

[Prayer Ventures for December 2022]

1 *World AIDS Day* Today we join our neighbors, siblings in Christ and companion churches around the world in remembering all who have been and continue to be affected by HIV and AIDS. Give thanks for the progress we have made in effective prevention, treatment and care and in discouraging discrimination against those who are HIV-positive; pray that we will not grow complacent but continue to make progress; and give thanks for the ongoing work of the ELCA's HIV and AIDS ministry.

2 Give thanks for our faith, which embodies hope and anticipation as well as confidence and joy in God's promises and grace, which were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

3 *International Day of Persons with Disabilities* Pray for our neighbors here and around the world who live with disabilities, that they might be welcomed, respected, valued and fully included in every aspect of the church and society. Give thanks for the wide-ranging work of ELCA Disability Ministry, Lutheran Services in America–Disability Network and other ministry partners.

4 Pray that, like John the Baptist, we will share the good news of Jesus and the love of God with boldness and humility and will invite all people to believe and be baptized into a new life in Christ, free from the confines of sin, despair and death.

5 Give thanks for the ELCA's Good Gifts catalog, which lifts up the diverse needs of our neighbors and offers opportunities to respond with gifts that grow the church, fight hunger and transform lives around the world — from honeybees and irrigation systems to trauma counseling and vocational training for entrepreneurs.

6 “Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (Romans 15:7). Pray that the Spirit will help us live in unity and celebrate the faith that binds us together as siblings in God's family; pray that we will invite and welcome people into our communities of faith so that they too might experience the gifts of joy, grace and mutual care as siblings in Christ.

7 Give thanks and pray for the work and enthusiasm of those applying for ELCA World Hunger Education and Networking Grants, which help congregations and synods build partnerships, provide training and education, plan service learning and host events with people passionate about ending hunger.

8 Pray for ELCA missionaries serving with our global companions in Africa: the Rev. Elisabeth Johnson and Anne and Willie Langdji (Cameroon); the Rev. Alex LaChapelle (Kenya); the Rev. Janelle Neubauer (Rwanda); and the Rev. Brian Palmer and Rev. Linda Johnson Seyenkulo (Liberia).

9 Pray that God will work through us to help goodness, honesty, justice, peace, generosity and compassion flourish in the world.

10 Give thanks for scientists, researchers and teachers of science and math; they help us acquire skills for daily life, explore and better understand creation, expand our appreciation of God's handiwork, and develop new technologies for the health and well-being of humanity and our environment.

11 People of faith are not immune to questions or doubts. Give thanks for God's patience with us and for the Spirit's work of strengthening our faith, revealing the mysteries and wonder of God's boundless love for humanity, and helping us understand Scripture and faith in the context of life today.

12 Pray for farmers and ranchers as they prepare their fields, animals and equipment for winter, and for those planting and harvesting during winter. Give thanks for their vocation of feeding the world, their care for the environment and their wisdom about seasons and cycles of life.

13 Pray that, with the use of Advent candles and wreaths, we will embrace faith traditions and practices that center us on God's grace and forgiveness, received through the gift of Jesus Christ.

14 "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant" (Luke 1:46-48). Join in the song of Mary and give praise and thanksgiving for God's love, mercy and attentiveness — blessings experienced from generation to generation.

15 Ask the Spirit to help us invite and welcome with enthusiasm our neighbors and surrounding community to join in our congregational activities, celebrations and worship during Advent and Christmas, and throughout the year.

16 *Las Posadas* This tradition, popular in Mexico and observed by some ELCA congregations, uses lighted paths and processions from house to house to follow Mary and Joseph's journey through Bethlehem in search of lodging. Pray that our recollection of Mary and Joseph's experience will prompt us to welcome strangers, immigrants, refugees and neighbors in need.

17 Pray for those who suffer depression, loneliness and anxiety, especially during the holidays. Ask God to help us be attentive to people around us who are struggling, that they might find understanding, hope, support, inclusion and caring companions in our communities of faith.

18 *International Migrants Day* Pray that we will support and accompany migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in their difficult pursuit of safety, justice, self-sufficiency and family stability.

19 Remember in prayer ELCA Global Mission personnel and missionaries who are celebrating Advent and the birth of Christ in the communities and congregations of our global companions around the world.

20 Remember those who are alone during this time of community celebrations, meals and worship, including refugees, immigrants, and those who are imprisoned, confined to home or an institution, without family, or separated from family and community by work or deployment.

21 *Winter solstice* Reflect on the intricacies of the universe that govern the movement of our solar system, the changing seasons and how people experience seasons in different hemispheres of the world. Praise God for a life-sustaining creation that inspires awe, curiosity and humility!

22 “Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved” (Psalm 80:3). Give thanks for God’s mercy and favor, which grant us new life and hope — not because we deserve it or have lived good lives but because God is gracious and generous beyond human comprehension.

23 Remember those who serve and work in our communities during the holidays. May we assure them of our love, concern and gratitude, and create opportunities to include them in our celebrations and worship, especially when they are unable to be physically present.

24 *Christmas Eve* Offer prayers of thanksgiving and joy for the gift of Jesus, our Savior, life and hope, who brings light to the darkness, “for he came down from heaven above to help a world in need” (ELW 271).

25 *Christmas Day* All glory and praise to God — everything we have seen, heard and been taught about Jesus Christ, our hope and salvation, is true. Give thanks that God’s love and mercy, present in the birth of Christ, have shaken the world and awakened our hope.

26 *Kwanzaa* Today begins Kwanzaa, a weeklong celebration of African culture and traditions that emphasizes family, community and shared principles. Give thanks for the rich and enduring traditions, celebrations and practices of our African American siblings and the global African community.

27 *John, apostle and evangelist* Give thanks for John and the other disciples, who trusted in and responded to Jesus’ call, leaving behind their previous lives to experience God’s presence and love through Jesus Christ and to do God’s work in the world. Ask the Spirit to guide, inspire and equip us for sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor in a world of constant change and new challenges.

28 Hope, joy, love and faith are infectious. Pray that the hope and joy stirred by our faith in God’s love and presence in the world will spill over into our personal and professional relationships and our interaction with strangers.

29 Pray that we will be ever mindful of our baptism, which brings us identity and purpose “through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). Give thanks that we are equipped, encouraged and sustained by our siblings in Christ throughout our lifelong journey of faith.

30 The birth of Christ, manifesting God’s love for humanity, changed everything, forever. We celebrate the joy and significance of Christmas and pledge our lives in constant witness to God, who embraces and loves us with all our flaws, complexities and questions.

31 *New Year’s Eve* What do you hope for in the coming year? What are your aspirations? Give thanks for the assurance we receive through our baptism, that we might live in God’s mercy and

grace through the ups and downs of life, and pray that we will be supported during our journey by a vast and caring community of siblings in Christ.