

[Prayer Ventures for March 2023]

**1** *Woman's History Month* Remember, celebrate and give thanks for the contributions, achievements, leadership, wisdom and gifts of women and girls throughout history in the church, our communities and the world.

**2** In January there were 52 mass shootings in our nation. Pray that God will hear our yearning for the peace, safety and transformation of our society for the sake of protecting life. Ask the Spirit to awaken us from the fear, numbness and feelings of powerlessness that can discourage us from taking risks and making sacrifices that will lead to consequential change in our nation.

**3** Pray for people and communities impacted by flooding and storms in California and by tornadoes, flooding and severe weather across the southern United States. Remember those who grieve the loss of loved ones and homes, those suffering trauma and those in the long process of recovery, especially those without shelter and most vulnerable.

**4** Pray that the invasion of Ukraine will end and that Russia will halt the violence that stands in the way of peace, reconciliation, recovery and healing. Pray especially for those who suffer most from the unrelenting misery, violence and destruction.

**5** Ask God for the curiosity, boldness and humility of Nicodemus, a Pharisee who sought to understand Jesus, the ways of God and the work of the Spirit.

**6** Remember in prayer people and communities recovering from the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. Ask God to sustain their hope, ease their grief and give them the resources they need for relief and rebuilding, especially in remote areas.

**7** Give thanks for siblings in Christ, throughout history and in the present, who proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and incite our faith in God's promise of love and forgiveness.

**8** *International Women's Day* On this day we join our neighbors and siblings in Christ around the world in praying for the total inclusion, equity and advancement — social, economic and political — of women and girls everywhere. Give thanks for the work we do together through the ELCA International Women Leaders program, the Justice for Women program and ELCA World Hunger.

**9** Pray that when we see or use the symbol of the cross, we will remember the sacrifice made by the Son of God — Jesus Christ — for the sake of the world, to free us from the constraints of human weakness, fear and death.

**10** "I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1-2). Give thanks that God is mindful of our struggles and uncertainties and provides care, support and counsel through the people around us, including strangers. In turn, ask God to work through us so that we will be alert, empathetic and responsive to the needs of our neighbors.

**11** Pray for college and university students during spring break, that they will be renewed, build friendships and serve their neighbors in need through service-learning experiences.

**12** “I heard the voice of Jesus say, ‘Behold, I freely give the living water, thirsty one; stoop down and drink and live’” (*ELW* 611). Give thanks that God attends to our spiritual thirst through the life-giving gift of Jesus Christ, who restores and sustains us to face life’s challenges, share the gospel and do God’s work in the world.

**13** Pray for ELCA missionaries serving with our global companions in Asia and the Pacific: the Rev. Jeffrey Truscott and the Rev. Charles Peterson (Indonesia), the Rev. Jessica Derise (Thailand) and Julie Gerrish (Malaysia).

**14** Pray that our prayer and song will express our joy, thanksgiving and praise to God — our creator, our defender and our source of salvation.

**15** Give thanks for mid-week Lenten meals that draw us together, that we might reflect on our humanness, find hope and comfort in God’s love and mercy, and strengthen our unity as children of God and siblings in Christ.

**16** Pray that, when we experience quarreling, division and hardship as a community of faith, we will trust one another as siblings in Christ and turn to God for reassurance, knowing that the Spirit leads us to reconciliation and unity.

**17** Thank God for the ELCA’s special relationship with the Moravian Church in America, a full communion partner since 1999. Pray for the church, its members and its leaders, that together we will find strength and resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.

**18** Give thanks to God for those who harvest the abundance of lakes, rivers and oceans to feed themselves and others. Pray that they will be safe, that their fishing will be successful and that they will wisely and generously steward our food resources and environment for the sake of all generations.

**19** Pray that, as our neighbors suffer misfortune, poverty, hunger, homelessness or physical or mental illness, we will not judge them, blame them or decide where they do and don’t belong but will instead respond as Jesus did, with boundless mercy, respect, care and hospitality.

**20** Remember in prayer leaders meeting in Minneapolis for the Assistants and Associates to Bishops Gathering. Pray that their faith, lives and ministries will be enriched and supported by their time together.

**21** Give thanks that God has brought us out of darkness and into the light of Christ, which reveals what is good, just and pleasing to God.

**22** *World Water Day* Praise God for the gift of water in all its forms. Pray that we will not take water for granted or squander it. Ask the Spirit to guide and sustain our efforts to guarantee all

people and communities access to clean, safe and abundant water, a life-nourishing resource and gift from God.

**23** Pray for the leaders across our church who serve on the ELCA Church Council. Ask the Spirit to guide and inspire their deliberations and work, which support, shape and further the growth and mission of our church in the world.

**24** *Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Bishop of El Salvador (1917-1980)* Give thanks for the life of Bishop Romero and those who demonstrate courage and persistence in their faith, public witness, compassion and advocacy. Pray for those who still suffer poverty, violence, oppression and injustice in Central America.

**25** With joy and thanksgiving, praise God for drawing us close and restoring our relationships, and celebrate that nothing can separate us from God's love, demonstrated to us through the life, sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**26** Amid solemn Lenten reflections, take heart and give thanks for the promise and proclamation Jesus made to Martha, the sister of Lazarus: "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live" (John 11:25).

**27** Lift up prayerful sighs of relief and gratitude that God is our help and refuge, trustworthy and ever present. "My Jesus is a rock in a weary land, a shelter in the time of storm" (*ELW* 333).

**28** How is the Spirit at work in you? Pray that we will be mindful of how the Spirit dwells within us and of the diverse and surprising results of its work.

**29** Pray for ELCA missionaries serving with our global companions in Slovakia: Megan Freudenberg, Naomi and Nicholas Sveholm, the Rev. Kyle and Anna Svenningsen, the Rev. Bradn Buerkle, Elizabeth Kuster, Michelle Laudermilk, Mitchell McDonald, John Rogers and Christina Sunstone.

**30** Give thanks for the Lilly Endowment grant that will enable the ELCA and ELCA Youth Ministry Network to collaborate on new models for youth ministry, equip 3,000 leaders for ministry with younger generations and provide ELCA congregations with accessible and affordable resources to engage youth in faith formation.

**31** Pray that our congregations will prove resilient to the severe weather that often comes with spring, serving as centers for relief, shelter and hope when disasters occur in their communities.