

CEIST

Catholic Education  
An Irish Schools Trust



## ‘Prayers For Chairs’

Beginning Board Meetings With A Prayer



# **‘Where two or three are gathered in my name I am there in the midst of you’ Mt18:20**

## **Preface**

When we sit together as a Board, we ask the Lord to take a seat with us and guide us as we meet.

So many Board meetings are fraught with worry – drifting teenagers, weary staff, matters of litigation, more bills and less money. Small wonder that we would begin our meetings with an invocation to the good Lord above!

At a simple level, the opening prayer creates a foundation for our meeting and at a more profound level the call to prayer is such that we invite the Lord to direct our conversations and our actions.

We have been told since childhood to try to see the Lord in others. Sometimes this is difficult; sometimes His disguise is too complete for us to recognise Him in those we meet. The challenge is to be open to the faces of Christ which we encounter as we go about our daily tasks and especially as we attend to matters of governance.

Challenge yourself to match each demand with a positive action that brings a bit more hope, justice and humour to those within your reach.

Above all, let the Gospel Values permeate every thought, deed and word as you gather together and rely on the presence of the Lord whom you have invited among you through this beautiful book of prayers, a true gift of the combined creativity of the CEIST Faith Development Department.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”. This is not a wish; this is a given. Claim it. Move through each meeting annointed by His spirit.

Joy to you,

Anne Kelleher, CEO.

**Nollaig** 2009

# Why Pray at a Board Meeting

Why pray at a board meeting in a Catholic school? It is a good question because in a time when a Catholic school is challenged as never before to explain itself, it is well worth saying why we might do such a strange thing as pray at a board meeting.

It is a ridiculous question too. Why, in heaven's name, would you not have a prayer at a board meeting of a Catholic school! Praying is one of the marks of being a Christian. For two thousand years, Christians, in the tradition of their Old Testament ancestors, have turned to God to acknowledge His presence amongst them, to give thanks for life and its blessings and to ask for comfort with life's unavoidable trials and tribulations. Saying a prayer reminds us of who we are.

It is a very special Christian tradition to pray at beginnings and openings, at the start of new chapters and the setting out on journeys. These are vulnerable moments when protection and direction are sought and dedications are made. Johann Sebastian Bach always wrote on his scores: "Ad Soli Deo Gloria" - Glory be to God alone. The Jesuits always wrote "Ad Majoram Dei Gloriam" (abbreviated AMDG) on their work books – to the greater glory of God. Even today you will see footballers bless themselves as they go onto a pitch. Fishermen will pray leaving a port. On an evening when it makes decisions that shape the present and create the future of a school how appropriate that a Catholic school board dedicate itself to God and place its cares in divine hands. The more our decisions impact on lives the more we need to pray.

The great French 20<sup>th</sup> century mystic, Simone Weil used to say that we live our lives by the quality of our attention. Nothing changes the quality of our attention like prayer. You can go so far as to say it changes everything. A board meeting where a prayer is said is never the same as one in which that does not happen. There is a different atmosphere. The moment is warmed. A greater wisdom prevails. Bigger pictures come into view. Ragged edges are smoothed out in mysterious ways.

Above all prayer changes us. There is a new quality in our presence here. We tune in more deeply to what we are about. We are more at peace and more centred. We are less likely to lose the plot. Our hearts are opened to deeper levels of sympathy. Our best selves emerge.

St Paul called it having the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) Through Christ's imagination we are released into the imagination of God. The Holy Spirit moves amongst us. We are reminded of our task to promote the Kingdom. We are in tune with the Beatitudes.

It is said that we do things differently in Catholic schools because we are schools of the Gospel. This little book sets out to help Boards to lead their schools towards the difference we hope to be.

