

[Prayer Ventures for April 2023]

1 *Arab American Heritage Month* Remember in prayer the diverse gifts, stories and cultures of our Arab and Middle Eastern siblings in Christ, who remind us of the church's rich history and tradition. Ask God to bless the advocacy, witness, leadership development and ministry support provided by ELCA Arab and Middle Eastern Ministries and the Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage.

2 *Palm Sunday* Pray for strength to follow Christ and the will of God, especially when fear of criticism or standing out discourages us from proclaiming and demonstrating our faith.

3 Give thanks for the chance to study, pray, reflect and give during ELCA World Hunger's 40 Days of Giving, joining partners, companions, friends and neighbors around the world in doing God's work.

4 "How precious is your steadfast love, O God! All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings" (Psalm 36:7). Give thanks and praise for God's love and grace, which envelop all people and are never deterred by borders, divisions or regulations of our making.

5 Remember in prayer people who live in despair and yearn for hope, especially those recovering from natural disasters, incarcerated in prisons and jails, displaced by war and economic crises, or suffering poverty, hunger, unemployment or lack of shelter.

6 *Maundy Thursday* When we gather for communion with our siblings in Christ, we remember when Jesus gathered with disciples, friends and strangers around a meal. Give thanks for the bread and wine that remind us of God's abundant mercy and the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, providing us the nourishment to live our baptismal call, walk in God's ways, serve our neighbor and share the gospel.

7 *Good Friday* Ask the Spirit to renew and strengthen our faith as we recall the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus for the sake of the world. Pray that our hope will be stirred and our lives energized by God's grace, given despite our complexity, weakness and suffering.

8 *Holy Saturday* Give thanks that darkness and death no longer hold us captive — God's promise of forgiveness, freedom and new life has been fulfilled for us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

9 *Easter Sunday* "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised" (Matthew 28:5-6). Praise God! Give thanks that our lives, purpose and hope are forever changed in the risen Christ, God's tangible expression of love and mercy for humankind.

10 Give thanks for musicians, choirs, cantors, music directors, orchestras and bands that give witness to our faith, draw us into worship and reflection, and help us express our joy and praise to God.

11 Remember in prayer ELCA missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission serving alongside our companions in Germany, Austria, Belgium and the United Kingdom.

12 Give thanks for God's steadfast love and kindness, which are so often obscured by our daily activities, concerns and distractions.

13 Pray for students in our seminaries who, responding to the Spirit's call, explore opportunities for ministry and service wherever God is at work in the world.

14 Pray for the Peace Not Walls campaign as we work for justice, peace, human rights, reconciliation and healing in Palestine and Israel. Ask that our efforts might yield results as we accompany the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and all Jews, Christians and Muslims working together for peace with justice.

15 Give thanks for teachers in our public schools and pray that God will sustain and renew their energy and commitment as they manage the challenges of their vocation. Ask the Spirit to grant them compassion, wisdom and skill to attend to the needs of students and parents, and promise to generously support their service.

16 The story of Thomas, who was skeptical when Jesus first appeared to the disciples after his resurrection, is not unlike our own when we feel doubt and yearn for proof of God's presence and love. Ask God to forgive our uncertainty, and pray that our faith, like Thomas', will be renewed, so that we, too, might proclaim of Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

17 Pray for our presiding bishop, Elizabeth A. Eaton, that the Spirit will sustain her faith and wisdom and continue to equip her for guiding our church through the challenges of doing God's work in an ever-changing world.

18 Ask God to help us serve our neighbors in need, share the gospel, endure all hardships in this world and find comfort in the assurance of "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven" (1 Peter 1:4).

19 Remember in prayer ELCA missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission serving alongside our companions in Mexico, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Brazil.

20 Pray for God's counsel in how to be a positive, compassionate and healing influence in society and the world, following the path of life, light and truth.

21 Pray for the leaders, voting members and others gathering for the assemblies of the Western Iowa and Southwestern Texas synods, that the Spirit will strengthen, guide and inspire them as they reflect on the mission of the church, choose leaders and encourage one another to proclaim the gospel and serve our neighbors in need.

22 *Earth Day* Praise God for the diverse and abundant natural resources that sustain life, the interconnection of all that exists, and the wonders of creation that inspire and humble us. Pray

that we will wisely steward what God has entrusted to our care and work diligently to restore what we have damaged and depleted — for the well-being of humanity and the honor of our Creator.

23 Pray that we might take advantage of opportunities to talk with one another about our faith, our questions, our thoughts and the challenges of following Christ.

24 Pray for farmers, ranchers and agricultural workers who, each spring, prepare, plant and tend fields, orchards and herds so that they will produce bountiful harvests and feed the world.

25 Rejoice in the good news that God has reclaimed us with the blood of Christ — Savior, Messiah and Teacher, the light of the world and the bread of life that sustains our spirit.

26 Remember in prayer musicians and worship leaders gathering online for the Music that Makes Community webinar “Composing Ourselves: A Laboratory for Creating Congregational Songs.” Pray that the Spirit will inspire and nurture their skills for writing new worship songs drawn from diverse cultures and traditions.

27 Thank God for listening and responding to our prayers, both spoken and silent.

28 Pray for the leaders, voting members and others gathering for the assemblies of the Minneapolis Area, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana and Alaska synods, that the Spirit will strengthen, guide and inspire them as they reflect on the mission of the church, choose leaders and encourage one another to proclaim the gospel and serve our neighbors in need.

29 Pray for the leaders, voting members and others gathering for the assemblies of the Northwest Intermountain Synod, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod and the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, that the Spirit will strengthen, guide and inspire them as they reflect on the mission of the church, choose leaders and encourage one another to proclaim the gospel and serve our neighbors in need.

30 Pray that our faith might grow and mature as the Spirit guides and encourages us through worship, service, Bible study, involvement in a faith community, and the witness of our global companions.