

Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
150 River Road
Red Bank, New Jersey 07701
Phone: (732) 741-9241
Email: office@htlcredbank.org
Website: htlcredbank.org



FEBRUARY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Feb 1 10am Worship	2 7pm Welsh Farms AA 7:30pm Men's Al Anon	3	4 9:30am Quilting	5 6:30pm Al Anon	6 12pm Dorcas 6:30pm Al Anon Comb	7 8:30am AA Step Group 5:30pm Al Anon
8 10am Sunday School 10am Worship	9 7pm Welsh Farms AA 7:30pm Men's Al Anon	10	11 9:30am Quilting	12 6:30pm Al Anon 7pm Council Meeting	13 6:30pm Al Anon Comb	14 Valentine's Day 8am Bagels and Bible 8:30am AA Step Group 5:30pm Al Anon
15 Newsletter Deadline Pancake Sunday 10am Worship	16 Presidents' Day 7pm Welsh Farms AA 7:30pm Men's Al Anon	17	18 Ash Wednesday 9:30am Quilting 12pm Ash Wed. Serv. 4pm Ash Wed. Serv. Fi 7pm Ash Wed. Serv.	19 6:30pm Al Anon	20 6:30pm Al Anon Comb	21 8:30am AA Step Group 5:30pm Al Anon
22 10am Sunday School 10am Worship	23 7pm Welsh Farms AA 7:30pm Men's Al Anon	24	25 9:30am Quilting	26 6:30pm Bunco 6:30pm Al Anon	27 6:30pm Al Anon Comb	28 Trivia Night 8am Bagels and Bible 8:30am AA Step Group 5:30pm Al Anon



WORSHIP

February 1st /4th Sunday after Epiphany Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount by naming those who are blessed in the reign of God.

February 8th/5th Sunday of Epiphany In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encourages his followers to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, doing good works and keeping God's commandments.

February 15th /Transfiguration of Our Lord Shortly before he enters Jerusalem, where he will be crucified, Jesus is revealed to Peter, James, and John in a mountaintop experience of divine glory called the transfiguration.

February 18th/Ash Wednesday In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.

February 22nd/First Sunday in Lent Jesus experiences anew the temptations that Israel faced in the wilderness. As the Son of God, he endures the testing of the evil one.

Worship Volunteers

	Asst. Minister	Usher	Sacristan	Lector	Counters
February 1	Linda Coleman	Jill Socha	Sherry Lee	Cynthia Kazmac	Carleo/Csernica
February 8	Keith Bennett	Kathy Caputo	Joanne Giordano	Molly Foard	McKenna/
February 15	Chris Foard	Dan Gillon	Helga Britton	Rosemary Lane	Foss/Coleman
February 22	Elaine Bradford	The Grippts	Nancy Poole	Bill Spreen	Socha/Giordano

**Office Closed
February 16th
President's Day**

FEBRUARY 18TH, 2026

SERVICES

12:00 NOON

4:00 PM FAMILY SERVICE AND

7:00 PM EVERYONE



Scam Email Warning– We want to make everyone aware of scam emails that appear to come from Pastor Mack and ask for gift cards or Bitcoin.

Please know these messages are fraudulent. Pastor Mack and the church will never request payments in this way.

Please do **not** respond to emails or texts asking for gift cards or Bitcoin. These are scams. We will **never** request payment in gift cards or cryptocurrency.

Any donation to the church should be made through our established avenues. Vanco or the collection plate.



Blessings!

It's quickly approaching! Are you ready for it? If you don't know what I'm referring to, I'm speaking of Valentine's Day. That day when lovers and those who wish to express their love to others, do so in the giving of cards, flowers, and other kinds of gifts and gestures of kindness. But just what is the day that's celebrated every February 14th and what are its origins? Depending on who you ask you will get many differing responses. Here is a little of what I know about Valentine's Day and its beginning.

Well to begin, Valentine also known as St. Valentine of Rome is an actual historical figure who a priest who lived in Rome during the 3rd century AD. According to one story, he was imprisoned and persecuted for his faith.

It is believed that St. Valentine performed Christian marriages in secret during a time when the Roman Emperor Claudius II had banned marriage of young men believing that unmarried soldiers would make better fighters. St. Valentine's actions in performing these marriages were viewed as an act of disobedience against the emperor's orders.