# Contents:

## Prayers for all Occasions

<b>Preface</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>Why Pray at a Board Meeting</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Opening Of The School Year</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Crossing Over</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3. Keeping Focus</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. Bless Us Lord</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Deepening Our Sense Of Community</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6. LORD, Come Into this Space</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7. That We May Show Respect</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>8. New Year Prayer</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>9. To Be A Faithful School</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>10. What We Seek</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>11. Being Free and Responsibility</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>12. Thy Kingdom Come</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>13. Warmth For The Soul</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>14. Lord, Give Us Hope</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>15. “The skies proclaim his justice. All peoples see his glory”</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>16. Lord That We May Trust</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>17. Before We Begin</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>18. Lord, Who Will Be First In Your Kingdom?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>19. When Strangers Become Friends</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>20. A Prayer Of Thanksgiving</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>21. Lord That We May Listen</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>22. Community Has To Be Fought For</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>23. Lord We Need You This Evening</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>24. Prayer For Illumination</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>25. A Prayer Of Gratitude</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>26. The Power Of The Holy Spirit</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>27. That We Remember Who We Are</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>28. Humanity Cannot live Without Hope</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Prayers for Special Occasions</b>	
<b>14. Prayer Before Beginning The Interview Process</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>15. Prayer For When A Tragedy Has Occurred</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>16. Prayer on the Occasion Of A Death</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Prayers Celebrating Our Heritage</b>	
<b>17. Celebrating Nano Nagle page</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>18. Celebrating Catherine McAuley page</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>19. Celebrating Jules Chevalier page</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>31. Celebrating Anthony Receveur page</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>32. Celebrating St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>33. Time To Go Home page</b>	<b>44</b>

# Opening of School Year

## Opening Prayer

Loving Father, as we gather at this first meeting of a new academic year we pray for your guidance. Help us this year to work to the best of our ability so that everyone in our care will reach his/her full potential and in doing so may none of the challenges we encounter prove too daunting. May we treat all those that we meet with respect and kindness. May our decisions be based on careful consideration and wise choices. Help us to make this school a community to be proud of, where people feel included and welcomed. Amen

## Scripture Reading: Mathew 5:14 - 16

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven.

## Reflection Questions

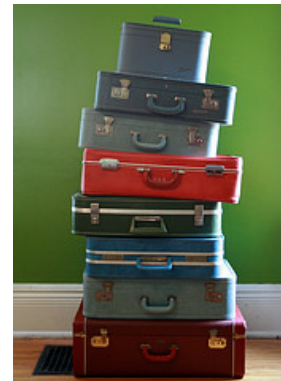
How will we as a board let our light shine in our school community this year?

What obstacles might arise which would cause our light to be hidden?

## Together We Pray

### Journey Prayer

Arise with me in the morning,  
Travel with me through each day,  
Welcome me on my arrival.  
God be with me all the way. Amen



## Crossing Over



We come here this evening from busy lives.

It can be hard to arrive.  
Our bodies can be here and the rest of us somewhere else.

When worn by the day and the people thronging around him, Jesus used to take a boat across the lake, to pray, to be in contact with what was deepest in him, to be able to return whole.

We may not have a boat at our disposal this evening but we have our imaginations and who can prevent us even for the shortest few moments getting into that boat with him and crossing over to that place of peace and depth before we face the pull of life in the ebb and flow of this board's work.

We take a few moments to cross the lake with Jesus and to be with him.  
(short silent pause)

### **Let us pray**

Lord, as a group of seekers ourselves on this board, give us your peace, a peace the world does not give (Jn 14:27).

In these few moments we ask you to still our minds and calm our hearts so that refreshed and whole again we may return and be truly present to what we are about to embark on together this evening.

We ask you Lord to remain with us as we begin the work you have entrusted to us.

## Keeping Focus



In 1716 the King of Sweden, Charles XVI, went on holidays to a small village. He turned up for Sunday Services in a little rustic Lutheran Church. The presiding Minister spotted the King at the back of the church. He decided to put away his homily notes and elected instead to pay tribute to the King. For an hour he spoke lyrically about the King.

The King returned home. Some weeks later he sent a box to the Minister of the country church. The Minister opened the box with a mixture of excitement and curiosity. Within the box was a

Crucifix. Attached to the cross was a letter.

It read: “The Cross must be placed opposite the pulpit so that whoever preaches will be reminded of the primary focus of his preaching, i.e. Christ the true King”.

**Prayer:** Lord, this evening, at our Board meeting, give us the grace to remain focused as we go about as our Father’s business.

