

Prayer Ventures for December 2024

1 *First Sunday of Advent* Give thanks for God’s boundless love and mercy, made tangible and sure through the birth of Jesus Christ, and for the free gift of salvation and hope that sets us free and leads us to eternal life in the kingdom of heaven.

2 *World AIDS Day (Dec. 1)* If left untreated, HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) can cause AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). In 2023, 39.9 million people were living with HIV and 630,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses. Pray for individuals, families and communities impacted by HIV and AIDS, and for health care workers, researchers, clinics and faith communities working to treat, prevent and eradicate HIV and increase awareness of HIV and AIDS.

3 *International Day of Persons with Disabilities* Pray for our neighbors and siblings in Christ who live with disabilities, that they will be welcomed, respected, valued and fully included in every aspect of the church and society. Give thanks for the wide-ranging work of ELCA Disability Ministries and the 16 social service organizations that make up the Lutheran Services in America Disability Network.

4 “Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” (Colossians 3:14-15). Pray for the Spirit to shape our lives, that our words and actions might embody the gospel, the heart of our faith.

5 Pray for those in Florida and the Gulf Coast who are grieving losses and recovering from hurricanes. Pray for assistance, resources and support to help them recover and rebuild, and thank God that our donations to Lutheran Disaster Response enable our church to respond to crises and care for those enduring trauma and devastation.

6 Give thanks for the ELCA Good Gifts catalogue, which helps us understand the needs and priorities of our neighbors and provides opportunities for us to respond with compassion and generosity in ways that promise great, immediate and long-term impact.

7 “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul” (Psalm 25:1). Lift up everything to God — your joys, concerns, questions, lamentations, confessions and praise.

8 Thank God for the example of John the Baptist, who endeavored to spread the life-giving news of Jesus Christ and to encourage faith in a loving, forgiving God.

9 Pray that our faith and anticipation will be stirred by Advent candles, songs, art and Scripture that draw our attention to God’s abundant love for humanity and amazing gift of Jesus Christ.

10 Give thanks for siblings in Christ who accompany us on our baptismal journeys and encourage our faith and understanding of God’s ways. Pray that we will not hesitate to share the gospel or to show love, concern or mercy for others, as God does for us.

11 “I wonder as I wander, out under the sky, how Jesus the Savior did come for to die for poor ordinary people like you and like I” (*With One Voice* 642). Praise God that our salvation does not depend upon our actions, the strength of our faith or our perfect understanding of what God has accomplished for us through Jesus Christ.

12 December is a time of anticipation and joyful celebration, expressed through shared meals, gatherings of friends and family, community events and special opportunities for worship. Promise to invite and welcome others, especially those in our communities who feel alone, ignored or forgotten.

13 Give praise and thanks to God for blessing us with Jesus Christ, our true Savior, Messiah, teacher, light and hope.

14 Pray that, day after day, we will grow more generous in responding to our neighbors in need, strengthening our communities, supporting our global companions and expanding the ministries and outreach of our congregations.

15 Promise to be a faithful, generous and merciful follower of Jesus Christ, proclaiming the gospel in word and deed and doing God’s work in the world.

16 *Las Posadas* Las Posadas (“the Inns”) is a Mexican Christmas tradition in which worshipers reenact the experience of Mary and Joseph as they searched for a place where Mary could give birth. Remembering Mary and Joseph’s difficult journey, promise to embody hospitality, compassion, generosity and justice in responding to modern-day homelessness, poverty and immigration.

17 Pray for students returning home from colleges, universities and seminaries, that they will experience joy and renewal as they reconnect with family, friends and faith communities.

18 *International Migrants Day* Remember our neighbors and siblings in Christ who seek refuge and welcoming places to rebuild their lives. Pray for those held in refugee camps and waiting at border crossings, that they will be treated with love and respect and supported in their difficult journeys. Give thanks for the work of our church in partnership with Global Refuge (formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service).

19 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). To worry is normal, especially in these times. Know that you are not alone and that God listens to our prayers, caring for us through faith communities and our siblings in Christ.

20 *Katharina von Bora Luther (1499-1552)* Give thanks for Katharina Luther, Martin Luther’s source of inspiration and trusted partner in life. Let us thank God for partners and spouses who accompany us in our baptismal journeys and help us to do God’s work in the world.

21 *Winter solstice* Praise God for the mysteries of creation, the cycles of life and the reflection they inspire.

22 Pray that — like Elizabeth awaiting the birth of John, and Mary awaiting the birth of Jesus — we will trust God and move forward through our uncertainties.

23 Remember those who serve our communities during the holidays, including church staff, first responders, retail and restaurant workers, health care providers, members of the military and those who maintain the infrastructure of our communities.

24 *Christmas Eve* “That there were shepherds, means that no one is to hear the Gospel for himself alone, but [everyone] is to tell it to others who are not acquainted with it. For he who believes for himself has enough and should endeavor to bring others to such faith and knowledge” (Martin Luther, “Sermon for Christmas Day; Luke 2:1-14”). Promise to share the story of your baptismal journey with confidence and joy, so that others might find comfort in the good news of Jesus Christ.

25 *Christmas Day* God’s glorious light breaks through sin, death and despair to illuminate the gifts we receive through the birth of Jesus Christ — love, mercy, hope and new life. Praise God!

26 Kwanzaa begins this week. Give thanks to God for our siblings of African descent, and for the richness of their traditions, cultures, values, stories, faith and leadership.

27 Pray for those living with political conflict and instability, that they will grow in hope and resilience and experience lasting peace, justice and healing.

28 Give thanks for the enduring impacts of Christmas and the good news of Jesus Christ, letting them shape your life and guide you throughout the year.

29 “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (Colossians 3:12-13). Promise to bear witness to God’s love for all people, a love unconfined and undiminished by national borders, political affiliations, human laws or social problems.

30 Christ’s church is diverse and global, manifested in different Christian faiths and traditions. Pray for ELCA congregations and ministries, ecumenical partners, global companions and neighboring faith communities that join us in sharing the gospel and doing God’s work in the world.

31 *New Year’s Eve* Our faith, hope and joy in Christ do not ebb and flow with the seasons, the holidays or our church calendar. They are an ever-present reality, nurtured and strengthened by the Spirit’s presence in our daily lives. Give thanks and praise to God!