

Prayer Ventures for December 2019

1 *First Sunday of Advent* Lift up prayers of thanks and praise for this season of anticipation, remembrance and celebration of Jesus Christ — God’s awesome gift of love and redemption for all humanity.

2 Pause each day to reflect prayerfully on the symbols, traditions and practices — ancient and new — that we see and experience throughout Advent and Christmas. Give thanks for everything that centers our attention on the good news of Jesus Christ, deepens our faith as loved and redeemed children of God, and inspires and guides our baptismal journey.

3 Today has become known as Giving Tuesday, a day for encouraging generosity and charitable giving. Pray that the Spirit will always inspire us to be generous with our resources, money, gifts and time for the sake of our neighbors in need.

4 Pray that we awake each day, putting on Jesus Christ and shining as a light in the world, a brilliant light that shines with good news, love, justice, compassion and peace.

5 Remember in prayer Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) and the other hospitals in East Jerusalem. AVH is owned and operated by the Lutheran World Federation and supported by several of its member churches, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Pray that our government will restore funding vital to the safe and effective operation of the East Jerusalem hospitals as soon as possible so that patients — especially children, who are particularly at risk — will continue to receive the treatment and care they need.

6 Give thanks for the young people who have served or are currently serving as Young Adults in Global Mission, working alongside our global companions to share the gospel, grow the church, care for people in need and strengthen communities in the name of Christ. Pray that these young adults will inspire others to respond to God’s call to ministry and service — locally and globally.

7 When you see an Advent wreath, reflect on the circle of evergreen branches and give thanks for the gift of eternal life we have in Jesus Christ — the promised Messiah, born for the sake of the world.

8 Pray for clarity and faith in the lifelong baptismal journey for which the Holy Spirit calls,

renews and equips us — a journey for the sake of the world.

9 The “Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent” is a public apology offered by our church in the context of the quadricentennial remembrance of slavery in this country. With faith in God’s forgiveness and mercy, pray that we will be unconflicted in our repentance, committed to understanding injustice and racism, and bold and persistent in working to end racism and white supremacy wherever they exist, including in the church.

10 Give thanks that we are freed by our faith to serve our neighbor and affect change in our communities, nation and world — change that is grounded in the gospel and God’s vision of justice, compassion, healing and peace for all people.

11 Pray that God’s righteousness, justice, peace and compassion for the poor and oppressed will flourish in the world, and that we will be bold and persistent in doing God’s work together.

12 Remember in prayer people, especially women and children, who live in refugee camps and immigration detention centers. Pray that they will soon return home or move to a community or country where they are welcome and safe, able to reunite with family and reestablish their lives. Give thanks for our church’s and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service’s commitment to advocate and care for refugees and immigrants everywhere.

13 Remembering that we have been welcomed without hesitation into the body of Christ, pray that we will exercise, without judgment or partiality, grace and hospitality toward our neighbors — friends, antagonists and strangers alike.

14 Give thanks to God for the gifts, service and ministry of women as we celebrate 50 years of Lutheran women being ordained in the United States, 40 years of women of color being ordained and 10 years of LGBTQIA+ individuals being able to serve freely.

15 Give thanks for being reminded and reassured — through the word of God, the sacraments and the witness of one another — that Jesus is the promised Messiah, our savior, teacher, life and hope.

16 Pray for ELCA missionaries and young people serving in the Young Adults in Global Mission program who are separated from their families and home congregations during the holidays yet celebrate the good news and gift of Jesus Christ with our companion churches and brothers and sisters in Christ around the world.

17 Pray that wherever the weather turns cold and damp, all people will have the warmth and safety of shelter, and that where shelter is absent or difficult to find, the love and generosity of God dwelling in us will move us to create and open shelters in our congregations, community spaces and homes.

18 Give thanks for ELCA Good Gifts, an opportunity to support ELCA ministries and programs in nearly 80 countries around the world, including the United States. These funds and gifts support work being carried out by our congregations, companion churches and ecumenical partners.

19 Over 47,000 people in the United States died by suicide in 2017, and there were approximately 1.4 million suicide attempts. Pray for hope, relief from suffering and skilled, compassionate care for people who struggle with loneliness, isolation and depression, especially during the holidays. Ask that the Spirit will move us to see and respond to the people around us and to engage in and support suicide-prevention efforts such as the work of the Suicide Prevention Ministry, an independent Lutheran organization.

20 Give thanks and praise to God, who lifts up those bowed down and oppressed, watches over strangers and sets free the bound and imprisoned.

21 Remember in prayer the many people who work and serve during the holidays, including first responders, care providers, law enforcement, medical personnel, pilots and attendants, truck drivers, men and women serving in the military, seafarers, social service staff, and people serving in stores, restaurants and hotels.

22 In the story of Mary, Joseph and the humble birth of Jesus, we sense God's love for humanity and God's understanding of the diverse contexts in which we live. Praise God for loving us as we are and for reaching into the world in ways that we can relate to, understand and embrace.

23 Ask that we will be strengthened and inspired by the Holy Spirit for sharing the story of God's

love and mercy — the story of Jesus — in today's world and culture.

24 *Christmas Eve* What draws you to Jesus? What are you looking for in God's promises? Give thanks to God for revealing to us through Jesus Christ the gifts of fullness of life and the one true light that illuminates God's ways and truth.

25 *Christmas Day* Join with our sisters and brothers around the world and with all creation in lifting up prayers and songs of praise and thanksgiving for God's gift of love and life, manifested in the birth of Jesus Christ — a light in the darkness that cannot be overcome.

26 "Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things." Pray for enthusiasm and courage in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ through our words and actions each day.

27 Remember in prayer people who struggle to meet the costs of living, students and seminarians graduating with long-term student loans, and people experiencing ongoing or unexpected medical expenses. Ask God to help us exercise understanding, empathy and generosity in our support and care for people struggling with financial debts and needs.

28 Pray that the good news, joy and faith that live in us will not diminish with the passing of the holidays and special celebrations but will grow deeper and pervade every aspect of our life.

29 Reflect on Mary and Joseph fleeing one country for another with the baby Jesus; lift up in prayer all people who suffer injustice and persecution and have become refugees and immigrants seeking safety and acceptance.

30 Pray that God will bless the experiences of college and university students participating in J-term courses and service-learning experiences, and that these will enrich their faith, knowledge, wisdom and discernment of vocation.

31 On the threshold of a new year, ask that the Spirit will instill in us a sense of time and life that is unrushed, observant and appreciative of the people, community, creation and gifts given by God for our sustenance, use, enjoyment and sharing.