

For the Common Good:

Prayers and Resources for Congregations in Public Life



Contents:

Introduction with Context	2
Lutheran Sacramental Theology	3
ELCA Polity is Democratic in Nature	5
Connecting Worship and Civic Life	6
Suggested Music	7
Praying for People by Name	9
Occasions for Prayer	10
Bids for Prayers of Intercession	12
Additional Resources	15
Conclusion	16

Introduction with Context

Bishop Meggan Manlove

As our four states, and their many counties and municipalities, prepare for the Fall 2026 elections, what is the church's role? Specifically, what is the role of the nearly 85 ELCA ministry sites that make up the Northwest Intermountain Synod? This work began during the cluster deans' Spring 2026 retreat at the Grunewald Guild and continued at the Spring 2026 Synod Council meeting in Kennewick. It has continued online, led by a task force of Council members and others interested in helping answer these questions and leading to this document.

Our Lutheran Christian faith encourages us to see that while democracy is never perfect, it is the form of government that encourages the most voices to be heard, most replicating the visions of the reign of God passed on through scripture and pillars of the faith. Not a coincidence, our ELCA policy is democratic in nature. The ELCA social statements *Church in Society* (1991) and *Faith and Civic Life* (2025) and the social message *Government and Civic Engagement* (2020) all help connect faith, scripture, our Lutheran tradition, and participation in democracy.

Much of this document tries to connect the important **Christian practices of prayer and worship with civic life**, including this fall's elections. This includes individual and small group prayer as well as prayer by the Sunday assembly. Our hope and expectation is that individuals and ministry sites will find something helpful in these pages. Come, Holy Spirit, encourage our prayers, singing, and engagement in civic life.

Curated to the Glory of God by

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Lutheran Sacramental Theology: A Theology of Welcome, a Theology of Democracy

Rev. Kimberly Meinecke

We live and thrive in the knowledge that we are known and beloved of God. This knowledge is rooted in the work of God through the sacraments of the church: baptism and Eucharist. These sacraments – outward and visible signs of God's inward and spiritual grace – are the means by which God gives and strengthens our faith. They are wholly from and by God and filled with God's promise. The sacraments are made up of both the physical element (water, or bread and wine) and the promise of salvation.

We are transformed by these sacraments not because of anything we do but because God's gift of hope, forgiveness, mercy, and grace changes us. We no longer live for ourselves and only our own needs; we live for others and for the sake of community and the world. This transformation wrought by God in our lives through sacrament means that we not only recognize our own worth and value but that of every other human being. We can fully claim the *imago Dei*, that we are all in the image of God and worthy of dignity and respect.

Baptism, the Font of Life

As Matthew's Gospel ends, Jesus tells his disciples to **go into all the world** to teach and baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20). This instruction means that the gift of baptism, including God's grace and mercy, is for all. The dignity and worth of all people is affirmed in this commandment; the variety of voices and perspectives, especially those from the margins, are welcome in the conversation.

Eucharist, the Table of Grace

The prophet Isaiah, in his vision from chapter 25, describes a feast table on a high mountain which is filled with food and drink (verse 6-9); all people from all nations are welcome at this table of abundance where they are seen and can feast. Many years later, when thousands of people gathered to listen to Jesus on a hillside, he offered them a feast (versions of this story can be found in Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 8:1-9, and Luke 9:12-17.) Not only did they hear words of hope, they were fed a simple but bountiful meal with bread aplenty. This abundance from Jesus was for all who were gathered – while there were scholars and local leaders there, the crowds included women, children, the poor, those with illnesses, and others who were marginalized in society. The Table is spread in scripture for all who are hungry, regardless of situation or

station in life. This is God's table of abundance and grace to which any and all are invited.

Sacramental Theology

As Lutheran Christians, this Sacramental Theology is core to our insistence that, regardless of any external or internal reality, each person is welcome at the Baptismal Font and at God's table. Each person is to be celebrated as the full human being God has created and loves. Each person's presence, voice, and perspective is to be valued and honored. Our Sacramental Theology extends this metaphorical belonging and table to include not just the baptismal font and altar of Holy Communion, but the table of conversation, decision, and listening. It is a table of welcome.

Public Life

Our public and civic life is shaped profoundly by our theological understanding. Our faith is not something kept private in our homes or churches but is to be lived in community life and in the public square. Our faith helps us to make decisions about **how** we live as community, including the act of listening and paying attention to all voices, even those we may not fully understand or agree with. Faith calls us to stay in the conversation so that we may keep working towards understanding and respect.

