

[Prayer Ventures for March 2019]

- 1** Continue to remember, pray for and care for people who need warmth, shelter and nourishment, not just during the worst of the winter but throughout the year.
- 2** Pray that we lift our eyes to, recognize and respond to our neighbors in need, and follow with faith Jesus' teachings and admonitions to be attentive to others, compassionate, loving and just.
- 3** Lent is approaching, and our attention is being turned to Jesus' suffering, sacrifice, death and resurrection. Lift up humble, grateful prayers for God's mercy, love and forgiveness, which were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, son of God – our hope and salvation.
- 4** *Lutheran Schools Week* Give thanks for the life-changing impact of Lutheran schools, early-childhood programs, teachers, staff, administrators and sponsoring congregations committed to faith-based education across our church and communities. Pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association's work of supporting educators, schools and congregations as well as advocating for exceptional faith-based education.
- 5** Remember in prayer those college and university students who are participating in service, learning and mission experiences during spring break, especially through ELCA campus ministries.
- 6** *Ash Wednesday* Speak to God about the personal significance of the smudge of ash on your forehead, remembering our frailty and mortality and, at the same time, the gift of forgiveness and new life we have through Jesus Christ.
- 7** Pray for mercy, trusting in God's steadfast love and ability to cleanse us thoroughly – inside and out – from our sin, immorality and human failings.
- 8** *International Women's Day* Today the world celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women throughout history, across nations and throughout the church. Give thanks for the bold witness, service and leadership of women and girls in our church, and for the ministries of Women of the ELCA, the ELCA Women and Justice program and the International Women Leadership initiative.
- 9** Our God is great and awesome, and a lover of justice. Pray that our gratitude and what we learn from the word and ways of God are reflected with clarity and brightness in our lives, endeavors and relationships.
- 10** Forty days of Lent can seem like a long time to ponder our human weaknesses and the things we'd rather forget or deny. Ask God for strength to face daily temptations, the strength that Jesus demonstrated while being tempted and tormented in the wilderness; pray for faith that is confident in the power of the Spirit and God's mercy.

**11** Continue to pray for people and communities recovering from disasters here and elsewhere in the world, and remember that rebuilding, economic recovery, and the healing of trauma and grief often take many years.

**12** We believe God calls the church – corporately and individually – to care for God’s creation, pursue justice, care for people in need and seek peace. Pray that the Holy Spirit will inspire, embolden and guide us in doing God’s work in the world.

**13** Give thanks for our weekly opportunities to gather together for Lenten meals, worship and reflection, and for how these experiences and disciplines help nourish our faith and strengthen the body of Christ.

**14** Thank God for our special relationship with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1997; pray for the church, its members and leaders, and pray that together we find strength and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.

**15** Give thanks and praise to God for offering us refuge and protection, especially those of us who feel weak, vulnerable, fearful or alone.

**16** We ask God to work among leaders, nations and factions in conflict throughout the Middle East region, that they will find sure paths to peace, reconciliation, healing and justice for all people. We pray that the Holy Spirit will stir within us empathy, understanding and compassion for those who are caught in the middle of, or have simply fled, the violence, chaos, persecution and uncertainty.

**17** Remember throughout Lent the suffering, trials and sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our salvation. Give thanks to God for this profound, boundless, undeserved work of love and mercy for our sake.

**18** Praise God for the long-standing companion relationships that 20 ELCA synods maintain with 20 dioceses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania; pray that these communities nurture and strengthen one another for life and ministry through prayer, study, communication, exchange of visitors and sharing of resources.

**19** Call on the Holy Spirit to tune our senses to the promises and reassurances of God, especially when we are uncertain, experiencing darkness or feeling ill-equipped for the challenges of life.

**20** Give thanks for the beginning of spring, with its newness, hope and increasing light, and reflect with wonder and awe on God’s creation.

**21** Pray for all who suffer, grieve or lose hope; ask God to grant them relief, comfort and lasting hope through the indwelling of God’s spirit; and pledge them our concern, assistance, encouragement and care.

**22** Pray for rostered ministers and lay leaders serving ethnic-specific and culturally diverse congregations and ministries throughout the ELCA; ask God to equip, sustain and enthuse them for serving where God is at work in the world.

**23** Give thanks and praise to God, who is our light and salvation, the stronghold of our lives and the source of our courage and confidence.

**24** Remember in prayer Stephen Deal (ELCA regional representative in Central America), the Lutheran World Federation's Central America program and our companion churches in Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica as they strive to share God's love and participate in God's mission together.

**25** Pray that the Holy Spirit will teach us anew what it means to be humble, loving, hopeful and engaged with the world for the well-being of our neighbor.

**26** Pray that, during Lent, our traditions, rituals and practices will be grounded in Scripture and Lutheran theology but also dynamic, connecting thoughtfully across the past, present and future.

**27** What does your soul thirst for? Call on the Lord to satisfy your soul and sustain you with unwavering love.

**28** Pray for farmers and ranchers, whose work follows the seasons, as spring beckons them to prepare the soil, plant and harvest crops, and tend to herds and orchards. Give recognition and thanks for all who have a hand in bringing food from field to table; pray that our abundant food resources reach those who are hungry and live in poverty; and pray that our agricultural technologies continue to evolve so we can feed the world while also stewarding creation.

**29** Reflect on God's words: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Pray that, as attentive believers and disciples, we listen to and learn from God, the Spirit working to shape and reshape us throughout our baptismal journey.

**30** Pray that, throughout Lent, we stay focused on the cross and Easter for the light, truth and good news of Jesus Christ that propel us forward in our baptismal journey with hope and joy.

**31** Recall and give thanks for the experiences and people in daily life that shake us up, leading us to grow in faith and recenter our lives in God's grace.