

[Prayer Ventures for March 2020]

**1** *First Sunday in Lent* During the 40 days of Lent we recall how Jesus, the Son of God, withstood temptations even in a weakened state. Pray that we will find confidence and courage through faith in Jesus and will draw on the strength of God to endure the temptations and distractions of daily life.

**2** Give thanks for the contributions and impact of women of all ages and abilities who shape our society and communities, share their faith and wisdom, serve our neighbors in need and respond to God's call to serve as lay and rostered leaders in our congregations and church.

**3** Give thanks for the witness and work of the Rev. Lancelot Themba Mkhabela and Kwena Mkhabela, regional representatives for Madagascar, West Africa and Central Africa; the Rev. Kirsten Laderach, YAGM country coordinator for Madagascar; and the seven volunteers serving alongside our companions in that country as part of the Young Adults in Global Mission program.

**4** Be glad and shout for joy! Trust in God's love and mercy, which strengthen and preserve us in our every need and circumstance.

**5** Pray that during Lent we will carve out time in our busy lives to pause and reflect on our faith, our baptismal journeys and the life and suffering of Christ, who sacrificed himself for us that we might enjoy a new life, reconciled to God and full of love, mercy, hope and a spirit of service.

**6** Give thanks for the gift of grace we have in Jesus Christ, which sets us free to live our faith with boldness and to serve our neighbor.

**7** Pray for peace, reconciliation and healing in the world wherever there is conflict or war, especially in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and parts of Africa. Ask that the Spirit of God will guide and inspire political leaders, diplomats and mediators, soldiers and peacekeeping forces to be persistent and unified in seeking peaceful, just and compassionate solutions and treaties.

**8** Talk with God. Ask your questions even though some feel deep and perplexing, and trust that God will listen and respond as a loving, concerned parent.

**9** 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 diverse ministries and its members and leaders; and pray that together we will find mutual support, new partnerships and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.

**10** Harriet Tubman (1822-1913) and Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) were born into slavery but emboldened by their convictions of justice, equality, faith and concern for others to fight against slavery and to advocate for women's rights. Ask God to grant us a similar boldness to live our faith and serve our neighbors who suffer injustice, poverty, oppression and hunger.

**11** Throughout Lent, remember and give thanks that God is our ready source of help, protection, strength and life.

**12** Ask for God’s wisdom and creativity in developing our congregations as communities of faith where people discover a sense of belonging, feel grounded in the word of God and the sacraments, find opportunities for faith-centered learning and service, and know they are connected to the greater body of Christ.

**13** Praise God for the undeserved and unearned gifts of mercy and grace given to us and our ancestors of faith. Pray that the Spirit will fill us with the words, thoughts and images needed to tell others about God’s promises and activity throughout history and especially today.

**14** Lift up prayers of concern and support for people and communities affected by the widespread destruction caused by wildfires in Australia. Pray for the thousands of people displaced from their homes, for volunteer firefighters and relief workers, for the healing of nature and for the response efforts of the Lutheran Church of Australia, local congregations and Lutheran Disaster Response.

**15** Pray that we will be inspired by the story of the Samaritan woman talking with Jesus at the well and will share with others — without bias or judgment — the good news of Jesus Christ, Savior of the world.

**16** Give thanks for the service and witness of the Rev. Zachary Courter and Rev. Rachel Eskesen, YAGM country coordinators for Hungary, and the eight volunteers serving alongside our companions in Hungary and Serbia as part of the Young Adults in Global Mission program.

**17** As Moses and the Israelites called out in the wilderness for the reassurance of God’s presence and attention, we, too, long for reminders and signs of God’s activity, love and mercy in our daily lives. Pray that the Spirit will open our hearts and minds to God’s presence and that we will be eager partners in God’s work in the world — wherever it leads us.

**18** Pray for people who are grieving the loss of a loved one or a member of their community. Ask God to help us be present with them through our empathy, care, support and faith; ask the Holy Spirit to help us kindle comfort, hope and peace when the fragility and brevity of life feel overwhelming.

**19** Give thanks for the ELCA Lay Schools for Ministry network and the Select Learning program, partner ministries that equip us for our baptismal vocations and create opportunities for lifelong learning, sharing multigenerational stories of faith and nurturing biblical and theological literacy.

**20** God is good and great and the creator of all that exists. Sing praises to the Lord and make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

**21** Praise God that we will be changed inside and out by God’s love “poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” Pray that the love and reconciliation we have received from God

through Jesus Christ will transform us to be passionate witnesses, disciples and bearers of the gospel for all who long for good news and hope.

**22** Give thanks that God equips us and uses our unique abilities and gifts to care for the physical and spiritual needs of our neighbor. Ask God to grant us courage, patience and confidence in the gospel when we experience resistance, anger or condemnation in response to our advocacy and acts of compassion and justice.

**23** Pray that our church's understanding of the theology and practice of accompaniment will deepen as we walk together with Lutheran, ecumenical and interfaith sisters and brothers around the world.

**24** *Óscar Arnulfo Romero (1917-1980), bishop of El Salvador* Bishop Romero was assassinated for his courageous, gospel-driven work and his advocacy for human dignity, social justice and the rights of the poor and marginalized. Give thanks for his witness and impact and for those in the church and society who continue to fight for justice and the interests of people in Central America.

**25** In Jesus Christ we have a loving shepherd and a guiding light who walks with us in the dark moments and places of our lives. Give praise and thanks to God!

**26** Remember in prayer congregations and communities that are preparing for spring and summer storms and living with the uncertainty of what this year will bring. Pray that God will protect them, equip them to respond and calm their anxiety.

**27** Praise God for spring and its abundant signs of new life, which prompt us to remember the good things God has given us to tend, share and use.

**28** Pray that, as "children of light," we will grow in our understanding of what pleases God — lives full of light and shining with everything that is good, right and true.

**29** Ask God to help us trust that our actions, words, witness, relationships and service can and will accomplish wonderful and sometimes miraculous things in the world. Pray that, in all we do, we will act with humility so that our lives point not to our own abilities and accomplishments but to the power and love of God.

**30** Ask God's forgiveness for the times when, turning our attention to the breaking news of the day, we forget the masses of refugees in the world. Pray that, through our prayers, generosity, compassion and advocacy, we will be inseparably bound to those refugees who, displaced from their homes and communities, yearn to be welcome, respected, safe and settled.

**31** Remember in prayer those congregations, synods, leaders and churchwide staff preparing for synod assemblies this year. Pray that the Spirit will guide and inspire their plans for the sake of doing God's work in the world, spreading the good news of Christ and growing the church.