Living deeply into this sacramental theology means that there is a place in our civic life for all people. We all have a place in the democratic way of life. When we honor God's gift of sacrament and grace, it is not possible to exclude some individuals from communal public and political life.



ELCA Polity is Democratic in Nature

Pastor Peg Harvey Marose

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, established on January 1, 1988, brought together three unique church bodies: the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. These distinct church bodies brought differences of polity to the new church. In a truly American way, this new church created a democratic polity that resembled the United States of America.

The ELCA has a democratic polity of representation. Congregations send representatives to synod assemblies. The synod assemblies send representatives to the church-wide assembly. The decisions of the church are made by these assemblies. There are synodical and church-wide bishops, councils, and staff that provide leadership for the church, but the decision power lies solely with the assemblies. Resolutions and memorials that come from congregations and church members are discussed and voted on by synod assemblies. Memorials are items that are sent by the synod to church-wide for discussion and votes at the church-wide assembly. It is these decisions that establish the positions and actions of the church.

The polity of the ELCA is reflective of the democratic society in the United States, of which it is a part. Our country's form of government is based on representation of the people to state and national legislatures. Governors and the president provide leadership, but the laws come from the representative legislatures.

The protection of our democratic system is central to Lutherans. It is the way we have chosen to live faithfully as God's people. As such, we recognize the humanity of each person in our country and throughout the world. Together we guide our representatives to protect the lives, livelihoods, and futures of all people.



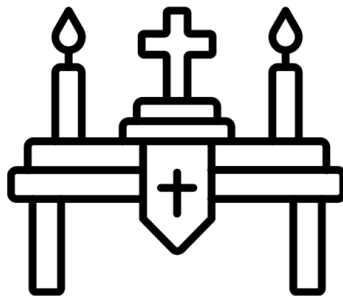
Connecting Worship and Civic Life: An Exploration of the ELCA Social Statement “Faith and Civic Life”

Bishop Meggan Manlove

From the ELCA's 2025 [*A social statement on Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All*](#)

Article 12: Congregations, synod-authorized ministries, campus ministries, and other recognized worshipping assemblies are centers to support civic participation precisely because they are to be grounded in the living Word of God's Law and Gospel. Rooted in Word and Sacrament, almost everything in worship, from the gathering to the sending, prepares us to join God's activity in civic life. **The dynamic movement of the liturgy allows Christians to rest in God's mercy and be restored in hope but, at every turn, prepares them to be sent forth into the world to work for the community's good, both locally and beyond** (emphasis added).

There are many examples. Besides preaching, the church's prayers lift up social concerns and ask guidance for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1). The peace of Christ is a sign of our unity in God and a reminder that we are sent to share this experience of peace with the world. The offering is collected to support the assembly and to share with other people in need, locally and around the globe. There are many types of worshipping communities. They may be based locally or draw from broad regions. In all cases, as expressed in the ELCA constitution and social teaching, this church expects that each worshipping community will be engaged in forms of active civic participation as one element of life in Christ's church. This is one vital way in which God's people serve neighbors in human society.



Suggested Music

Synod Council Member Gwen Sullivan

The following hymns are taken from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW) and *All Creation Sings* (ACS). Those suggested here do not just address the peace and unity that we are feeling the need of at this time in our communal history but are also reminders to recognize the wonders of creation, to see beauty in the everyday elements of our lives. “To be able to marvel at the face of our neighbor with the same awe we have for the mountaintop, the sunlight refracting—this manner of vision is what will keep us from destroying each other. . . . When we grow accustomed to neglecting beauty, we eventually become creatures of hatred. We lose our imagination—a virtue to which wonder is hopelessly tied. Why care for barren land? Why advocate for justice in a system predicated on injustice? We become so accustomed to that bitter taste that we can taste nothing else” Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories That Make Us*, 36, 38).

Included are songs of lament, of lament coupled with hope, of reminders that we are always in God’s care no matter what we see and hear and feel. There are calls to hold fast to the hope of salvation, to love one another, to come together in order to break and share bread with one another, without regard for differences, to care for those who cannot care for themselves.



