

PRAYER VENTURES FOR JULY 2020

1 As this time of stress and uncertainty continues, pray that we will be persistent in our generous support for the mission of the church: comforting and caring for our neighbors, responding to the global impact of the pandemic, providing food and basic necessities for people in need, reaching out to the isolated and lonely, and aiding organizations that work for the health, well-being and restoration of our communities.

2 Give thanks for God's ever-present love and care, and for the message of the psalmist who proclaims, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

3 Ask the Spirit to help us express our gratitude and concern for first responders, nurses, doctors and hospital employees, and to show us how to serve as God's hands and voice in caring for their spiritual, physical and emotional needs.

4 Ask God to help us cherish and not abuse the blessings of freedom and liberty, work to change our society where there is injustice and oppression, and accompany our global neighbors and companion churches striving for freedom, justice and voice.

5 Give thanks that God's love and truth are revealed to us through faith in Jesus Christ and that the Spirit is at work inspiring and equipping us to share the good news, spread truth and invite others to believe.

6 Pray for wisdom and patience as we navigate how to gather as congregations and discern what is appropriate, safe, caring and respectful of the ongoing concerns of our members, communities and nation.

7 We understand well Paul's struggle between the inclinations of human nature and following the ways of God and teachings of Jesus. Pray for forgiveness and strengthened faith when we are weak or make poor decisions; pray that we will be guided and encouraged by the Spirit of God that dwells within us.

8 Thank God for our special relationship with the Episcopal Church, a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1999. 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.

9 Give thanks that "the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made." Pray that our joy and thanksgiving will move us to be witnesses to God's presence, grace and mercy in the world for the sake of all people.

10 Pray for the 120 ELCA companion synods that connect our congregations with Lutherans and

ministries worldwide. Give thanks that together we participate in God's mission, support each other, share our joys and sorrow, and use our gifts and resources to respond to human needs and grow the church.

11 Remember in prayer refugees and immigrants throughout the world and at our borders who hope for and seek welcoming, safe communities where they can reestablish their lives and raise their families. Pray that they will have access to health services, food and resources to meet their daily needs during this time of heightened vulnerability and isolation.

12 Pray that we will sow the seeds of the good news of Jesus Christ without bias or judgment as to how people will receive it, and that we will trust the Spirit to accomplish what God intends through our witness and service in the world.

13 Pause to reflect on the significance of the 50th anniversary of a Lutheran church choosing to ordain women in the United States. Give thanks for the leadership, ministry and gifts of women who have served the church throughout history and for those women who endured the hardships and work leading to the ordination of women.

14 Pray for Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton, that God will sustain her faith and strength and guide her leadership and decisions, particularly during this difficult and uncertain time in our church and society when we are looking to her for guidance and vision.

15 Give praise to God, for God's word is powerful, clear, true and trustworthy.

16 Pray for businesses that are struggling or reopening or have shut down, and for their owners, their employees and all the other people and businesses they impact. Ask God to help them make decisions and implement new health precautions that take into consideration the well-being and needs of their employees, the people they serve and their community.

17 Pray for voting members of the Western North Dakota Synod gathered for a special meeting and elections, and for members throughout the synod who will participate through livestreaming. Ask that the Spirit will strengthen, guide and encourage them in choosing leaders, proclaiming the gospel, growing the church, serving our neighbor and doing God's work in an ever-changing world.

18 Give thanks that God's word is a light to our path throughout life that guides us in our baptismal journey, fills us with hope and joy, and illuminates truth and justice.

19 It is a painful, nagging reality that there are both good and evil in the world. Pray that the Spirit will renew our faith, trust and patience that God's righteousness, judgment and mercy will reign when the end of time comes.

20 Give thanks for rostered ministers in our church who are active in call, on leave from call, awaiting call or retired. Praise God for their faith, gifts, caring leadership, example and sacrifices in response to God's call to a life of ministry and service.

21 We are church together, many members of the one body of Christ. Pray that the Spirit will unite us in our commitment to condemn sexism, anti-Semitism, white supremacy and racism against indigenous people and people of color, whenever and wherever these sins occur.

22 Pray that, like God, we might be "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."

23 Pray for our ELCA colleges, universities and seminaries and their faculties, staff and students as they work to adapt to and overcome the disruptions and difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Pray that faculty and staff will find effective ways of caring for students, continuing educational experiences both in person and from a distance, enriching faith and helping students discern and prepare for their vocations.

24 Pray that we will be filled with and led by the Spirit so that our actions, words and faith reveal who we are — children of God, followers of Christ.

25 Remember in prayer the leaders, voting members and others gathered for the South Carolina Synod Assembly, that the Spirit will strengthen, guide and encourage them in choosing leaders, proclaiming the gospel, growing the church, serving our neighbor and doing God's work in an ever-changing world.

26 How do you envision and understand the kingdom of heaven? Pray that we might stay well-rooted in Scripture and the teachings of Christ to better understand the kingdom of heaven, and to be cautious in embracing cultural myths, traditions handed down and false promises about the kingdom of God.

27 Pray that we will continue turning to and prayerfully studying Scripture — individually and together. Pray that doing so will strengthen and deepen our faith, comfort and encourage us, guide us in loving our neighbor, and be a source of joy and thanksgiving.

28 What gives you cause for happiness and hope these days? Give thanks and praise to God for desiring joy,

healing, renewed life and freedom for us and all humanity.

29 Praise God for the joy and reassurance of knowing that there is nothing — absolutely nothing — that can separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ.

30 Give thanks for the special gifts, skills and minds of scientists, researchers and explorers who strive to better understand creation, improve the human condition, solve complex problems that cause us suffering, and restore and steward creation with a long view of sustaining future generations. Pray that they will make wise, responsible and just use of their research and discoveries for the well-being of all people and our planet.

31 Lift up in prayer our neighbors who are unemployed or underemployed and seek safe, meaningful work that will help them develop self-sufficiency and confidence and meet the needs of the people for whom they provide care, assistance and support.