

24 Christmas Eve On this day each year, we remember with hope, faith and anticipation the promises God has made and fulfilled through the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ, God's real and present gift of love and forgiveness for the world.

25 Christmas Day Alleluia! We give thanks and praise to God for the good news of great joy given to all people in the birth of Jesus Christ, the son of God—our light and salvation.

26 Kwanzaa begins During this week of Kwanza, we give thanks to God for the richness and significance of traditions, cultures, languages, stories and leadership among people of African descent.

27 We humbly give thanks to God for our baptism through which we are joined with the body of Christ—all believers—and cleansed of our old self and made new, not because we did anything to deserve it, but because of God's abundant mercy.

28 We remember in our prayers the communities in Italy that continue to be affected by earthquakes and pray for their recovery, the ongoing efforts of disaster response workers and that all may know the love and hope of God's presence.

29 We ask the Spirit to inspire and guide us as we seek to make our congregations places of celebration, caring, worship, outreach and that equip us to serve our neighbor and the world.

30 Christmas presents have been opened and set aside, decorations are being put away and Christmas trees tossed to the curb, but we pray the celebration and joy of the gift of Jesus Christ continues throughout the year, for life.

31 We ask God to help us not squander or forget the forgiveness, new life and freedom we have in Jesus Christ and that we can face without fear the changes and newness that may come with the approaching new year.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

PRAYER VENTURES

DECEMBER 2016

These petitions are offered as guides to prayer for the global, social and outreach ministries of the ELCA. Thank you for your continued prayers for the life and mission of this church.

1 World AIDS Day We pray that our work with global partners, companion churches and community agencies will further develop and expand ministries of HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and advocacy where they are needed most and bring hope and wellness to people who live with HIV and AIDS.

2 We look forward to Jesus' return, though we know not when, and pray that we not lose sight of the work and ministry God is calling each of us to do here and now in the world before that day of salvation and judgment arrives.

3 International Day of Persons with Disabilities We remember in our prayers people living with disabilities and pray our church, communities and social structures grow in commitment to affirming the gifts and abilities of all people and creating a more inclusive, equitable and just world for people living with disabilities.

4 John the Baptist called people to repentance and a new life—a new beginning—in Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God for the new life and hope we have in Jesus Christ and pray that our lives always reflect and share the light of Christ in the world.

5 As we shop for Christmas gifts for family, friends and coworkers, we ask God to give us pause and remind us of the benefits, hope and joy that can result from sharing our financial gifts and resources with neighbors in need—in our community and globally.

6 We ask God to grant our newly elected president and leaders wisdom, compassion for all people, commitment to justice and strength for carrying out their responsibilities as public servants.

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7 Where there is conflict in the world, we pray for peace and healing; for soldiers and veterans who are currently serving or have served our country in the interest of peace and freedom, we give thanks and ask for God's protection. And reflecting on times of war and peace throughout history, we ask God to instill in us lessons of reconciliation, justice, forgiveness, diplomacy and concern for the well-being of all people.

8 We remember in our prayers our relationships with Lutheran churches around the world and the Global Ministry Projects that support our companions in expanding their ministries, training pastors and evangelists, reaching youth, strengthening their community presence and spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.

9 We continue to pray for the communities and people who have suffered great losses and tragedy from recent hurricanes and flooding in the southeastern U.S. coastal areas and Caribbean region.

10 Though we sometimes have doubts and wonder about who Jesus is and what he has done for us as the promised Messiah, we pray the Spirit will continue to stir and strengthen our faith and reveal to us God's word and truth.

11 As people of faith in Jesus Christ, we ask God to make us agents of hope, forgiveness, love and reconciliation that by our witness and actions we might help bridge and heal the deep divisions and discontent that exist in our society today.

12 We remember in our prayers ELCA missionaries, Young Adults in Global Mission and all servants of Christ separated from their home communities, friends or families during this time of year. We give thanks to God for their faithful service and the sacrifices they make for the sake of sharing the gospel and caring for God's people throughout the world.

13 *Lucy, martyr (died 304)* Lucy, a young Christian woman in Sicily, devoted her life to God and to serving the poor. We pray that we too are so devoted in our faith and service and fear no persecution, criticism, adversity or even death.

14 We remember in our prayers the thousands of displaced refugees living in temporary camps this winter in the Middle East and pray their daily needs are met, they not lose hope and will someday return home or settle into new communities that are safe, nurture trust and care among neighbors and where all can prosper—in every way.

15 Being engulfed by commercialism and pop culture traditions attached to the Christmas season, we ask God to remind us of and keep us centered in the simple, true essence of Christmas—the birth of Jesus Christ and God's gift of love for all people.

16 We remember in our prayers that our hope and help is found in God, who made heaven and earth and everything within them.

17 People working during the holidays sacrifice much to serve our needs and our communities. We pray they find employment that pays fair wages to support themselves and their families, find times for rest and renewal, and experience the joy we have in Jesus Christ.

18 We pray that we remain faithful, committed and receptive to God even in the face of the complexities and mysteries of life, just as Joseph and the pregnant Mary were in preparing to bring Jesus into the world—for the sake of the world.

19 We remember in our prayers all people who are homeless or facing imminent homelessness and pray that the Spirit will guide us in helping them secure warm, safe and reliable shelter and homes.

20 *Katharina von Bora Luther, renewer of the church (died 1552)* We give thanks to God for the life, faith and influence of Katie Luther, wife of Martin Luther, and remember in our prayers women throughout history who have helped influence, lead and grow the church and its mission in the world.

21 *Winter solstice* In our observance of Advent, we look to the lighting of candles to remind us of the light of Jesus Christ shining brightly without fail in the world, especially in places of despair and darkness where people long for light and hope.

22 We pray the Spirit will move us to share the good news with people we encounter during the Christmas season and invite them to join in the life of our faith communities so they may see, hear, experience and come to know the source of our faith, kindness, hope and joy—Jesus Christ.

23 We remember in our prayers individuals and families who live with poverty, unemployment or are homeless and pray the Spirit will move us to be attentive of others, generous and welcoming, especially during our holiday gatherings, the sharing of gifts, bountiful meals and celebrating the good news of the Christ child.