

PRAYER VENTURES FOR MARCH 2021

1 *Women's History Month* Give thanks for women throughout history and in our lives who have shared their gifts and leadership in the church and society, raised and cared for us, taught us and nurtured our faith, and fought for justice, equality and healing. Pray for women everywhere who suffer injustice, demeaning stereotypes, violence and poverty, that they will not lose hope but will be delivered from their suffering and persecution to live freely and boldly.

2 Give thanks that we can trust completely God's promises, love and forgiveness, especially when we feel unlovable, unfaithful or uncertain.

3 The Spanish word *amparo* means protection of a living creature from suffering or damage. Pray for the ELCA's Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) strategy, and pray that we will join in serving the most vulnerable children and their families as they seek safety and the opportunity to live in welcoming, humane communities and congregations.

4 Pray for our synod bishops, the presiding bishop and the secretary, who are meeting online for the Conference of Bishops. Ask that the Spirit guide and inspire their discussions, prayerful deliberations and decisions, which impact the ELCA, the work we do together and the Future Church goals and structure being implemented in the churchwide organization.

5 During our Lenten journey, pray that God will help us reflect on aspects of our life and faith that we find difficult to examine and confess, and that we will remember we are always loved and made new through the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ — our Savior, redeemer and source of hope.

6 Ask God to bless and guide our efforts to worship, commune, study Scriptures, socialize and care for each other online, and to find safe ways of gathering in person. Give thanks for the inspiration of the Spirit and the creativity of our siblings in Christ, who help us envision and practice new ways of being church together.

7 Pray that the theology, values, traditions and practices of our church and congregations will be centered in the good news of Jesus Christ and the ways of God, and that God will guide us back to this center when we are distracted or drawn away from our purpose and identity as the body of Christ.

8 *International Women's Day* Pray for women everywhere, for gender equality and equity, for the elimination of gender bias and stereotypes, and for

opportunities for women to develop and use their gifts, skills, insights and passions without barrier or discouragement.

9 Pray that in the sign and symbol of the cross we will see the power of God at work for our salvation through Jesus Christ — a gift of love and mercy for all people and nations.

10 Lift up prayers of joy for, and find ways to reach out to, those celebrating birthdays, marriages, anniversaries and other special occasions without being able to share those moments with others in person.

11 Give praise and glory to our wonderful God, whose ways and commands are revealed to us with clarity and who is merciful and gracious with us when we stray from them.

12 Pray that we will continue to gain ground on vaccinating people against COVID-19, especially those who are most vulnerable and those who provide essential services for the sake of our health, well-being and daily needs, here and globally.

13 We are a publicly engaged church that participates in God's work of pursuing justice and peace and of restoring and reconciling communities. Give thanks for ELCA Advocacy, ELCAvotes, the Lutheran Office for World Community and the teachings of our church, which help us to understand the needs of our neighbors, equip us for social concerns and encourage us to respond as God calls us to serve and act.

14 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." This is welcome news for everyone! Give thanks and praise to God!

15 Give thanks that God has created us to do good in the world and that, even in complex and difficult circumstances, the Spirit is always at work teaching and emboldening us to love and serve our neighbor.

16 Give thanks that God loves us, hears our pleas — spoken and silent — and grants us hope, comfort and relief amid our troubles. Ask that the Spirit will show us how to respond with wisdom, compassion and hope when our neighbors experience difficulties.

17 Pray for our ELCA missionaries serving alongside companion churches and organizations in Africa, including the Rev. Elisabeth Johnson (Cameroon), Anne and Willie Langdji (Madagascar, West Africa and Central Africa), the Rev. Alex Lachapelle (Kenya), the Rev. Brian Palmer and the Rev. Linda Johnson Seyenkulo (Liberia), the Rev. Lancelot Themba and Kwena Mkhabela (Madagascar, West Africa and

Central Africa), and the Rev. Amanda and the Rev. Grant Applehans (Madagascar).

18 Ask God to prepare and equip congregations and communities — physically, emotionally and spiritually — to respond to the severe weather that often comes in spring, and to help one another endure.

19 Give thanks that God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, rescues us from darkness, sin, death and all that separates us from our loving and merciful Creator. Pray that we will take to heart Paul's reminder that "by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

20 Thank God for our special relationship with the Reformed Church in America, a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1997. Pray for the church, its members and its leaders, and pray that together we will find strength and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor, especially in these uncertain and challenging times.

21 We grieve the suffering and death of Jesus, yet we also rejoice in his resurrection and the promise of salvation that comes with it. Pray that we will follow Jesus wherever he leads us — through challenges and joys — and that our lives will glorify God throughout the journey.

22 Pray for the lay leaders of our church, who respond to God's call to serve, accept invitations to share their gifts and skills, and give of themselves to grow the church, serve neighbors in need, nurture the faith of others and equip disciples of all ages.

23 Pray for God's mercy and love every day. Ask that God will instill in us joy and hope, create in us a faithful spirit, teach us truth and wisdom, and stir gratitude in our hearts for all that God has done and continues to do for us and all humanity.

24 Due to the lasting impact of COVID-19 and the uncertainty surrounding vaccine rollout, the ELCA has decided not to send Young Adults in Global Mission volunteers for its 2021-22 program year. Pray for young adult applicants who are eager to serve and share their faith, and for the enduring relationships we have with our companion churches and partner organizations around the world

25 Pray for all those who grieve and suffer the loss of a loved one, friend, co-worker or neighbor, especially those impacted by the death of someone from COVID-19.

26 We see humility, sacrifice and unconditional love in the suffering Jesus endured for our redemption. Pray that the Spirit will make us humble, loving servants

willing to sacrifice convenience, reward and emotional comfort for the sake of sharing the gospel and caring for our neighbors in need.

27 Pray for our ELCA missionaries serving alongside companion churches and organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, including Albert (Gustavo) Driau and the Rev. Rachel Ringlaben (Argentina and Uruguay), Karen Anderson (Chile), Linda Gawthorne (Colombia) and the Rev. Claudia Lopez Ortega (Nicaragua).

28 *Palm Sunday* Jesus endured persecution, inner conflict, betrayal by his closest followers, arrest and an unfair trial leading to his death — all for our salvation and the fulfillment of God's promises and love. Give praise and thanks to the Son of God!

29 Pray that we might reconcile our differences and embrace, teach and act on our values, appreciating the diversity of humanity and our communities, attending to our neighbors in need, practicing mutual respect and care, and pooling our diverse gifts, skills and perspectives to change our society, church and world.

30 Prayerfully reflect on who Jesus is and what we profess to believe about Jesus as Savior, teacher, servant, example, source of truth, man and Son of God.

31 Give thanks to God that "we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" who support and encourage our faith and accompany us in our baptismal journey of service and witness.