

PRAYER VENTURES FOR MARCH 2022

1 *Women's History Month* Celebrate and give thanks for the achievements, influence, leadership, stories, gifts, and faithful witness of women in our church and society throughout history. Pray for women who suffer injustice, demeaning stereotypes, violence, and poverty, that they will cling to hope and be delivered from their suffering and persecution to live freely and boldly as loved and valued children of God.

2 *Ash Wednesday* On this day, let us approach God in prayer with humble and penitent hearts, marking ourselves with the ashes of our messy, fragile human lives yet doing so with the reassuring sign of the cross — the mark of Jesus Christ, our source of forgiveness, salvation, hope and new life.

3 Pray for our synod bishops and presiding bishop as they gather for the Conference of Bishops. Ask God to bless their time together for worship, study, building relationships and deliberating on how we can share the good news of Jesus Christ, serve our neighbor, strive for justice and peace, work alongside our global companions and grow the church.

4 Praise God, who is boundless, awesome, merciful, pure, and attentive, and who loves justice and peace.

5 Remember in prayer refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria who have been stuck at the Belarus-Poland border since last November; pray for the Lutheran Church in Belarus as it assists refugees with translation services, food, clothing, hygiene items and other essentials; and give thanks for the support and assistance we are able to provide through Lutheran Disaster Response.

6 Give thanks that we know Jesus as the son of God, who did not give in to worldly temptations of power or serving his own needs but humbled himself and demonstrated God's sacrificial love for the salvation and healing of humankind.

7 Pray for the work, advocacy, and networks of ELCA Disability Ministry, and that our congregations and communities might, without hesitation, preconception, or limitation, connect with and embrace people living with disabilities, inviting them into full participation in the life and leadership of the church and society.

8 *International Women's Day* Celebrate and give thanks to God for the gifts, influence and leadership of women and girls everywhere. Pray that we will continue to strive for a world free of bias and injustice, providing women and girls with equitable access to education, health care, work, and opportunities to use their gifts in the church, our communities, and our world.

9 Ask the Spirit to help us see beyond our weaknesses and self-doubt and confess with confidence our faith in the saving, life-giving love of Jesus Christ and the encouragement we receive from our siblings in Christ.

10 Give thanks that our church accompanies our global companions, working together to share God's love, respond to neighbors in need and participate in God's mission. **11** Lift up prayers of gratitude that God is our refuge and fortress, the one in whom we can trust in every circumstance, no matter how complicated or threatening.

12 During Lent, as we spend time reflecting on our human weakness and limitations, pray that we do not slip into discouragement or hopelessness but allow the Spirit to lead us toward the hope, forgiveness, and newness we receive as a gift through Jesus Christ, the manifestation of God's enduring and redeeming love for us.

13 Give thanks for the humbling, awe-inspiring example of Jesus Christ, who persisted in his ministry and work of healing the world undeterred by criticism and death threats. Pray that the Spirit will inspire and embolden us to be committed and unwavering as we care for our neighbors in need, sharing our faith and spreading the life-changing good news of Jesus Christ.

14 Pray for the community ministries of congregations across the country that serve neighbors in need through community gardens, meals, food pantries, homeless shelters, counseling, disaster response, neighborhood renewal, day care for children and adults, educational opportunities and connecting volunteers with ecumenical partners and community organizations.

15 Pray that being siblings in Christ will inspire us to encourage and care for one another; equip each other to live our faith and serve our neighbor; strive for justice and peace in the world; trust each other with our joys, sorrows, and questions; and gather together to praise God for claiming and restoring us as loved children with an eternal inheritance.

16 Our church has deep, long-standing relationships with Lutheran churches and partners around the world. Pray that we will grow stronger as a global church, receive one another's gifts and expertise, and support the growth and work of our companions, which includes urban and youth outreach, establishing new congregations, providing theological education, pursuing justice and peace, and training new leaders.

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

18 Ask God to remind us that we accomplish far more of God's work in the world by embracing relationships and partnerships with our siblings in Christ and others.

19 Pray for ELCA Global Mission personnel, Young Adults in Global Mission and seminary interns who accompany and support the work of our companion churches around the world, especially as they adapt to the changing needs, circumstances, and opportunities in their respective countries during the lingering pandemic.

20 *First day of spring* Praise God for the wonders of creation and the signs of hope, life and renewal that emerge with spring.

21 Pray that our lives, relationships, and behaviors might reflect God's patience and undeserved confidence in our capacity to change, grow and love as the Spirit works within us.

22 *World Water Day* God's gift of water — in all its forms — nourishes and sustains life and stirs awe and wonder. Pray that we will faithfully steward the water resources entrusted to our care and enjoyment. Pray that we will work together to conserve water, help those who lack access to clean water, take thoughtful action during droughts and do the work of cleaning up and protecting water that we have polluted or misused.

23 Give thanks for God's faithfulness, actions, teaching and example throughout the ages, which guide us to follow the word and desires of God, enrich our faith, and bear hope and the good news of Jesus Christ to all people.

24 Pray for ELCA missionaries serving alongside church bodies and companion organizations in Central America to train leaders; share the gospel; respond to poverty, hunger, and violence; advocate for laws that respect the human rights and dignity of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers; and teach church leaders to care for victims of trauma.

25 "My mouth praises you with joyful lips when I think of you on my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy. My soul

clings to you" (Psalm 63:5-8). Thank God for being our ready help and refuge in every moment of our life.

26 Across the country, congregations and synods working with resettlement agencies are sponsoring individuals and families who have been evacuated from Afghanistan. Pray that the Spirit will guide our efforts to welcome, support and care for people who are resettling and adjusting to unfamiliar communities, neighbors, and cultures. Give thanks for the challenging and essential work of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran Services in America and the ELCA's AMMPARO strategy (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities).

27 Recall recent experiences — personal or witnessed — when God's grace far exceeded your expectations and comprehension. Lift up prayers of acknowledgment and gratitude to God.

28 Ask God to build up our resiliency, optimism, hope and confidence in God's presence when we feel anxious, overwhelmed, or powerless in today's world.

29 Rejoice and give thanks to God for surrounding us with steadfast love and forgiveness that cannot be taken away or diminished by anyone or anything.

30 Remember in prayer poets who free us to see and contemplate in new ways the beauty and complexity of creation, diverse human experiences, challenging social conditions and our faith.

31 Pray for the leaders from across our church who serve on the ELCA Church Council. Ask the Spirit to guide them as they support, review, advise and enable God's work in the world with thoughtfulness, integrity, respect, and partnerships sharing a common vision.