

[Prayer Ventures for January 2019]

1 *New Year's Day* We join all creation in praising God and pray that everything we do and say reflects God's glory and wonder-filled love.

2 *National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month* We remember and pray for those who are victims of sex trafficking, involuntary servitude, debt bondage and forced labor in our nation and around the world, and we ask God to guide us in caring for victims and taking an active role in ending this abuse, injustice and oppression.

3 Ask God for the strength and patience we need to move forward with and accomplish new goals and endeavors; give thanks for the people in our lives who offer support, encouragement and wisdom, and who reassure us of God's grace and forgiveness when we feel like we are failing or struggling.

4 Remember in prayer people who have lost their homes and places of shelter as a result of recent natural disasters; pray they receive assistance — including emotional and spiritual care — and resources needed for rebuilding their lives and homes; pray we are generous in our support of Lutheran Disaster Response's work of bringing God's hope, healing and renewal to people and places suffering loss and disruption.

5 We come to God in prayer with grateful hearts, curiosity and awe that, as insignificant and small as we seem in comparison to the universe, God is mindful of us and cares for us.

6 Pray the Holy Spirit is at work in us expanding our vision of whom we include when we think and speak of "neighbors," that our prayers, concerns and actions consider people and situations beyond our congregations, social circles, communities and nation.

7 Give thanks for the generous support of donors to *The Campaign for the ELCA* that has enabled the ELCA's International Women Leaders initiative to grow in its accompaniment and support of international women leaders through educational seminars, south-to-south exchanges, in-country study programs and degree programs at ELCA colleges and universities.

8 Pray for newly elected leaders, judges and officials across our nation, that they be filled with wisdom, compassion, a deep sense of justice, and a desire to build relationships where schisms exist — for the well-being of all people and communities, especially where there is poverty, hardship and inequality.

9 Give thanks for faith communities, church leaders, Christian educators, friends and mentors who help us understand the mystery of Christ and the gospel, leading us to greater boldness and confidence of faith.

10 Pray for our elders, especially those who are homebound or living alone, that we will seek ways to keep them connected and cared for through our congregations and communities during the long winter months and throughout the year.

11 There is no greater advocate, defender and deliverer of the poor and oppressed than God. Pray we are faithful, unwavering partners in God’s work of bringing justice, healing, hope, relief and peace to the world.

12 Pray for the ELCA Disability Ministries Team and its work of advocating, equipping congregations and synods, and supporting new and existing ministries for the sake of all who live with mental illness, their families, and people who offer care, support and treatment.

13 Ask that the Holy Spirit shape our words, teachings and actions to enable us to be clear and articulate witnesses of who Jesus is: Son of God, the promised Messiah, our true salvation and hope.

14 Pray for J-term students returning to colleges and universities, that their experiences, new perspectives, knowledge and renewed faith help clarify, enrich and equip them for their vocations and discernment of what God may be calling them to.

15 Give thanks that God is with us in every situation, disaster, uncertainty and difficulty and that we can trust God’s promise and reassurance: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.”

16 As many of our Christmas gifts fall into disuse, break, lose their appeal or are regifted, we ask God to remind us of the gifts and blessings in our lives that give us joy and are lasting — day after day.

17 Ask the Holy Spirit to help us support, pray for, encourage and accompany those who are new Christians and beginning their journey of faith following Jesus.

18 *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* We are one in the body of Christ. Pray for our ecumenical partners, global church companions, and our brothers and sisters in Christ everywhere that God will draw us closer to one another and bless our work together for the purpose of building up Christ’s church in the world.

19 The voice of God can be sensed throughout all creation and in every nation. Pray we are attentive to God’s voice that it will assure us of God’s glory and power, give us strength and bless us with peace.

20 In the miracle of turning water into wine for wedding guests to enjoy, Jesus demonstrates the power and presence of God in our everyday lives and situations. With joy and humility, give thanks for God’s ability to accomplish the unimaginable for the sake of the world.

21 *Martin Luther King Jr. Day* Give thanks for the life, vision and sacrifice of Martin Luther King Jr. and all those who have worked tirelessly and at great personal risk throughout history for justice, peace, freedom and equality for all people, especially the oppressed and poor.

22 Give thanks for the service and witness of ELCA federal chaplains who work with members of the military, patients, families and staff at Veterans Affairs medical centers, and among the staff and inmates of federal prisons.

23 Pray for those who are cold and homeless this winter that they find warm, safe shelter and for the work of congregations and community programs that offer temporary shelter, meals and assistance for individuals and families in need of long-term, affordable, safe housing.

24 Though we have many and sometimes uncommon spiritual gifts and abilities, we pray we are always mindful that they are gifts from God to be used for God's glory and to uplift and complement each other to be bearers of the good news in the world.

25 Pray we take comfort and encouragement in knowing we are not measured by our successes or failures or whether or not we achieve our goals and resolutions, but by our identity as baptized children of God, we are loved, forgiven, renewed and set free to share our faith, spread hope, serve our neighbor and do good in the world.

26 Pray for the ELCA Peace Not Walls Young Adult Initiative and its trips to the Holy Land for young adults of color to explore issues of faith, justice and culture through awareness-raising experiences, relationship building and practicing accompaniment in Palestine and Israel.

27 Give thanks for the word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit that strengthens our faith and understanding of the work, purpose and truth of Jesus Christ — the light of truth, salvation and hope in the world.

28 Pray our long-standing congregations grow, adapt and thrive for God's work in the world; ask that the Holy Spirit inspire, equip and renew their leadership and members for ministry and service in the midst of everchanging social, cultural, economic and technological contexts.

29 Pray for participants, including leaders from the ELCA, gathered in Udon Thani, Thailand, for the Asian Lutheran International Conference, a network supported by the ELCA Association of Asian and Pacific Islanders.

30 Thank God for the special relationship we have with the United Methodist Church, a full communion partner with the ELCA since 2009; pray for their church, its members and leaders, and that together we find strength and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.

31 Our diverse gifts, experiences and perspectives are brought together with purpose in the body of Christ. Pray our differences do not divide us, but instead enrich our lives and faith communities for mutual care and encouragement, doing God's work in the world and sharing the good news of our salvation and unity in Jesus Christ.