Eventually, St. Valentine was arrested and sentenced to death. While he was in prison, he is said to have developed a relationship with the jailer's daughter, to whom he wrote a farewell letter signed "*From your Valentine*" before his execution. This is one of the earliest connections between Valentine and romantic love.

Saint Valentine was executed on February 14th, around the year 269 AD. Over time, this date became associated with celebrating love and affection, leading to the modern-day Valentine's Day holiday. However, it's essential to note that the historical details surrounding St. Valentine are not well documented, and many of the stories have been embellished and romanticized of the centuries.

While Jesus wasn't speaking about "*romantic*" love in the passage below, his words highlight the importance of love in the lives of his followers.

John 15:12

[Jesus said] "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

Peace,
Pastor Mack

Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Red Bank

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

November 14, 2024 via teleconference

Enhancing Internal and External Communication

Enhancing and Expanding Outreach Ministries

Discovering, Understanding, Celebrating and Empowering the Talents of the
Congregation

Fostering a Creative, Innovative Youth and Family

Council Present: Pastor Mack, Lauren Bennett, Andy Bohner, Linda Coleman, Chris Foard, Joanne Giordano, Cynthia Kazmac, Naomi McKenna, Jill Socha, and Paul Volker.

Council Absent: Roger Foss.

Devotions: Linda Coleman

Approval of Minutes from October 10, 2024 meeting: A motion was made by Lauren, seconded by Andy, and approved by all.

President's Report: Cynthia Kazmac

Cynthia handed the floor over to Bill Spreen.

Bill reported on his extensive work gathering information and estimates on replacement of the church roof. The roof is 35 years old. Bill has been working with Joe Jackson for the past 6 months getting information and estimates. Five Star Roofing proved to be the best company to do the work. They are a quality construction company. A long term solution was needed. An estimate of \$28,000 was given. This would include gutter repair. If after removing old shingles it was found that the sheathing was faulty, work would be done to replace the needed base. This could increase cost, so a final cost for funding was decided to be possibly \$32,000.

Mark Csernica from the Endowment committee has been working with Bill on the finances. Chris brought up the fact that a congregational meeting will need to be called in order to use money from Endowment. (this occurs when expenditures are over \$10,000) An email, and message in the Sunday bulletin will go out announcing there being a vote on November 24 after church service to approve this expenditure on the roof replacement. This vote will also take place via ZOOM for those unable to be attending church on the 24th.

A motion to hold the congregational meeting to approve the expenditure of \$32,000 from Endowment on roof replacement was made by Linda, seconded by Jill and approved by All.

Pastor's Report: Pastor John Mack

Blessings,

As we move closer to mid-November, it appears that many church activities are quickly approaching. I always look forward to the church opening its doors to serve our community through the annual CPC Thanksgiving meal. Both the preparation of the food and sitting down and sharing a meal together is a wonderful time of fellowship. If you are available, I encourage you to join us for this event.

This year, I will again lead a Bible study during the season of Advent. In this study, we will read passages from the Gospel of Luke alongside with stories from ELCA World Hunger partners. Through sharing, study of scripture and storytelling, the study will help deepen our understanding and appreciation of the Advent season.

Thank you to everyone who assisted and/or contributed to the Red Bank Crop Walk and the annual Trunk-or-Treat events at HTLC. The weather was splendid for both events which contributed to allowing us to meet and greet our friends and neighbors. Also, thank you to Lauren, Joanne, and all others involved in Memorial Garden project. It looks wonderful!

May the peace, power, and love of Christ be with you.

Peace,
Pr. Mack

Upcoming Church and Community Events

- CPC Thanksgiving Meal at HTLC
- 11/24 Christ the King Sunday (last Sunday in the liturgical year)
- Advent Bible Study (Wednesdays from 7:00pm-8:00pm on December 4, 11, and 18th)
- 12/1 First Sunday in Advent
- 12/22 Christmas Pageant and Decoration of the Church

Meetings and Gatherings

10/10 Clergy, Cops, and Community Leaders Prayer Breakfast
10/20 Red Bank Crop Walk for Hunger
10/23 Worship and Music Committee Meeting
10/26 Trunk-or-Treat Halloween Celebration
11/11 Clergy and Deacon Conversations with Bishop Tracie
11/13 Memorial Service for Elenor Mitchell
Weekly Pericope Study
Confirmation Class

Pastoral Calls (25)

Baptisms (4)

Memorial Service 1

Pastor thanked all who helped at recent events.

