

***“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thess. 5:16-18***

As people who follow Jesus, we pray. Alone and together, we pray. And, in times of great change, we pray.

We can agree that 2025 has begun as a time of significant change, particularly in our federal government. Whether we agree or disagree with the changes, the very speed of the actions gives us pause. And so we pray.

We pray for peace. We pray for victims of war, violence, and persecution. We pray for those who have lost jobs or vital services. We pray for children, people with disabilities, elders. We pray for those experiencing anxiety in the face of rapid change. We pray for government leaders. We pray for civil discourse in our communities. We pray for our congregation and for the renewal of the church. And we pray that we might each be faithful disciples, good listeners, and loving Christians.

Today, I invite you to **join with congregations and communities across the ELCA** to gather for weekly, community prayer as part of the Bishops’ **Pray Without Ceasing** Initiative.

Specifically, I ask your congregation to make two commitments:

- **Establish and host a regular, weekly prayer gathering – welcoming all.** We encourage congregations to consider Sunday at 5pm (local time), but trust that you will determine a time and day that is best for your situation. We hope your first prayer gathering will be held between May 1-8, 2025.
- **Think ahead and invite two other congregations** (ELCA, full communion partners, other faith communities) to make the same two-fold commitment before May 15 (to host a weekly, welcoming prayer gathering and to ask two other congregations to make the same commitment).

By Pentecost Sunday on June 8, several communities in our synod and in each participating synod will have begun gathering weekly to Pray without Ceasing. How amazing that over the weeks, this number will continue to grow and multiply.

The call to prayer runs through Scripture: the community gathered before Pentecost, the faithful praying to receive the Word in Nehemiah, some 150 Psalms calling us to pray alone and together. **Now, in this time of significant change, we pray.**

Attached is a list of **Frequently Asked Questions** that have arisen as Bishops have discerned how best to call congregations all through the ELCA to renewal in prayer.

If you are ready to make this commitment or if you have questions, simply reply to me. You will then receive important materials, including samples of weekly prayer liturgies and invitations for bulletins, e-news, etc. Every Thursday, beginning May 1, (at 1pm CT) an optional weekly zoom call will be held for leaders participating in **Pray Without Ceasing**. Join in if you have questions or want to share resources. You will receive the zoom link in the near future.

I am so thankful for the many ways you and all the congregations of our synod gather to pray regularly for the church, the world, and our neighbors in need. I invite you to prayerfully consider this invitation to join **Pray Without Ceasing** – a time to gather for additional prayers in this season of rapid change. Thank you for your faithful ministry.