

[Prayer Ventures for March 2018]

[Intro text]

1 Pray for the work, advocacy and networks of ELCA Disability Ministry and that our congregations and ministries work together to invite, embrace and include people living with disabilities in the life of the church – without hesitation or preconceptions.

2 Remember in prayer our 65 synod bishops, ELCA presiding bishop and secretary gathered for the Conference of Bishops in Chicago. Give thanks for their service to the church and pray their times of worship, study, sharing and business strengthen their faith and leadership and guide the mission of our church.

3 Give thanks for music in our lives and worship, a gift that lifts our spirits, draws people together, gives expression to our emotions and thoughts, helps us reflect on our faith and Scripture, and expresses our praise and thanksgiving to God.

4 The church is not immune from the temptations of commercialization, profit and consumption. Pray we keep Jesus Christ at the center of all we do, strive to be and witness to; ask God to help us be mindful of the teachings of Jesus commending generosity, simplicity and attentiveness to the needs and circumstances of our neighbor and the world.

5 Remember in prayer communities nervously anticipating potential spring storms and severe weather. Pray their preparations, if needed, help preserve life and property, and give thanks for Lutheran Disaster Response, first responders, volunteers and members of the military who stand ready to assist.

6 Pray our personal reflections during Lent, as discomfoting and disheartening as they may be, do not lose sight of the promise that we are not worthless, lost or alone – God knows us, loves us, draws us close and graciously claims us.

7 In a time when we bicker over power, superiority and influence, give thanks that through the humility, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus we experience a different understanding and use of power and authority – God’s unrivaled power and sacrificial love for the sake of the world, especially our neighbors who are oppressed, hungry, poor, ignored, suffering and long for hope.

8 Pray for farmers, ranchers and agricultural workers preparing for planting crops, managing animals and livestock, and the hard work that comes with every spring, that the world may be fed and nourished through their bountiful harvests and endeavors.

9 Give thanks for our ELCA seminaries and lay schools for ministry. Ask God to bless their work and efforts in identifying, inviting, preparing, renewing and encouraging women and men for ministry in diverse contexts and communities.

10 Remember in prayer the service and witness of the 10 young adults serving in the Young Adults in Global Mission program in Madagascar; the Rev. Kirsten Laderach, YAGM country coordinator; and the Rev. Lancelot Themba and Kwena Mkhabela, regional representatives for Madagascar, West and Central Africa.

11 We ask God to help us be thoughtful and articulate in our witness and interactions with others, that we are comfortable in using our own words and imagery to respond to questions about our faith, describe God's love and activity in the world, and talk about Jesus.

12 We remember in prayer Lutheran Men in Mission and Women of the ELCA, ministries that strengthen the faith of Lutheran men and women of all ages, encourage bold lives of faith and service, cultivate leaders, and attend to needs of men and women.

13 Give thanks for the rich partnership and relationship we have with the Presbyterian Church (USA), a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1997. Pray for their church and ask God to further our respect for one another and work together sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.

14 "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever." In every danger, illness, uncertainty and difficult circumstance, turn to God in prayer asking for God's loving attention, mercy, direction and healing.

15 Pray the Spirit will help us focus on the cross throughout Lent, seeing with greater clarity and richness its symbolism and meaning for the world as a daily reminder of the gift we have in Jesus Christ, a gift that gives newness, hope, purpose and direction for daily life.

16 By grace we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ – a wonderful, undeserved gift from God. Praise God!

17 Pray the leaders of our nations are moved to heal old and new rifts, work together for justice and peace, and share resources for the well-being and prosperity of all people.

18 In baptism our old, flawed self is washed away – and dies – revealing a new life and identity we have together in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pray we each remember our baptism and the promise of God's daily, enduring gift of forgiveness and love.

19 Make Psalm 51 a frequent prayer during Lent: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit."

20 Pray for our continuing generosity in response to *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*; give thanks for its impact, including the support of 11 Global Ministry Projects helping strengthen, support and empower our companion churches in building new congregations, outreach to youth, training pastors and evangelists, and much more.

21 The ELCA and The Episcopal Church are committed to prayer, fasting and advocacy addressing cuts to public programs that are vital to hungry people who are living in poverty. Remember to pray for these concerns, our leaders and people in need on the 21st of each month through December 2018.

22 We remember in our prayers people who travel frequently for work, spending time away from their home, family, social networks and congregation. Pray they remain connected and can find opportunities for worship and renewal when away from home.

23 God's word and ways are written on our hearts, part of our very being and existence as baptized children of God. Ask God to help us be attentive in daily life to the spirit within us that gives our lives purpose, inspires us to be just and merciful, and helps us make decisions that please God and consider the needs of our neighbor.

24 Remembering the life, witness and advocacy of Óscar Romero (1917-1980), bishop of El Salvador, we recognize and give thanks for our brothers and sisters in Christ who work against oppression, defend the rights of the poor and risk their lives for peace in Central America and elsewhere in the world.

25 *Palm Sunday* Drawn into the passion story in the Gospels, we pray the vulnerability, sacrifice and love of Jesus Christ stirs our faith and instructs and emboldens us as followers, servants, leaders, citizens and bearers of the good news.

26 Ask God to strengthen us as servants who are given new life and freedom in Christ and are called and endowed with the Spirit to help bring peace, justice, hope and light to the world.

27 Pray our Holy Week and Easter traditions, worship and family activities are grounded in God's word and the gospel and not distracted or diminished by the commercialization or popularization of this time of anticipation, reflection and celebration of Jesus Christ – our salvation and hope.

28 Whenever we gather as the people of God to celebrate Holy Communion, we come together to receive God's grace and to be nourished and sustained for sharing our faith, serving our neighbor and growing the church. Give thanks and praise to God for the presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of Holy Communion through the power of the Holy Spirit.

29 *Maundy Thursday* Pray we, as modern-day disciples, are not afraid to draw close to one another and our neighbor to better understand and serve each other with humility, empathy, compassion and courage.

30 *Good Friday* At the foot of the cross and remembering the suffering and death of Jesus on our behalf, we reaffirm that, although we are not strangers to sin, darkness and death, we also live in the reality of God's mercy, grace and new life given to us through the risen Jesus. With both humility and joy, raise up prayers of thanks and praise to God.

31 *Vigil of Easter* In the midst of the joy and thankfulness bound up in the good news of Easter and Jesus' resurrection, we confess we sometimes have questions and skepticisms we keep to ourselves. Ask God to create in us hearts and minds receptive to the wonderful gift and mystery of our salvation, place people in our lives who encourage our faith, and help us be alert to signs of God's redemptive presence and work in the world.