

[Prayer Ventures for October 2020]

1 Give thanks for the gifts, witness, leadership and faith of our LGBTQIA+ siblings in Christ. Pray that we will continue to grow as a church centered in the gospel and committed to the inclusion of all people. Pray that we will recognize and challenge the dynamics of bias, fear, power and privilege that discourage participation and equity in this church and in society.

2 Ezekiel confronted the Israelites for their resistance to change and to God's ways of fairness. He rejected their arguments that change was too difficult, that they were acting only as they were raised and that he needed to live in the real world. Pray that we will repent, embrace God's peace and justice, and heed God's command, through Ezekiel, to "get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!"

3 *Francis of Assisi, renewer of the church (1181-1226)* Pray that we will greet each day with a sense of awe, gratitude and respect for creation, for the organisms and creatures that inhabit the earth and for humanity in all its diversity and complexity — the handiwork of God.

4 The Lutheran World Federation's Season of Creation 2020 invites us, through prayer and activism, to give thanks for creation and renew our human vocation for its care. Join Lutherans around the world in the online meeting and closing prayer today.

5 Persist in praying for all affected by Hurricane Laura, by wildfires in the western United States and by flooding and severe weather. Pray that we will generously assist relief and reconstruction efforts and support the work of Lutheran Disaster Response.

6 Give thanks and praise to God that our righteousness and salvation come not through our own efforts but through faith in Jesus Christ.

7 Ask forgiveness for our involvement — consciously or unconsciously — in perpetuating the racism, laws and structures that benefit the majority through inequality and oppression. Pray for the Spirit to stir our humility, wisdom and persistence as we reflect on our lives and society and strive for racial justice, reform, reconciliation and unity as children of God.

8 Ask God to strengthen our faith and deepen our roots in the good news of Jesus Christ. Pray that we will draw on God's strength through our faith, especially when we grow weary or doubtful in the face of the world's challenges, criticism and ridicule.

9 Pray that we will actively engage with our communities and neighbors, developing the resilience and hope needed to absorb, endure and recover from the spiritual, medical, social and economic impacts of natural and human-caused disasters.

10 Remember in prayer those who have lost jobs or are furloughed from work, that they will have the resources and support to meet their daily needs as they seek employment. Pray that our congregations will be welcoming, supportive and ready to help, concerned for their dignity and their spiritual, physical and emotional needs.

11 Give thanks and praise to God for welcoming us into the kingdom of God, an undeserved gift to be shared with the world. Pray that we will never take the joy and blessings of this gift for granted or hide it from our neighbor.

12 The Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC), a joint ministry of the ELCA and the Lutheran World Federation, represents Lutherans at the United Nations. Give thanks for the LOWC's work in monitoring issues of concern to the church, sharing our perspectives and speaking for peace, justice, human rights, respect for international law, and better standards of living for all people.

13 Pray that we, too, will hear Paul's assurance to the Philippians in difficult times, that "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Ask that the Spirit fill our lives with peace, love and mercy that will shine brightly in the world.

14 Pray for our companion-synod relationships throughout the world, especially during this time of physical separation, that we will continue to nurture and strengthen one another for life and ministry through prayer, study, communication, and sharing resources for doing God's work in the world together.

15 Throughout our baptismal journey, Psalm 23 encourages, calms and nourishes us with the reassurance that we are never without God's love, attention and guidance. Give thanks to God and pray that we will reflect God's loving presence and care in all that we do and say.

16 Pray for the leaders, voting members and others gathered, in person and online, for the Northeastern Pennsylvania 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.

17 Pray for active-duty military and their families, especially in times of deployment, transition and separation, that their faith will comfort and strengthen them and that they will have confidence knowing they are always connected with the love, support and concern of their home community of faith.

18 Remember in prayer newly elected synod bishops. Ask the Spirit to give them the wisdom, vision and faith to meet the challenges of their ministries, helping congregations and special ministries spread the gospel, serve our neighbors in need and grow the church.

19 Ask God to help us provide comfort, support and hope to our neighbors who feel helpless and overwhelmed amid the pandemic, natural disasters, economic struggles and social unrest.

20 Pray that we will experience God's love, encouragement and unity in the body of Christ through worship and the sacraments — in person, online or however we gather.

21 Give thanks to God for one another and pray for our siblings in Christ, that we will be steadfast in our faith, proclaim the gospel in our daily lives and serve as examples of God's mercy and love in the world.

22 Thank God for our special relationship with the United Methodist Church, a full communion partner with the ELCA since 2009. Pray for the church, its diverse ministries and its members and leaders, that together we will find mutual support, new partnerships and new resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.

23 "Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it," for God is great, powerful and wondrous. Sing praise to God!

24 Pray for students, teachers, school staff and parents as they continue to adapt to the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on school environments and distanced learning.

25 *Reformation Sunday* Praise God for the gift of grace that sets us free to change and be changed, to form and reform as the body of Christ for the sake of humanity, serving our neighbor and doing God's work in the world.

26 Pray for the Spirit to deepen our understanding of what being a Lutheran Christian means, through prayer, Scripture, reflecting on our creeds and teachings, being renewed and united through the sacraments, and opening ourselves to God's voice and guidance in an ever-changing society and world.

27 Give thanks that, though we have sinned and fallen short of God's expectations, God has set things right with us and restored our relationship through the gift of grace we have in Jesus Christ. Pray that throughout our baptismal journeys we will spread the hope and good news of God's merciful love for humankind.

28 The ELCA Fund for Leaders scholarship program supports students of promise attending ELCA seminaries. Pray that we will generously support this program to make seminary more affordable, to enable more future ministers to study and to help them graduate with less debt as they respond to God's call to serve as the church needs and the Spirit leads.

29 "God is our refuge and strength." Give thanks and praise to God and reflect on how God sustains you, gives you courage, influences your decisions and actions, and equips you for living as a follower of Christ in the world.

30 Pray for the Spirit to guide and inspire our discernment and decisions in the upcoming presidential election, and to help us prioritize the needs of our neighbors, the well-being of communities in turmoil and the task of healing the deep divisions in our society.

31 *Reformation Day* Give thanks and praise to God for the ministry, teachings and impact of Martin Luther and other church reformers, who took great risks to refocus our faith, institutions and practices on the word of God and the good news of Jesus Christ. Pray that we will continue

to be a reforming church, mindful of the Spirit's guidance as we discern how to follow Christ — now and in the future.