Advent and the birth of Christ through worship, traditions, ecumenical activities and bearing witness to God's boundless love and mercy.

23 "Without doubt you do not come to him and bring him to you; he is too high and too far from you. With all your effort, work and labor you cannot come to him, lest you boast as though you had received him by your own merit and worthiness. No, dear friend, all merit and worthiness is out of the question, and there is nothing but demerit and unworthiness on your side, nothing but grace and mercy on his" (Martin Luther). Give thanks for God's undeserved gifts of love, forgiveness, new life and salvation, given freely through Jesus Christ.

24 *Christmas Eve* "The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord'" (Luke 2:10-11). The birth of Jesus Christ is nothing to fear, yet it can be startling. Ask the Spirit to open hearts and minds to the good news of how God's grace, manifest in Christ, changes the world and brings light to the darkness.

25 *Christmas Day* "The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Hallelujah! Give praise and thanks to God, whose love and mercy for humankind is made real to us through the birth of Jesus Christ — God's son, our redeemer and the light of the world.

26 *Beginning of Kwanzaa* Kwanzaa is a weeklong celebration of African culture and traditions that stresses family, community and shared values. Give thanks for the traditions of our African American siblings and the inspiration of the global African community.

27 Praise God for communities of faith, large and small, that gather us around the good news of Jesus Christ through worship, the sacraments, study of Scripture, and mutual support, which equip us for doing God's work in the world.

28 Remember in prayer pastors and seminary students who participate in the ELCA's Federal Chaplaincy Ministries, serving in the U.S. military, Veterans Affairs hospitals and federal correctional institutions. Ask God to equip, strengthen and sustain them for the diverse challenges of their ministry.

29 Pray that we will carry forward the joyful story of Jesus and share how our faith shapes our decisions, actions and relationships as loved and reclaimed children of God. Ask the Spirit to help us as we serve our neighbors in need and invite others to follow Christ.

30 Ask God to show us new paths in our nation and the world that lead to peace, justice, generosity, mutual respect, reconciliation, love for neighbors and relief from suffering — paths that lead to the joy and wholeness God desires for all people.

31 *New Year's Eve* Share with God your hopes, plans and aspirations for the coming year. Ask God for the inspiration, wisdom and patience to realize our goals, and for strength and forgiveness when we fall short. Give thanks that, whether we succeed or fail, God's love and forgiveness endure.

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 *for additional information. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4101. Telephone: 800-638-3522.*

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PRAYER VENTURES
DECEMBER 2026

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 *Giving Tuesday* On this national day of giving, ask the Spirit to inspire our awareness and generosity, that together we might build a world where we are mindful of our neighbors' needs and where care for one another is part of everyday life.

2 *World AIDS Day* Following yesterday's observance of World AIDS Day, join our neighbors, siblings in Christ and companion churches around the world in remembering all people affected by HIV and AIDS. Pray for healing, hope and strength for individuals, families and communities worldwide that are living with this disease. Give thanks for doctors, nurses, pastors, public officials, healthcare educators, care providers and researchers who treat the infected, search for cures, bring hope to the discouraged and weary, and respond to the disease's physical, emotional, spiritual and social impacts.

3 *International Day of Persons with Disabilities* Pray for our neighbors everywhere 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 congregations, ELCA Disability Ministries, the Evangelical Lutheran Deaf Association, the Lutheran Services in America Disability

Network, Pathways 2 Promise, the Total Inclusion! initiative of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, and the tAble pre-event to the ELCA Youth Gathering.

4 Pray for the Spirit to help us take the initiative to invite neighbors, co-workers, friends and strangers to the joyful celebrations taking place in our homes and congregations throughout Advent and Christmas. Pray that we will be observant of those around us and include neighbors who are isolated, lonely, forgotten or without a faith community.

5 Ask the Spirit to stir the faith and hope of all who suffer, heighten our awareness of those suffering quietly in our midst, and deepen our resolve to respond with compassion, generosity, love and respect.

6 "Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey" (Mark 1:6). How could John the Baptizer, with all his eccentricities, appeal to so many people with his message of love, forgiveness, repentance, baptism and the coming of the Messiah? What are your gifts, quirks and unique qualities? Give praise and thanks to God for loving us as we are and for calling us to participate in doing God's work in the world.

7 Pray that the tradition of lighting candles in Advent wreathes will move us to remember and reflect on the birth of Jesus — God's gift of light, love, forgiveness and eternal life.

8 "The Lord is coming, always coming. When you have ears to hear and eyes to see, you will recognize him at any moment of your life. Life is Advent; life is recognizing the coming of the Lord" (Henri Nouwen, theologian). Praise God for the gift of Jesus Christ, our savior, who was born among us and will return to gather us into the kingdom of God!

9 Give thanks for companion synods, global church partners, full communion partners and siblings in Christ around the world who join us in celebrating our unity in Jesus Christ.

10 Pray for those who live in areas of ongoing conflict and war, that they will soon know peace, security, and relief from fear and stress. Pray for God to restore their daily routines, their sense of community and their severed relationships.

11 Pray that our impatience will be tempered by our faith in God's promises, which have no timeline or urgency, so that we can spread the gospel message as far and wide as possible, inviting others to believe before the return of Jesus Christ.

12 Give thanks and ask God to bless the work of the ELCA Homeless and Justice Network, congregations, ecumenical ministries and community organizations that address the root causes and impact of poverty and homelessness.

13 Thank God for looking upon us with gracious love, showing us mercy when we need it most, tending to our suffering and doing great things for us even though we are undeserving. Glory and praise to God!

14 Remember in prayer ELCA missionaries and International Women Leaders who accompany global partners in the Middle East and North Africa, that God will bless their advocacy for justice, their support for parish ministries and their witness to the presence of a loving, merciful God.

15 Pray for the Spirit to inspire and guide newly elected public officials, legislators and governors, that they will exercise compassion, humility, justice and wisdom in their service.

16 *Las Posadas* Observed by some ELCA congregations, this tradition uses lighted paths and processions from house to house to follow Mary and Joseph's journey through Bethlehem in search of shelter. As we reflect on Mary and Joseph's experience, may we be inspired to love, serve and welcome our neighbors, especially strangers, immigrants, people in need or those without shelter.

17 Remember in prayer students on break from colleges, universities and seminaries, that they will be renewed through reconnecting with family, friends and home congregations over the holidays.

18 *International Migrants Day* Join people around the world in honoring the contributions and respecting the rights of immigrants — the theme of this year's International Migrants Day. Ask God to help us accompany, support and respect immigrants and refugees as they seek welcoming communities and a better life.

19 Give thanks for the Prison Reentry and Advocacy Network and remember in prayer those incarcerated in jails, prisons, correctional facilities and detention centers. Pray that we might help them connect with their children, their families, caring faith communities and resources for rebuilding their lives. Pray for the Spirit to help us seek opportunities to share with them the good news of forgiveness, hope and new life we have in Jesus Christ — the gift of God's love for *all* people.

20 "The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus" (Luke 1:30-31). Nothing is impossible with God! Lift up prayers of thanksgiving and ask what God has in mind for you and your baptismal journey.

21 Ask the Spirit to help us be attentive to those in our communities and nation who are working during the holidays and may be unable to join us in worship, holiday celebrations and community activities. Pray that we will affirm their vocations, encourage their faith, make them feel welcome and remembered, and show our care and gratitude.

22 Give thanks for pastors, deacons, musicians, volunteers and other leaders who help us observe and celebrate