Financial Secretary Report: Andy Bohner

Andy reviewed his report. He noted that year to date statements have been mailed out to the Congregation.

Treasurers Report: Chris Foard

Chris reviewed his report. He noted the generous donation from the Sykes family is included in the October 2024 statement. Chris noted the church finances are in better shape than previously anticipated. Hopefully November and December are good months for donations.

Evangelism Report: Naomi McKenna

Events for 2025

January 25th - Women's Retreat

June 8th - Outdoor Church Service at Marine Park

August 10-15 - Day Camp

October 4th (raindate Oct 5) Porchfest

October 25 - Trunk or Treat

A "Welcome Letter for the Year" will list all of our events with a QR code – will put on postcards or flyers to give out at events, in church, etc.. We will also ask Glenn Bradford to put on the church website.

Krispie Kreme Fundraiser to benefit Day Camp 2025 will start on February 1st and end March 1st.

Christian Education: Lauren Bennett

Sunday School children will begin planning for the Christmas pageant by reviewing the script and choosing which part they would like to play. The Christmas pageant will be held during the worship service on Sunday, December 22nd. The next three

sessions of Sunday School will be dedicated to preparing for this special event.

The pageant format last year was successful and enjoyed by the congregation so the same script will be used. That means that some adult participants will be needed to fill roles in the pageant. Please consider joining in and let Lauren know if you're interested. The script can be brought on "stage" and read from (no need to memorize) and the congregation joins in on singing the hymns (no solos).

Lauren reviewed her report and noted a volunteer sign up sheet will go out asking for adult volunteers to take a part in the Pageant.

Social Ministry Report: Jill Socha

Social Outreach Ministry- Continue to give for Lunch Break as you can.

We will begin to collect food for the CPC Dinner that is scheduled for Wednesday 11/27/24. We are estimating about 50 participants and staff totaling about 75 people. The meal will be served at 12:00 noon with singing after. There will be signup sheets in the red book for congregation members who can donate items needed and for those who can help at the dinner, and a quick meeting on 11/24 before church.

We reached out to Love Thy Neighbor to discuss Christmas gifts as we have supported this local agency in the past.

WELCA – There was a meeting on October 27th to discuss disbursement of funds from the garage sale. There will be a craft workshop on December 1st led by Briana Bennett. There will be a Giving Tree again, see Sherry Lee for details.

Day Quilting –The quilters need gently used flat bed sheets. Weekly quilting on Wednesdays starts at 9:30. Bring your lunch and enjoy some fellowship at noon. All are welcome.

The next Night Quilting was on November 13th at 6:30. The next one will be after the holidays.

Blood Drive Update – We are scheduled to hold a blood drive for NYBC at HTLC on January 7, 2025 (Tuesday) from 12:30-6:30. This does not conflict with any AA meetings, but we will have to line up a bit of help on Tuesday evening to have Fellowship Hall reconfigured back to what the quilters will need on Wednesday morning.

Jill reviewed her report and noted that plans for the CPC Thanksgiving dinner are in full swing and that volunteers and food donations are needed.

Worship and Music: Linda Coleman

A brief review of holiday worship schedule:

- Poinsettia sales start Nov. 24, end Dec. 8. Will use Privetera's again to order.
- Dec. 22 is children's pageant, greening of the church and holiday brunch.
- Dec. 24 services at 10 a.m. family service, 4 p.m. candlelight service with full choir.
- Dec. 25 10 a.m. service.
- Sign ups for volunteers/flowers/needs will go in red book Nov. 24.

Discussed possible uses for the memorial money from Fran Sykes. including: accoutrements for the handbell; a choral scholar program; special music series for the church's upcoming 100th anniversary; new green banners for the sanctuary; getting a dedicated audio/visual set up in the sanctuary to better broadcast services; and upgrading the sanctuary lighting.

The committee also discussed a request for new communion linens to replace the ones that are stained or tattered. It will forward this to the council for approval.

Linda reviewed her report and noted Peter's input is vital to all decisions.

Stewardship Report: Paul Volk

For Stewardship I have been looking to reach out to inactive members and have gotten a list on the attached spreadsheet. These are members who gave in 2019 and I'm looking to reach out to those who have strayed and invite them back to church around the holidays.

Paul reviewed his report and asked Council to review the spreadsheet.

