

27 Pray for students, teachers and school staff on break during the holidays that they are renewed and strengthened through spending time with family, friends and their communities.

28 We remember in our prayers parents grieving the loss of infants or children, and pray we learn to be attentive, supportive, patient and caring, especially when we struggle awkwardly to find words and actions that are appropriate and helpful throughout their grieving and healing.

29 Lift up humble prayers of gratitude for God's undeserved, awesome and surprising saving grace.

30 We continue to pray for refugees and immigrants, especially in the Middle East and Europe, asking God to grant them hope, safety, welcoming communities in which to rebuild their lives and resilience; pray we never lose empathy and active concern for their struggles, suffering and losses.

31 Everywhere we turn and look we see the wondrous, amazing creative hand of God. Praise the Lord, and give thanks!



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

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## PRAYER VENTURES

### DECEMBER 2017

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*These petitions are offered as guides to prayer for the global, social and outreach ministries of the ELCA, as well as for the needs and circumstances of our neighbors, communities and world. Thank you for your continued prayers for the life and mission of this church.*

1 Give thanks for the work of Lutheran Disaster Response, through the Sierra Pacific Synod and Luther Social Services of Northern California, helping address the needs of those affected by recent widespread wildfires in California. Pray all those suffering loss and distress find hope and support throughout their recovery, rebuilding and healing.

2 We continue to pray for people and communities recovering from the devastation and loss caused by recent hurricanes – especially in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and other locations in the Caribbean, and Gulf Coast and Southeastern states – that they not lose hope, will receive ongoing support and assistance, and will be strengthened and encouraged by our caring for one another.

3 *First Sunday of Advent* Pray to be alert in faith and life in grateful response for the gift of Jesus Christ breaking into the darkness of the world with love and mercy and for the promised return of our Lord.

4 We remember in our prayers the Rev. Kirsten Fryer, Justin Kolb and Dr. Michael Parker, ELCA missionaries serving in Egypt alongside companion churches proclaiming the gospel, developing future leaders and strengthening parish ministry.

5 When we grow weary, discouraged or compelled to give up, we pray as the psalmist prayed, "Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved."

6 For the sake of doing God's work in the world, pray God will shape our words to inspire, comfort, give hope, hold each other accountable and invite our neighbor to know God's mercy and love; enlighten our actions through the word of God, conversations, relationships and encounters with people rather than acting on what we believe is best for them.

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*This resource may be copied and shared among members and friends of the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Contact [info@elca.org](mailto:info@elca.org) for additional information. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631. Telephone: 800-638-3522, ext. 2458.*

7 During this season of sharing gifts, pray we are mindful of and generous with our neighbors, especially those who live in poverty and hunger, immigrants and refugees, people who feel isolated and long for relationships and community, and families without homes or safe shelter.

8 Pray daily for God's mercy and patience, asking forgiveness for our shortcomings and failures, that through God's renewing love and the cleansing of our baptism we are set back on paths of righteousness and compassion.

9 In the face of heartbreaking, daunting gun violence, we pray God's Spirit will stir in us a sense of self-sacrifice and humility that we might reconsider how we exercise our freedoms and live together for the well-being and safety of all people and that we will be wise and courageous in conceiving and embracing effective changes in our lives and laws, even when met with uneasiness or resistance.

10 Give thanks daily for our baptism into the body of Christ that prepares, renews and moves us to be faithful, compelling messengers of the good news.

11 Ask God to bless the continuing work and impact of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, and give thanks for the many ways in which the campaign is helping cultivate and strengthen relationships, leaders and ministries locally and globally.

12 Pray for a spirit of peace to fill us and inspire our lives through knowing God is patient and forgiving with us and our salvation is certain through faith in Jesus Christ.

13 The mesmerizing light of Advent candles reminds us of the welcome, unfaltering light God shines into the world and our lives through Jesus Christ. Pray our lives are guided by the gospel and reflect the light of Jesus Christ in all we do and say.

14 Remember in prayer men and women living in prisons, jails and correctional facilities across our country, that the Spirit of God will fill their lives with faith and hope and that we are moved to show them – as Jesus has shown us – sincere mercy, love, respect and support.

15 Praise God for dwelling in our world – in us – and causing peace, mercy, goodness and hope to spring up where we might be inclined to give up in the face of darkness, despair and overwhelming difficulties.

16 God knows the quirks, insecurities and needs of our human nature and being. Lift up prayers of thanks and praise to God for meeting us where we are in the human form of Jesus Christ and for giving us something living, real, tangible and engaging to capture our attention and faith.

17 Just as John the Baptist was tireless in testifying to the one true light of Jesus, pray we too will be bold witnesses in today's world busied with sharing the good news and inviting people to believe and be baptized into the body of Christ for lives of faith, service and witness.

18 We remember in our prayers people who labor and serve throughout the holidays, giving thanks and recognition for their work and long hours. Pray they find time for rest, renewal, connecting with family and friends, and reflecting on the meaning of the holidays.

19 Stirred by the ever-present Spirit of God, give thanks and rejoice always in prayer, worship and moments of reflection.

20 *Katharina von Bora Luther, died 1552* Give thanks to God for women of faith throughout history who have witnessed to the good news, pursued justice and peace in the world, helped form the faith of others and served as examples and mentors for us.

21 The ELCA and The Episcopal Church are committed to prayer, fasting and advocacy addressing cuts to public programs that are vital to hungry people who are living in poverty. Remember to pray for these concerns, our leaders and people in need on the 21st of each month through December 2018.

22 With child-like anticipation and excitement, we tell and hear the Christmas story over and over again, sharing the news of the life-changing gift and impact of Jesus' birth; we pray we are always open to this good news inspiring and reshaping our traditions, celebrations and consumer habits.

23 Laugh, rejoice and shout for joy for God has done great things and restores our spirits.

24 As we remember and retell the story of the world anticipating the promised birth of Jesus, the true Messiah, pray we not take for granted the gifts we long for and have received in the son of God, our savior – forgiveness, hope and redemption.

25 *Christmas Day* On this great day, we give glory to God for the birth of Jesus, the incarnation of God among us, an undeserved gift bringing light to the darkness and life for all people.

26 With joyful hearts we give praise for what God has done for us and for revealing to us daily God's continuing activity in the world and – through our baptism – the diverse ways in which we are called to join with one another in serving our neighbor and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.