



METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON, D.C.
SYNOD ELCA

For Such a Time as This: A Call to Prayer and Fasting

I write to you in this hour of urgent need, compelled by the Spirit to call our Synod to a time of concentrated prayer and fasting. As I shared in my recent [letter on spiritual warfare](#), we are witnessing systemic evil that operates without shame—powers and principalities that seek to dehumanize and destroy what God has made holy.

Today I add my voice to the interfaith letter [Fear Is Not a Strategy for Safety](#), which challenges the fear-based governance threatening our neighbors in Washington, D.C. This letter reminds us that at the mercy of these orders and policies are "fellow human beings—neighbors, workers, friends and family—each made in the image of God."

As people of faith, we are called to advocate for the most vulnerable among us. But more than public witness alone, we are called to follow the example of Queen Esther, who faced a crisis that threatened the very existence of God's people. Before approaching the king with her bold advocacy, Esther called for three days of fasting and prayer: "Go, gather all to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16).

Esther taught us something key that we must remember in times such as these: confronting principalities and powers requires both spiritual preparation and courageous action. Her fast was not passive resignation but active engagement with the God who breaks strongholds and delivers the oppressed.

A Call to Three Days of Prayer and Fasting

I am calling our Synod to join in three days of prayer and fasting, beginning this Sunday and continuing through Tuesday. This is a time to:

Name and renounce the evil that surrounds us: The dehumanizing rhetoric that reduces our neighbors to "violent gangs" and "drugged out maniacs." The policies that separate families, criminalize compassion, and prioritize punishment over healing. The systems that count on God's people not knowing our baptismal power.

Pray for the release of strongholds: For the spiritual forces that bind up God's beloved creation and prevent the flourishing of life abundant. For the principalities that thrive on fear, division, and despair. For the powers that seek to strip dignity from the most vulnerable among us. *I have included possible Prayers of Intercession for Sunday Worship below.*

Intercede for courage and wisdom: For our leaders to reject fear-based governance and work together in dignity and respect. For ourselves as we discern how to live as faithful witnesses in this time. For the church to remember who we are and whose we are.

Possible Model to Follow

Sunday-Tuesday: Consider fasting from food (according to your health and ability), social media, news consumption, or anything that distracts from prayer and dependence on God.

Daily Prayer Focus:

- **Sunday:** For the church—that we may be bold in renunciation of evil and fervent in our commitment to life abundant for all.
- **Monday:** For our leaders and systems—that they may serve justice and seek the common good.
- **Tuesday:** For the vulnerable—migrants, the homeless, those struggling with mental health and addiction.

Community Gathering: Join with your congregation, family, or small group. Organize prayer times. Share in the fast together. Remember that spiritual warfare is not solitary work.

For Such a Time as This

We have heard these words time and time again: “For such a time as this.” I have articulated them each time I am awakened to the context in which we live and lead. And I have intentionally shared them with you throughout the years, as both lament and call. Lament because the question resounds, “Why, Lord! Why have we been called for such a time as this, of all times? Why?” After we follow the lament with deep listening to the Spirit, we, like Esther, can hear the call: “We have been placed in this moment for such a time as this.” What an honor to be anointed and called... for such a time as this, of all times.

The hour is urgent, dear friends, but as we were reminded a couple of weeks ago, we are not without power or hope. Our baptism has equipped us for this fight. Our prayers are both balm for healing and weapon against forces that seek destruction.

When we fast and pray together, we join our voices with the chorus of faith that spans centuries—with Esther and Mordecai, with Jesus in the wilderness, with the early church facing persecution, with every generation that has stood against powers that defy God's love.

Let us enter this fast with confidence in the One who has already conquered death and the grave, trusting that our prayers and actions together can break the strongholds that threaten to bind God's creation.

God of justice and mercy, you have called us to this moment and equipped us for this work. As we fast and pray, break every chain that binds your people. Give us wisdom like Esther, courage like the prophets, and love like Christ. Unite us in the good fight of faith, with God's help and in Jesus' name. Amen.

En Cristo,



Rev. Leila M. Ortiz, Bishop

(Possible) Prayers of Intercession for Sunday Worship

For Those Made Vulnerable by Fear-Based Policies

Merciful God, we lift before you our neighbors who have been dehumanized by harsh rhetoric and threatened by policies rooted in fear. We pray especially for migrants facing detention and deportation, for those experiencing homelessness who are criminalized rather than cared for, and for those struggling with mental health and addiction who are labeled rather than loved.

Break the strongholds of prejudice and fear that prevent us from seeing each person as made in your image. Give our leaders wisdom to craft policies that protect the vulnerable rather than punish them, and grant us courage to stand with those whom society pushes to the margins.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

For Our Cities and Communities Under Stress

God of justice and peace, we pray for Washington, D.C. and all cities where inflammatory rhetoric threatens to escalate into violence. Where political leaders speak of "roving mobs" and "lawless wastelands," help us to see neighbors, workers, friends, and family. Where military force is proposed as the solution to complex social problems, guide us toward collaborative approaches that address root causes.

Protect those who serve in law enforcement, and give them wisdom to distinguish between genuine public safety and political theater. Strengthen community leaders, social workers, and all who work for healing and reconciliation in our cities.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

For the Church in This Time of Testing

Almighty God, awaken your church to the spiritual battle before us. Help us remember the power claimed in our baptism—power to renounce the devil and all forces that defy your love. When evil operates without shame in our public life, make us bold in naming it. When systems of oppression seem overwhelming, remind us that your love is more systematic still.

Unite us across denominational lines in prayer and fasting. Give us discernment to distinguish between political partisanship and prophetic witness. Make us instruments of your peace and agents of your justice.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

For Leaders and All in Authority

God of all nations, we pray for President Trump and all who hold positions of power in our government. Grant them wisdom to serve the common good rather than personal ambition. Help them see that true safety comes not through fear and force, but through justice, compassion, and addressing the root causes of social problems.

Guide our local leaders, that they may work together across party lines for the flourishing of all residents. Give courage to those who speak truth to power, and soften the hearts of those who have grown hard toward the suffering of others.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

For This Moment of Urgent Need

God of Esther and Mordecai, you have placed us in this moment "for such a time as this." As we fast and pray, break every chain that binds your people. Where principalities and powers seek to destroy what you have made holy, demonstrate your greater power through acts of love, mercy, and justice.

Transform our lament into action, our anger into advocacy, and our fear into faith. Help us trust that even when evil seems to triumph, your kingdom is still coming and your will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your promise that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.