Letters have been mailed out for 2025 donation pledges. Envelopes are on order.

Outreach prior to the Holidays will be initiated to welcome back families who have not attended services in a while.

Pastor ended the meeting with a prayer.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Giordano

Blood Drive Helps Save Lives

Thank you, everyone! Holy Trinity hosted a successful blood drive staffed by NYBC on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, with 28 units collected from 24 possible donors, including 5 double donations. Thanks to all those who volunteered to donate, including the HTLC members who participated – Greg Doyle, Linda and Mark Csernica, Jill and Mark Socha, John Sollog and Deanna Vergari. Thanks also to Joanne Giordano for helping greet and welcome donors. A BLOOD EMERGENCY HAS BEEN DECLARED due to extremely low supplies so if you missed our drive, please visit donate.nybc.org to find a nearby drive and schedule a donation as soon as possible. We are also considering an additional drive in spring 2026.

Molly Foard, Blood Drive Coordinator

Email Blasts from Church

If you are not receiving email blasts, please try adding the church as a contact. It appears that the Email blasts are going to Junk mail for several members. However, once the office@htlcredbank.org email is in Contacts there are no issues.



HTLC Treasurer's Report for December 2025

HTLC Treasurer's Report as of December 2025	This Month Dec 2025	Last Month Nov 2025	Last Year Dec 2024	Difference from Last Month	Difference from Last Year
MONTHLY GIVING SUMMARY					
Giving Types	This Month Dec 2025	Last Month Nov 2025	Last Year Dec 2024	Difference from Last Month	Difference from Last Year
DESIGNATED GIVING	\$515	\$2,496	\$1,224	-\$1,981	-\$709
OPERATIONS GIVING					
Pledged	\$19,075	\$17,107	\$23,406	\$1,968	-\$4,330
Non-Pledged	\$396	\$204	\$877	\$192	-\$481
Challenge	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Income from Memorials	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Thrivent Choice	\$728	\$30	\$0	\$698	\$728
Building Use	\$360	\$40	\$185	\$320	\$175
OPERATIONS GIVING (ACTUAL)	\$20,559	\$17,381	\$24,468	\$3,178	-\$3,908
OPERATIONS GIVING (BUDGET)	\$19,208				
DIFFERENCE (ACTUAL - BUDGET)	\$1,351				
TOTAL GIVING (DESIGNATED + OPERATIONS)	\$21,075	\$19,877	\$25,692	\$1,198	-\$4,617
YEAR TO DATE BUDGET SUMMARY					
	Dec 2025 YTD Actual	Dec 2025 YTD Budget	Dec 2025 Actuals - Budget	2025 Annual Budget	2025 Updated Budget Estimate
INCOME (OPERATIONS GIVING)	\$215,914	\$230,500	-\$14,586	\$230,500	\$215,914
EXPENSE (OPERATIONS)					
Operations					
Payroll	\$118,339	\$121,203	-\$2,864	\$121,203	\$118,339
Ministry	\$27,556	\$28,221	-\$665	\$28,221	\$27,556
Office Administration	\$17,896	\$14,100	\$3,796	\$14,100	\$17,896
Properties					
Church Building & Grounds	\$22,389	\$23,194	-\$805	\$23,194	\$22,389
Parish House Bldg & Grounds	\$6,896	\$7,164	-\$268	\$7,164	\$6,896
Parsonage Bldg & Grounds	\$12,225	\$12,891	-\$666	\$12,891	\$12,225
Mortgage & Insurance	\$23,565	\$22,891	\$674	\$22,891	\$23,565
Committees					
Worship & Music	\$4,982	\$4,850	\$132	\$4,850	\$4,982
Christian Education	\$147	\$1,200	-\$1,053	\$1,200	\$147
Social Ministry	\$1,046	\$1,300	-\$254	\$1,300	\$1,046
Quilting	\$904	\$1,000	-\$96	\$1,000	\$904
Stewardship	\$2,207	\$1,050	\$1,157	\$1,050	\$2,207
Evangelism	\$270	\$1,200	-\$930	\$1,200	\$270
Youth & Family Ministry	\$0	\$300	-\$300	\$300	\$0
NJ Synod					
Benevolence	\$4,583	\$5,000	-\$417	\$5,000	\$4,583
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$243,005	\$245,564	-\$2,559	\$245,564	\$243,005
YTD NET INCOME (DEFICIT)					
(Total Income less Total Expenses)	-\$27,091	-\$15,064	-\$12,027	-\$15,064	-\$27,091
Green: Income greater than expected; expenses or deficit less than expected					

Quilting

Weekly quilting

Wednesdays 9:30AM

The Wednesday quilters will be meeting all summer except August 13th.