- ACS 921** Return to God (*Call and response; lament and hope*)
- ACS 922** When We Are Tested (*Familiar tune; reminder of God’s provision*)
- ACS 925** Beautiful Things (*Simple tune; reminder that God can create beauty even from dust*)
- ACS 939** Touch That Soothes and Heals (*Easy tune and strong words*)
- ACS 944** O Spirit All-Embracing (*Familiar tune; hope*)
- ACS 949** Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning for this work’s almost done
- ACS 971** Come and Seek the Ways of Wisdom
- ACS 977** Look Who Gathers at Christ’s Table
- ACS 984** May the God of Hope Go with Us (*Simple tune; sending*)
- ACS 988** The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve
- ACS 989** Let Your Peace Rain upon Us (*Simple Palestinian tune; bears repetition*)
- ACS 1000** God’s Work, Our Hands (*Familiar tune; timely words*)
- ACS 1014** When We Must Bear Persistent Pain
- ACS 1016** Cast Out, O Christ (*Tune may be familiar; timely words*)
- ACS 1018** Deep Peace
- ACS 1020** Let My Spirit Always Sing
- ACS 1050** Sometimes Our Only Song Is Weeping (*Lament and hope*)

ACS 1052 When Our World Is Rent by Violence (*Lament*)
ACS 1057 What Does the Lord Require of You? (*Round; may require some modeling & practice*)
ACS 1060 Gentle Joseph Heard a Warning (*Refugees*)
ACS 1062 Build a Longer Table not a higher wall
ACS 1064 Earth Is Full of Wit and Wisdom
ACS 1069 God Bestows on Every Sense beauty as hope's evidence
ACS 1077 Mercy, We Abide in You
ACS 1078 There Is a Longing in Our Hearts
ACS 1084 God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me

ELW 374 Day of Arising (*Easter hymn that has applicable words*)
ELW 396 Spirit of Gentleness (*Reminder of God's creative actions*)
ELW 397 Loving Spirit
ELW 407 O Living Breath of God
ELW 431 O Christ, What Can It Mean for Us to claim you as our king?
ELW 439 Soon and Very Soon
ELW 450 I Bind Unto Myself Today
ELW 484 You Satisfy the Hungry Heart
ELW 498 United at the Table (*Unidos en las fiesta*)
ELW 518 We Eat the Bread of Teaching
ELW 612 Healer of Our Every Ill
ELW 709 When Our Song Says Peace and the world says war, we will sing despite the world.
ELW 710 Let Streams of Living Justice flow down upon the earth
ELW 711 O Day of Peace that dimly shines through all our hopes and prayers and dreams.
ELW 763 My Life Flows On in Endless Song
ELW 769 If You But Trust in God to Guide You
ELW 770 Give Me Jesus
ELW 793 Be Thou My Vision
ELW 843 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness with a liberating light

Praying for People by Name

Bishop Meggan Manlove

Follow these links to find your county auditor or clerk and your election officials, so you can pray for them by name:

- Washington County Auditors: [DIRECTORY](#)
- Idaho County Clerks: [DIRECTORY](#)
- Wyoming County Clerks: [DIRECTORY](#)
- Oregon County Clerks: [DIRECTORY](#)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America considers civic engagement to be a public good, a responsibility for residents of the United States, and part of our calling as Christians. This engagement with God's work in the political sphere is based on careful discernment that transcends partisanship. Congregations and rostered ministers must ensure that activities related to the electoral process are transparent, nonpartisan, and legal. Yet within these boundaries, there is much we can do. Cultivating relationships with local election officials can be an important support for the individuals, communities, and generations impacted by the outcomes of U.S. elections.

See ELCA Advocacy's document [Cultivating Relationships with Local Election Officials](#) (Includes a template letter/email to send to your auditor/clerk/secretary of state.)

Throughout October, consider praying by name for all those running for local and state elected positions, for voters, and so many others. (See petitions below.)



Occasions for Prayer

Pastor Edwin Weber

There are many occasions for prayer, both in our private devotional lives and in the life of the gathered people of God. Public worship is one of the church's central forms of prayer as the body of Christ gathers to bring before God the needs of the community and the life of the world. In worship, we are summoned to pray for all people and all things, trusting in the goodness and mercy of God.



During an election season, congregations may wonder how best to provide time and space for prayer. Elections can carry particular anxiety, especially when public life is marked by conflict, fear, mistrust, or deep disagreement. Grounding ourselves in prayer as a gathered community, where we hear God's word, receive God's grace, and are sent for the sake of the neighbor, can be a powerful and faithful way to serve.