Our Father...

Amen.

## Bless Us Lord



One of the treasures of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem is a tiny fragment of leather which is 2,500 years old. It contains the oldest piece of biblical text in existence and is written in a form of Hebrew script already obsolete by the time of Jesus. The words it contains are from the Book of Numbers (6:24 -26) where Aaron blesses the people of Israel.

*The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.*

As we begin our board meeting this evening we take our prayer from these ancient words of Aaron.

### Prayer

May the Lord bless and keep us.

May he make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us.

May he turn his face towards us and give us peace.

We make our prayer through Christ, our Lord.

Amen

## Deepening Our Sense Of Community

*Our schools are faith communities of welcome and hospitality where gospel values are lived and where there is a special care for those most in need.* CEIST Charter

### Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1- 4

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared before them. And a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in their own languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability.

### Together we pray

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

and where there is sadness, joy.

O Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand;

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen



## Lord, Come Into This Space



‘Stranded and starving, somebody has to get packed and sent off into the unknown to search for food, taking what water is left, hacking a way through the undergrowth, hoping somehow to forge a path to something somewhere. But then comes a noise of a helicopter, and rescue approaching. That changes everything. The

one thing needed now is some space, so that what is coming can come’ (The Impact of God: Iain Matthew).

While Jesus chases me like a ‘hound of heaven’ I too seek him. Faith and Prayer are the rendezvous point for us both. Prayer is that instantaneous embrace with someone who knows you intimately. Faith is the embrace prolonged.

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;  
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;  
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine of ways

‘Ah fondest, blindest, weakest,  
I am He Whom you seek!  
You draw love from yourself, who draws Me’

(The Hound of Heaven by Francis Thompson)

**Prayer:** Lord, as we sit on the board here this evening, help us to be aware of the fact that you desire to come and sit in our midst. You showed us this on the Road to Emmaus. All we must do is to allow you in and to share our conversation. Let us pause for a moment and become aware of His presence among our group. (Pause in silence) Amen.

## That We May Show Respect

**“We respect the unique and intrinsic value of every person”.**  
**CEIST Charter**

**Scripture Reading:** Romans 12: 18.

Give the same consideration to all others alike. Pay no regard to social standing, but meet humble people on their own terms. Do not congratulate yourself on your own wisdom. Never pay back evil with evil, but bear in mind the ideals that all regard with respect. As much as possible, and to the utmost of your ability, be at peace with everyone.

### Reflection:



Jesus acknowledged the intrinsic value of every person he met. He shocked the pillars of Jewish society by associating with those who were socially unacceptable, with outcasts and with ‘foreigners’. He had time for everyone, was always compassionate and accepted each person he met as they were.

- To what extent do we try to ensure that each member of our school community both gives, and receives respect to all with whom they come into contact?
- What can/should we do as a Board to support the school culture of good relationships and Gospel values?

### Closing Prayer:

We thank you Lord for the privilege of being here tonight and of being called by you to participate in this important work. Help us, as board members, to always show respect for each other in our own discussions and decision making so that the value of respect may be at the core of all that takes place in this school.

We pray that each member of our school community may experience the respect of others and feel valued for the gift that they are. We pray too that they, in turn, will always follow your exhortation to “Love one another as I have loved you”.  
Glory be to the Father ....

## New Year Prayer



‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new’. 2 Corinthians 5:17

### Opening Prayer

God of our yesterdays, our todays, and our tomorrows, thank You for the year behind us and for the year ahead. Help us in this New Year, to worry less and to laugh more. Help us to remember that when Jesus was born in a stable He came for us so that we could know You better. Thank You for another new year and for new chances every day. We pray for peace, hope, respect and justice, that we might share them with others. **Amen**

### Reflection

#### *Pacem in Terris*

“May he banish from the hearts of all men and women whatever might endanger peace.

May he transform them into witnesses of truth justice and love.

May he enkindle the rulers of peoples so that in addition to their solicitude for the proper welfare of their citizens, they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace.

May he enkindle the wills of all so that they may overcome the barriers that divide, cherish the bonds of mutual charity, understand others, and pardon those who have done them wrong.