Everyone is welcome!



Evening Quilting Evening Quilting –

Please share this information . This is an important ministry that helps so many. It's very easy and you don't need to know how to sew. We have a great time socializing too!

We will meet: Jan. 21, Feb. 18, March 18

At 6:00 PM. Note: If we have to cancel I will send an email. Please let me know only if you can come.

Contacts: Pat Pienkos 732-513-9615

Debbie Yetka 908-461-4084

Looking forward to seeing you all!

Quilting Material Needed -

Gently used bed sheets (fitted sheet / flat sheet / pillowcases / Duvet cover) of any size.

Fabric remnants or cotton dress shirts.

Please leave donations in the quilters closet in Fellowship Hall. Thank you for your supports!

Quilters Need Help

If anyone is traveling near Mechanicsville, Pa , and can add a few extra minutes to your trip, the warehouse for shipping quilts, school kits, etc is located directly off one of the exits.

We accumulate many quilts throughout the year and we would appreciate sending some quilts with you to deliver.

Any questions, please call Sherry Lee or Elaine Theophall.



Jack Volk	February 3
Lauren Bennett	February 7
Carol Volk	February 16
Dawn Cheek	February 19
Ron Ruberg	February 22
Pat Pienkos	February 25
Lisa Lynch	February 27
Dennis Bradford	February 28

Trivia Night!

February 28, 2026



Mark your calendars!

Plan for a fun night at Holy Trinity on Feb. 28 at 5pm for great food and trivia.

We have an International theme, so we ask you to bring a pot luck dinner item showing your ethnic heritage. There is a sign up sheet for your convenience.

You don't have to be another Ken Jennings ---this is just for fun. See you then!

[Prayer Ventures for February 2026]

1 *National Freedom Day and Black History Month* Today commemorates the abolishment of slavery in 1865 and recognizes past, present and future work to secure and protect freedom, justice, equality and respect for all people. It is also the first day of Black History Month. Pray for strength, humility and penitent hearts so we may acknowledge our nation's history and the mistreatment of people based on ancestry, race, religion and perceived differences. Give thanks that our sins and weaknesses are met with God's immense grace and the Spirit's ability to effect change and newness in us, our church and society.

2 Remember in prayer siblings in Christ and communities of faith in the Caribbean region, especially those who are engaged in long-term recovery from natural disasters. Pray for the Caribbean and Florida-Bahamas synods, that their work will bear abundant fruit as they support congregations and ministries in proclaiming the gospel in diverse contexts throughout the region.

3 Pray for nations experiencing violence and war, including Venezuela, Ukraine and Russia, the Middle East, South Sudan and others. Ask God to guide leaders, diplomats and peacemakers as they seek lasting solutions and peace. Pray for the Spirit to inspire us to be advocates and bearers of peace, hope and justice in our communities and the world.

4 The Lord "has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8)? Ask God to help you understand the depth and breadth of justice, kindness, humility and love, which we are asked to exemplify in every aspect of our life and baptismal journey.

5 Pray for young adults who are discerning whether to say yes to serving in an outdoor ministry summer program. Ask God to give them confidence in their faith and the gifts that the Spirit has nurtured in them for service and ministry with children, youth and adults.

6 Ask the Spirit to provide us encouragement and guidance for our life and baptismal journey through Scripture, faith communities, the counsel and example of siblings in Christ, church leaders, people of faith who have gone before us, and prayer.

7 Give thanks and pray for the ELCA's partner church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and the challenging and hope-filled work of its school and ministries that serve both Christians and Muslims.

8 "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Give thanks for those who have inspired your faith. Pray that you are also a light for others, giving glory to God and shining bright with love, mercy and hope.

9 Pray for the ELCA's Congregations Lead Initiative, which equips and inspires congregations with innovation and tools that renew their ministry and community partnerships to create adaptable, relevant and thriving faith communities.

10 “The Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your needs in parched places and make your bones strong, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters never fail” (Isaiah 58:11). Give thanks and praise to God who is ever-present and sustains our faith, spirit and strength so that we can navigate times of adversity and uncertainty.

