

[Prayer Ventures for September 2020]

**1** Give thanks and take comfort in knowing that God is trustworthy and unwavering in remembering and accompanying us every moment of our lives — in our joy, suffering and complicated situations.

**2** September often marks a time of beginning, with students starting school, congregations launching programs and creation transitioning into a new season. But due to the pandemic, this year is different, presenting challenges we have not faced before. Pray that the Spirit will grant us wisdom, creativity and patience as we seek new ways of being church together, attend to the needs of children and youth, care for one another and fight the spread of COVID-19.

**3** There is no better time than right now for us to hold on to what is good, treat one another with respect, extend hospitality to strangers and those different from ourselves, seek peace, and care for our neighbors, including our enemies. Pray for strength, empathy, compassion and boldness in our faith and daily life as we follow Jesus.

**4** In the name of the God who creates every human being out of love, and remembering the ELCA social teaching that “the God who justifies expects all people to do justice,” pray that more Christians will enter into public conversation about and take action to safeguard the dignity due to all children of God.

**5** Pray that, as Election Day grows closer, our conversations, deliberations and decisions will be guided by our faith, the teachings of Jesus, and our concern for justice, reconciliation, unity and the well-being of all people and communities.

**6** Conflict and hurtful actions are part of our human nature and experience — in the church, in society and in the world. Ask God to grant us humility, concern for one another and, when there is conflict, the courage to foreswear vengeance, engage each other and work toward truth, understanding, reconciliation and unity.

**7** Pray for farmers, ranchers and agricultural workers as they struggle through the pandemic. Ask God to bless every aspect of their work, from planning and planting to tending crops and animals to harvesting and distributing their bounty, which feeds the world.

**8** Pray that the Spirit might help us understand and follow the ways and commandments of God for the well-being of humanity, and that our life together might shine with justice, compassion, unity, care for those who suffer and a vibrant faith in Jesus Christ.

**9** Remember in prayer our siblings in Christ and companions in Latin America and the Caribbean region. Pray that we will support each other — through prayer, generosity and sharing of resources — to spread the gospel, train and support leaders, respond to the needs of communities, work for justice and grow the church.

**10** During this anniversary year, marking a half century of Lutheran women being ordained in the United States, give thanks for the gifts and service that women pastors have brought to our

church and our world; lament that women have been barred from serving and have been bullied, dismissed and excluded; ask forgiveness; and resolve that we will welcome, encourage and respect women of all ages and backgrounds as they respond to God's call to ministry and service.

**11** Remember in prayer the leaders, voting members and others gathering online for the Northeastern Ohio Synod Assembly, that the Spirit will strengthen, guide and encourage them in choosing leaders, proclaiming the gospel, growing the church, serving our neighbor and doing God's work in an ever-changing world.

**12** Pray that, with the assurance of God's forgiveness and our salvation, we will experience the freedom to love and value our neighbor, living with purpose and a sense of each day's importance.

**13** *"God's work. Our hands."* Sunday Pray that our congregations, together with neighboring congregations, ecumenical and interreligious partners, community organizations and Lutheran agencies, will respond daily to the endless opportunities for serving our neighbor and addressing critical social needs, loving our neighbors and making our communities stronger, healthier and more hopeful.

**14** Pray for our pastors, our youth and family ministers, our congregational leaders and our synod staff as they learn new things amid difficult times. Give thanks for the work of the Spirit in equipping leaders with new skills, new perspectives and renewed creativity for sharing the gospel, building up the church and doing God's work in the world.

**15** *National Hispanic Heritage Month* Give thanks to God for the gifts, history, contributions and rich cultural diversity of our Latino brothers and sisters, and pray for the growth and vitality of the 147 ELCA Latino ministries and the Latino Association (Asociación Ministerios Latinos ELCA) as they share the good news of Jesus Christ, encourage our unity in him and promote Christian values that unite Latinos of the ELCA as a "community of communities."

**16** As children of God, give thanks and bless the Lord for being "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

**17** Give thanks for the good we do together through ELCA World Hunger and our partners, responding to the critical needs of people everywhere. Pray that our work will bring hope and relief to communities in need and will foster sustainable solutions that get at the root causes of hunger and poverty.

**18** When forgiving someone is difficult, pray for the patience and mercy toward others that Jesus describes to Peter — the same inexhaustible patience and mercy God has demonstrated toward us.

**19** Reflect on members of your congregation and community and pray for specific people who are grieving, celebrating or trying to sort out their lives right now, or who simply could use our thanks and gratitude.

**20** Pray that our acts of generosity will be driven by our faith, without partiality, restraint, the promise of reward or recognition, or the expectation of earning God’s favor.

**21** Thank God for our special relationship with the Moravian Church in America, a full communion partner with the ELCA since 1999. 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.

**22** Pray that reflecting on the ways and word of God will help us understand how God’s amazing grace and forgiveness are directed toward all humanity, including people we judge to be undeserving or beyond saving. Remember the undeserved gifts of love, forgiveness, new life and salvation we have received through Jesus Christ, and give thanks and praise to God.

**23** Ask the Spirit to help and inspire us as we deliver messages of hope, joy, truth, unity, positive change and God’s kindness in the world.

**24** Pray for our siblings in Christ in Asia and the Pacific region, that we might support each other, share our resources and spread the gospel across diverse cultures and languages, growing the church by working for justice, training and supporting leaders, and responding to the needs of communities.

**25** Remember in prayer the leaders, voting members and others gathering online for the Saint Paul Area Synod Assembly, that the Spirit will strengthen, guide and encourage them in choosing leaders, proclaiming the gospel, growing the church, serving our neighbor and doing God’s work in an ever-changing world.

**26** “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.” Give thanks to God and tell everyone about God’s grace, mercy and wonderful works for the sake of the world — works we are called to join in together as children of God.

**27** Pray for the Spirit to help us recognize, trust and appreciate God’s authority and power over all creation, the universe and our everyday lives.

**28** Pray for our seminaries, colleges, universities and campus ministries as they work to create new approaches to education, fostering community among students and faculty when they cannot be physically present. Pray that we will be generous in supporting ELCA educational institutions and student ministries that are vital to our church and society.

**29** *Michael and All Angels* There is so much we do not fully comprehend about heaven, earth and the means — including angels and divine beings — by which God has interacted with us throughout human history. Pray that our faith and the inspiration of the Spirit will open our minds, hearts and imaginations to the infinite, mysterious and awesome ways that God is present and at work in the world.

**30** Pray for individuals and families trying to immigrate to our nation or seeking asylum and safety as they face changing laws, complicated procedures and unwelcoming situations and

people. Pray that the love of God dwelling within us will move us to step forward and practice hospitality, compassion, understanding and empathy as bold advocates who accompany immigrants and refugees during their difficult and confusing experiences.