The Sunday Assembly

Perhaps the most natural place to include prayer during election season is in the Sunday assembly, as congregations across the synod gather for worship. This resource includes suggested petitions for the Prayers of Intercession, with bids for various circumstances that may be used or adapted for local worshipping communities. One simple adaptation may be especially helpful. In petitions for the nations, we often pray for elected officials and others in positions of public responsibility. During election season, congregations may add the phrase "and for those seeking office," acknowledging the ways campaigns and elections shape our public discourse, civic life, and future policy.

Preachers, teachers, and liturgists may also notice existing elements in the liturgy that naturally resonate with prayer in such times. In the "Kyrie," we pray for peace in the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God, and for the unity of all. In the Hymn of Praise, "This is the Feast," we confess that blessing, honor, glory, and might belong to Christ alone. In the Lord's Supper, Christ welcomes us to the table and forms us as one body. These words and liturgical actions may be especially meaningful when carefully drawn upon in preaching, teaching, and prayer.

Prayer for the Nation / National Holiday

A congregation may also choose to hold a special service of prayer. Such a service could be scheduled at a time that makes sense for the local community and would provide a distinct occasion for those who desire additional prayer and support during election season. This may be especially helpful for people who feel anxious, burdened, or called to pray more intentionally for the nation, while allowing others to participate according to their own spiritual needs.

Several liturgical forms may be appropriate. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* provides propers for “National Holiday” (*ELW*, Assembly Edition, 63). Although labeled “National Holiday,” these propers may be well-suited to any occasion when a faith community gathers to pray for the nation. Such a service could take the form of Word and Meal, including Holy Communion, or it could use a Service of the Word or one of the daily prayer offices, such as Evening Prayer / Vespers.

For some communities, gathering on the evening before an election may be especially appropriate. Other congregations may discern that no special service is needed and that the prayers of the Sunday assembly are sufficient. Either approach can be faithful, depending on the needs and context of the congregation.

Lament and Vigil

When considering the form such a prayer service might take, congregations are not limited to Word and Meal or the daily prayer offices. *All Creation Sings* includes a Service of Lament (Assembly Edition, 61), which may be especially appropriate when a community is carrying grief, fear, anger, or deep concern about the state of the world.

Lament gives faithful expression to human sorrow before God. It is not a spiritual form of pessimistic complaining, nor does it require us to cut short grief or move too quickly to resolution. Rather, lament allows the baptized people of God to bring sorrow, anger, fear, and longing into the presence of the One who hears the cries of the suffering. In the Service of Lament from *All Creation Sings*, the assembly lives this out in part by gathering at the font and ending the service with a prayer that looks toward the promise of God’s justice, which shall roll down like waters.

A related form of prayer is keeping vigil. While lament gives voice to sorrow, vigil is an ancient form of Christian prayer centered in waiting, watching, and hope. A prayer vigil may be especially suited to the night before an election or another time of communal concern. One form could invite members of the congregation to sign up for periods of prayer at the church, so that together the community maintains a continuous chain of prayer for the nation, for public servants, and for the peace of the community. Some

congregations may choose an overnight vigil; others may gather for a shorter period of prayer in the evening.

A more formal vigil could draw upon patterns from the Easter Vigil's Office of Readings, using scripture, silence, song, and prayer over an extended period of time. Such a vigil invites the community to wait upon God with hope and expectation, trusting the mystery of God's salvation in a world still marked by sin, fear, division, and violence. Christians keep vigil in the confidence that God's promise is revealed most clearly in the death and resurrection of Christ, whose reign of justice and peace we await with hope.

Bids for Prayers of Intercession

Pastor Edwin Weber

For County Auditors or Clerks

For county [auditors / clerks], election staff, and all whose daily work supports the administration of elections, especially [name/s] that they may carry out their duties with wisdom, patience, equity, and justice. Protect them from harassment, intimidation, corruption, and fear. Strengthen them in their public service, and surround them with communities of gratitude and support.

For Secretaries of State

For our Secretary of State [name] and all who hold responsibility for election oversight, public trust, and civic order, that they may be guided by truth, humility, and care for the people they serve. Grant them courage in times of pressure, clarity in times of confusion, and faithfulness in the duties entrusted to them.

For State Attorneys General

For our Attorney General [name] and all who serve in offices entrusted with legal counsel, public accountability, and lawful processes, that they may be guided by wisdom, humility, and courage. In times of dispute, pressure, or confusion, help them seek truth, protect the vulnerable, and serve the common good rather than partisan advantage.