11 Give thanks for your synod staff who help equip, support and encourage congregations and leaders to share the good news of Jesus Christ, serve neighbors in need and do God’s work in the world.

12 As ELCA members, we are called to respond to our neighbors in need here and around the world. Pray that the impact we have with individuals and communities will grow with the work we do together through ELCA World Hunger, HIV and AIDS Ministry, Lutheran Disaster Response, AMMPARO Migrant Ministry and social ministry organizations.

13 Remember in prayer unsheltered neighbors and siblings in Christ, that they will have safe, secure and consistent places to live each day. Give thanks and pray for those who are part of the Homeless and Justice Network of the ELCA, a coalition of ministries called to serve people on the margins who are struggling with homelessness, poverty and justice issues.

14 Pray for the members of your congregation, their relationships and marriages, that they will experience love, forgiveness, joy, respect and mutual care.

15 *Transfiguration of Our Lord* “While [Peter] was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him’” (Matthew 17:5). Praise God for revealing to us that Jesus Christ is the son of God, the promised messiah, savior and bearer of God’s love and mercy, who delivers us from the darkness of our sins and weaknesses.

16 Give thanks for Mission Builders, an ELCA ministry that uses a nationwide network of faithful and active men and women who eagerly use their diverse skills to support congregations, outdoor ministries and schools with construction projects that help grow the ministry and outreach of the church.

17 Ask the Spirit to help us refrain from complacency and silence in response to our neighbors who experience daily challenges and injustice, especially among immigrants and refugees, people experiencing poverty, unsheltered neighbors, the elderly, those who are incarcerated and others. Pray that our response to neighbors in need reflects the compassion, respect and justice that Jesus demonstrated throughout his ministry and implored us to follow.

18 *Ash Wednesday* Today is the first day of Lent. Ask the Spirit to help you reflect on your faith as a follower of Christ who — with imperfection — values and practices sacrifice, witness, service, generosity and spiritual growth.

19 Praise God for ELCA missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission volunteers who walk together with Lutheran, ecumenical and interfaith siblings in Christ in 35 countries around the world to share the good news of Jesus Christ, care for the needs of communities, nurture leaders and strengthen ministries.

20 Pray that liturgical colors, symbols, Scripture and worship during Lent remind us that we are not left in the darkness of suffering and death. Give thanks that the Spirit always leads us to the empty cross of our risen Savior — Jesus Christ — who restores life and promises eternal life in the kingdom of God.

21 Remember in prayer the ELCA AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) strategy and the volunteers, advocates, congregations and synods that strive to protect and accompany vulnerable migrant children and their families who seek safe and welcoming places to reestablish their lives.

22 Is there some realm of life right now where you feel as if you're in a wilderness and being tested? Ask God for strength, wisdom and guidance, and lean into the faith given to you by the Spirit.

23 Give thanks for ELCA Witness in Society, the advocacy ministry of our church that works to change public policy through our collective and individual voices, which are shaped and guided by biblical values of peacemaking, hospitality to strangers, care for creation, and concern for people living in poverty and struggling with hunger and disease.

24 Pray for our 65 synod bishops gathered at the Conference of Bishops meeting for worship and study, mutual sharing and encouragement, and to conduct business on our behalf for the purpose of being responsible stewards of the church, sharing the gospel and doing God's work in a world that is always changing.

25 "Prayer must not be based on or depend on your personal worthiness or the quality of the prayer itself; rather, it must be based on the unchanging truth of God's promise" (Martin Luther, *Faith Alone*). Pray for whatever is on your mind today; be in conversation with God and trust that your words — imperfect, spoken and silent — are heard and attended to.

26 Gun violence continues to afflict our society. In 2025, there were 38,741 deaths related to gun violence and 408 mass shootings (gunviolencearchive.org). Ask God to give us the strength to be diligent in our work and advocacy to end such violence and care for those who suffer grief and trauma due to gun violence and accidental shootings.

27 Give thanks and praise to God for strengthened faith, blessings and the confidence we receive through God's word, water, bread and prayer, which equip and encourage us to go out into the world and do God's work — together.

28 Pray for the ELCA's directors for evangelical mission, the leaders who help coordinate the partnership between churchwide ministries and the 65 synods of our church. Pray for the work we do together to develop new-start ministries, revitalize congregations, practice stewardship and generosity, and develop and equip leaders for mission and ministry.