

[Prayer Ventures for February 2023]

1 *Black History Month* Give thanks for the gifts, accomplishments, influence and witness of our African-descent neighbors and siblings in Christ — we stand together to glorify God as partners in the gospel, doing God’s work in the world together. Though unified as siblings in Christ, we ask God to guide our church in its pursuit of racial justice, socioeconomic equity, racial reconciliation and an end to hatred and mistrust.

2 Give thanks for older adults, whose diverse gifts, life experiences, perspectives and wisdom are essential to the life, vitality and leadership of our congregations and communities.

3 Pray for leaders of children, youth and family ministries as these leaders gather for the ELCA Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza in Anaheim, Calif. Give thanks for their commitment, gifts and concern for the faith and well-being of young people.

4 Give thanks for staff and volunteers who help congregations function smoothly, grow and thrive, including administrative assistants, accountants, property managers, program coordinators and communications staff.

5 Jesus describes us as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Pray that, by sharing our faith and acting with compassion, justice and care for our neighbors, we might direct people’s attention to our loving and generous God.

6 ELCA World Hunger works through the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and alongside global companions and agencies in Kenya to build the capacity of families to respond to and withstand worsening droughts. Pray for our neighbors in Kenya and for the immediate and long-term success of LWF initiatives, which include training farmers in climate-smart practices, building and repairing water wells, managing water supplies and promoting hygiene.

7 Remember in prayer those who have suffered tragedy, trauma or loss from recent winter storms, flooding and earthquakes. Pray that God will bring them hope and encouragement throughout their grieving, recovery and adjustment to the changes in their communities.

8 Pray for pastors and deacons who serve multiple congregations, and pray that congregations sharing leadership will flourish, discovering new partners, resources and assets for doing God’s work in the world.

9 Pray that our compassion and advocacy, offered without prejudice or the expectation of any recognition or reward, might bring light, hope and relief to the world. “If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday” (Isaiah 58:9-10).

10 Remember in prayer the 1.3 million people serving in the military and the nearly 800,000 serving in the military reserves, many of them young adults.

11 Give thanks and pray for the ELCA's AMMPARO strategy (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities), work that grows more critical every day as vulnerable youth yearn for assistance with the daunting task of finding safety, stability, respect and welcoming communities in our country.

12 Pray for people who suffer chronic illness and pain that impacts their daily lives, activities and employment; pray that they might receive affordable health care and effective treatment; and ask the Spirit to stir our empathy and help us provide appropriate, respectful support.

13 Pray that our civic engagement and concern for our neighbor and the world might exceed what is required or expected of us by laws, social norms, trends and tradition.

14 Ask God to help us understand, respect and set aside our differences so that we might be empowered by our unity in Christ and embrace our complementary gifts and passions to do God's work in the world, "for we are God's servants, working together" (1 Corinthians 3:9).

15 Praise God that, as different as we are from one another, we gather to celebrate Communion remembering our unity and strength in Christ, who frees us to love and serve our neighbor and to bear God's mercy into the world.

16 Give thanks for the publishing ministry of Augsburg Fortress and for writers and editors who help deepen our faith, equip us for life and service, and support our faith communities.

17 Praise God for the clarity and joy we find in following God's ways and commandments, and for the assurance that we are never alone or directionless in our baptismal journeys.

18 *Martin Luther, renewer of the church (1483-1546)* Give thanks for the life, faith, prayerful deliberation, and wisdom of Martin Luther, who continues to influence and challenge the church and our theology. Pray that we might remember Luther's human complexity and imperfections — and our own — as we strive to understand Scripture and live as children of God in an ever-changing world.

19 We embrace the mystery of the Holy Trinity through the gift of faith. Give thanks that, through Scripture, God leads us to clarity about the true nature of Jesus Christ, who was sent to redeem us and to teach us how to live as children of God: "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5).

20 *World Day of Social Justice* Pray that our concern for social justice in the world will be grounded in our faith, Jesus' example and the ways and wisdom of God, emboldening us to serve our neighbor, respect one another and risk changing unjust laws, traditions, institutions and behaviors.

21 *Shrove Tuesday* Ask the Spirit to prepare our hearts for the season of Lent and to create in us a humble, penitent spirit that is renewed daily through faith in God's forgiveness and love, revealed and experienced in Jesus Christ.

22 *Ash Wednesday* “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). Give thanks for the cross of ash drawn on our foreheads today, which assures us of God’s forgiveness, love and renewing spirit.

23 Pray for ELCA missionaries serving with our global companions in Tanzania: David and Kellen Msseemmaa, Astine and Ryan Bose, Dr. Steven and Bethany Friberg, Dr. Stephen and Jodi Swanson, Deacon April Trout, Linda Jacobson, Robert Kasworm, the Rev. Mary Jo Maas, Derrick Matthews and Dr. Dorothy Brewster-Lee, the Rev. Elieshi Mungure, and Robert and Carolee Stuberg.

24 Shout praise and thanksgiving for God’s love, forgiveness, patience, creativity and concern for those who suffer poverty, injustice and disregard.

25 Pray for the Deaconess Community of the ELCA, an intentional group of women who respond to Christ’s call through Word and Service and diaconal ministry.

26 Give thanks for the strength and example of Jesus, who prevailed over temptation and demonstrated the power of God over evil, self-interest and greed. Pray that the Spirit will guide and sustain us through the challenges we face each day.

27 Pray that we might understand how we stray from God’s intent, harming or neglecting our neighbor. Ask the Spirit for the humility we need to confess our offenses, receive God’s mercy with gratitude and make amends with neighbors we have hurt.

28 Give thanks for synod bishops who manage their synods’ work, further the church’s mission in diverse contexts, and support and care for leaders and congregations. Pray for them as they gather in mutual support and encouragement for the Conference of Bishops, to advise the presiding bishop of our church and reflect on how we do God’s work in the world.