

Prayer Ventures for January 2020

1 What is the significance of your name? On this day we recall the naming of Jesus and pray that when we hear, say or think his name, we will recognize him as our salvation, our uniter and our sure source of love, forgiveness and new life.

2 Throughout National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, remember in prayer the men, women and children who are victims of this global tragedy, which disproportionately affects women and girls. Pray for an end to human trafficking and that all who suffer its abuse, injustice and oppression may find freedom, support, healing and safety, especially in our communities of faith.

3 Give thanks for the cloud of faith-filled witnesses who surround us as mentors of faith, vocation and life skills, enriching our lives through their example and sharing their faith, wisdom and knowledge.

4 Pray for the people and communities affected by the recent fires in California, that they will not lose hope but will experience God's presence and encouragement through the care and support of others. Give thanks for the work of Lutheran Disaster Response — with the California synods, Lutheran Social Services of Northern California and Lutheran Social Services of Southern California — to respond with physical, emotional and spiritual care.

5 Pray that the Holy Spirit will help us bear witness in the world to the light and truth of Jesus Christ, that we will be infused with enthusiasm for inviting others to believe and follow, and that all will experience the grace and fullness of God.

6 *Feast of Epiphany* God's glory is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, born among us and immersed in the messiness, complexity and commonness of humanity for the sake of the world. Pray that we will recognize God's divine presence and activity in the world for the redemption and healing of humankind and for the nurturing of our lives to better emulate Jesus.

7 Give thanks for the gift of wisdom that comes from God. Pray that our faith, with the encouragement of the Spirit, will compel us to share, teach and cultivate God's wisdom and ways among all people — young and old alike.

8 Give thanks and praise to God that we are adopted and called children of God through Jesus Christ, an immeasurable gift of grace, love and forgiveness in which we are immersed.

9 Pray for the ministries that have received ELCA World Hunger Big Dream Grants, which support domestic ministries as they pursue innovative and sustainable approaches to ending hunger. Ask God to help their work flourish and inspire others to seek new ways of ending hunger and lifting the human family.

10 The good news of Jesus Christ embodying God's love, forgiveness and promise of eternal life is for all humanity; no one should be excluded from this good news and mystery of grace. Ask that the Spirit fill and inspire us to speak enthusiastically about our faith and serve our neighbor — every neighbor — in the name of Christ.

11 Do you have goals, plans, hopes and ventures for this new year? Give thanks and take comfort and courage in the promise of God's love, forgiveness, renewing Spirit and acceptance of us just as we are — in all our human endeavors.

12 Washed in the waters of baptism and touched by the Spirit, Jesus began his ministry and was made known to the world as the Son of God bringing the light and truth of God to the world. Remember in prayer how we are cleansed and renewed daily through our baptism, filled with the Holy Spirit, prepared for a life of praising God and serving our neighbor, and called to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

13 Pray for people who struggle with substance abuse and addictions and for those who are working to rebuild their lives and relationships through sobriety and the support of companions who understand the challenges of recovery. Pray that they will have faith in God's unwavering love and forgiveness in moments of despair, joy, accomplishment, weakness and stumbling.

14 God's voice and presence throughout creation are powerful and awesome. Give glory and praise to God as a humble member of the body of Christ, seeking God's strength each day.

15 *Martin Luther King Jr. Day* Give thanks for saints, martyrs and leaders, throughout history and today, who have dedicated their lives to racial justice, equality for all people and an end to racism and discrimination, and who stand with the neglected or weary. Pray that our actions, words and service for the sake of our neighbor will be inspired and guided by the witness and example of these bold leaders.

16 Pray for ELCA Churchwide staff, volunteers and planning committees as they prepare for “boundless: God beyond measure,” the 2021 ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis. Ask the Spirit to guide them as they help youth, young adults and adults catch a glimpse and develop a deeper understanding of Christ’s love and what it means to live a life filled with God.

17 Give thanks that God shows no partiality or exclusivity in sharing love, mercy and forgiveness; the good news of Jesus Christ is for everyone and every nation!

18 The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins today. Give thanks for the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical organizations and ministries with whom we journey together toward unity — unity that we celebrate and share in Jesus Christ.

19 Pray that in moments when God says, “Come and see” (meaning “trust and follow”), we demonstrate the same curiosity, hope and faith that moved the first disciples of Jesus, imperfect and uncertain as they were even when face-to-face with the Messiah.

20 Lift up in prayer the names of staff — paid and volunteer — whose vocation and faithful, generous service enhance and support the daily ministry and mission of our congregations and synods, including administrative assistants, business managers, custodians and people responsible for digital communications.

21 Pray for the leaders of every nation, including our own, that they will heal long-standing and recent rifts, pursue just and peaceful agreements and solutions for the well-being of the people they serve, and share resources to relieve hunger and poverty everywhere, without concern for profit or gain for any single nation.

22 Ask God to help us actively mend the suspicion and hatred in our nation and around the world that divide us, frustrate compassion and generosity, and undermine our understanding of how to live in community. Pray that where we are broken or in conflict, God will show us how to be whole.

23 Pray that we will find joy in following the will of God as it is written in our hearts and revealed in Scripture.

24 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 diverse ministries and its members and leaders; and pray that together we will find mutual support, new partnerships and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.

25 *Conversion of Paul* Reflect on how God has transformed you. Give thanks and praise to God for stirring our lives and calling us to be witnesses and servants doing God’s work in the world. And give thanks for our faith, our unique personal histories, our strengths and weaknesses, and our gifts and skills, even when we are uncertain of their usefulness and relevance in the body of Christ.

26 Praise God for Jesus’ life, teachings, ministry and personal example, which instruct us today as modern-day disciples called to follow Christ, share the gospel, serve our neighbor and grow the church in an ever-changing world.

27 Remember in prayer women of the early church, throughout history and today, whom God has called and equipped as witnesses, bearers and teachers of the faith, and leaders in every corner of the world. They are a blessing to the church.

28 Give thanks for theologians and teachers in our church, in our educational institutions and in our midst. Pray that God will grant them insight and wisdom to help us connect faith with daily life and deepen our understanding of God’s word, ways and desires for us.

29 Ask God for forgiveness for the conflicts that divide our church and our congregations. Pray that when we disagree, we will exercise humility, love, respect and reconciliation, remembering and reaffirming our unity of spirit and purpose as siblings in Christ.

30 Ask God to help us when we feel discouraged or overwhelmed by or detached from the difficult challenge of reducing gun violence. Pray for wisdom, courage and boldness in advocating for legislation and cultural shifts that, though complex or unpopular, will protect the gift of life and honor the handiwork of our Creator.

31 “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Praise God and shout with joy!