For Judges and Courts

For judges, court staff, and all who serve the work of justice, especially when they are called to consider questions of elections, that they may be protected from intimidation and guided by wisdom and fidelity to the law. Grant them patience amid public pressure, clarity amid changing circumstances, and courage to serve justice with humility.

For Poll Workers

For poll workers who welcome voters, answer questions, safeguard procedures, and assist in the practice of our civic life, that their service may be marked by patience, integrity, courage, and peace. Keep them safe from hostility or harm, and aid them in helping others casting their vote.

For Election Workers

For election workers who prepare ballots, safeguard our elections, process returns, count votes, maintain records, respond to questions, and labor behind the scenes, that they may be supported and the public assured of their good stewardship. Give them endurance, wisdom, and protection, and let their labor serve the common good.

For Postal Carriers

For postal carriers and all who help deliver ballots, voter information, and public communications, that their work may be safe, timely, and honored. Bless those who travel roads, sort mail, staff offices, and serve communities in every place. Protect them from danger, exhaustion, and discouragement.

For Public Officials, Those Seeking Office

For elected leaders, appointed officials, and all those seeking office, that they may speak truthfully, listen deeply, and act with humility. Guide them to serve not their own agenda, but the needs of their neighbors, especially those who are poor, vulnerable, overlooked, or afraid. Give them open ears to the people they seek to serve and a steadfast concern for the common good.

For Polling Places

For polling places in schools, churches, libraries, community centers, and other public spaces, that they may be places of safety, welcome, patience, and peace. Let all who enter them be free from intimidation, confusion, and fear, and let every community be served with dignity and fairness.

For Volunteers Registering Voters

For volunteers who help neighbors register to vote, understand election processes, and help the vulnerable participate in civic life, that their service may be marked by integrity, nonpartisanship, patience, and care. Guide them to remove barriers, answer questions clearly, and encourage participation with respect for each one casting a ballot.

For Participation in Our Elections

For voters and all who are discerning how to participate in our shared civic life, that they may seek truth, knowledge, and wisdom. Free them from cynicism, contempt, fear, and despair. Open their ears to neighbors with different experiences and views, that all our nation and communities may flourish through rich participation in our elections and shared lives, guided humility and concern for the well-being of the whole nation.

For Those Wrestling with How to Vote

For those who feel uncertain, conflicted, weary, or anxious as they consider how to vote, that they may be guided by truth, peace, and hope. Help us listen carefully, learn honestly, and discern faithfully. Shape our choices by love of neighbor, care for the vulnerable, and responsibility for the well-being of creation.

For Public Trust

For our communities and for all who struggle with distrust or fear, that truth may overcome falsehood, patience may overcome suspicion, and peace may overcome hostility. Build trust where it has been damaged, expose corruption where it exists, and strengthen every good effort toward fairness and accountability.

For Peace, Nonviolence, and Free and Fair Elections

For peace in our communities, nonviolence in our public life, and free and fair elections, that all voices may be heard and every lawful vote counted. Restrain hatred, intimidation, and cruelty. Guide our nation in truth and justice, and teach us to seek the welfare of our neighbors above the triumph of our own desires.

Additional Resources

[Living Lutheran](#): This is: Advocacy, Witness in Society: Connecting Faith and Public Life

Government and Civic Engagement Social Message:

https://resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/government-and-civic-engagement-in-the-united-states-discipleship-in-a-democracy/?_ga=2.193055405.1287818683.1785460701-1288694178.1774638693

[Living Lutheran](#): News from ELCA Advocacy, July 2026

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/mission-ministry/news-from-elca-advocacy-28/>

Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry's Aug. 19, 2026, Letter: [A Call to be Trusted Messengers in this Election Season](#)

[ELCA Advocacy Resource Library](#)



Conclusion

In his hopeful 2011 book, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, Quaker author and educator Parker Palmer wrote, “If I were asked for two words to summarize the habits of the heart American citizens need in response to twenty-first-century conditions, chutzpah and humility are the words I would choose. By chutzpah I mean knowing that I have a voice that needs to be heard and the right to speak it. By humility I mean accepting the fact that my truth is always partial and may not be true at all—so I need to listen with openness and respect, especially to ‘the other,’ as much as I need to speak my own voice with clarity and conviction. Humility plus chutzpah equals the kind of citizens a democracy needs. There is no reason, at least no good reason, why our number cannot be legion.”

We hope that the prayers encouraged in this document lead all of us to possess a bit more chutzpah and a bit more humility as we approach the fall elections.

Peace,
Prayer and Presence in Public Life Task Force