May all peoples of the earth become as brothers and sisters, and may the most longed for peace blossom forth and reign always among men and women.” Pope John XXIII

**Prayer:** Lord, we as board members are witnesses of truth, justice and love in our school community.

We pray that you will help us enkindle our school community so that we are a place of peace, charity and understanding.

## To Be A Faith School

**“We believe a knowledge of and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ give meaning and purpose to our lives”. CEIST Charter**

### **Gospel Reading:** Matthew. 13:31-32

He put another parable before them:

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it is grown it is the biggest of shrubs and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air can come and shelter in its branches”.

### **Reflection**

Like the mustard seed, the seed of faith can be very small. However, if it is nourished in a caring Christian community which lives according to the teaching and example of Jesus, and in an atmosphere which is permeated by a life of prayer, then the seed will grow and flourish. In such a community it is not only spirituality which is developed, but also true humanity.

- How aware are we of the work done by our teachers to foster the development of a relationship with God among our students and how do we support them?
- Are parents and students made aware of the Catholic ethos, values and principles of the CEIST Charter

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord, we pray this evening at our board meeting that our school community will continue always to be a faith sharing community which proclaims and lives the Gospel, transforming people in the Catholic faith. May our staff, students and parents grow closer to you, become ever more comfortable and confident with their own religious identity in this challenging world, and develop both deep spirituality and compassionate humanity as they journey through life.

We say together: Our Father ...

## What We Seek

*'Seeking the good is walking in the right direction'*

Timothy Radcliffe



We are aware of how salmon, eels and terns set off on long migratory journeys to other sides of the earth answering some nameless call stamped in their natures.

They are a bit like Frodo and Sam in Lord of the Rings, setting off not quite knowing where they are going and what they are to do.

As Christians we know that we are hard-wired to be pilgrims. Whether it's Lourdes or Knock, Taize or Compostela, we are often on the move.

Our hearts are restless, St Augustine wrote, and they will not rest until they rest in that great other we call God. We may not always be able to put words on that but we have a real sense of being primed to seek the good, the true and the beautiful. CS Lewis said that beauty rouses up the desire for 'our own far off country'.

As Christians our call is to remind people of their deepest desires which are rooted in our nature.

At our board meeting this evening we may be called to issue that reminder, to our own inner selves, to each other, to a student, a parent, a teacher. We may be called to accompany someone on their pilgrimage.

### **Prayer:**

Lord, give us the strength to issue your call when the time comes.

## Being Free and Responsible



We are all well familiar with the impressive Statue of Liberty as it dominates the harbour at the mouth of New York City. The monument is a permanent edifice to remind us that liberty lies at the heart of freedom. But to be totally free one must also be totally responsible. One cannot be free without being responsible for one's actions in relation to oneself and to others. Irresponsibility thrives in the world today.

Viktor Frankl, concentration camp survivor, recommended that the Statue of Liberty on the East Coast should be supplemented by a Statue of *Responsibility* on the West Coast. Frankl contended that, "Freedom... is not the last word. ... In fact, freedom is in danger of degenerating into mere arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibility."

**Prayer:** Lord, help our schools be places set apart. They are called to be signs of contrast to the cultures of death in society. They are called to establish cultures of life and light instead. May our schools continue to be heroic in their stand against all that threatens the wellbeing of our teachers and children.

Lord, as we sit together as a Board tonight, grant us the courage, forbearance and grace to continue to build a culture that liberates through the values of responsibility and justice. Amen.

## Thy Kingdom Come

### 'Education involves the whole person' CEIST Charter

#### Scripture Reading: Luke 18:15-17

People even brought babies to him for him to touch them; but when the disciples saw this they scolded them. Jesus called the children to him and said: "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. In truth I tell you, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."



#### Reflection:

- How conscious are we of our role as part of the Church's pastoral ministry?
- How far do Catholic values determine our policies and practices?

#### Prayer

Father, we pray this evening at our board meeting that your Holy Spirit will be with us as we work together. May we be always mindful that our role here involves more than the practical, and often difficult, business of making decisions concerning the running of a school.

Lord may our school be proud to be a Catholic school permeated by Kingdom values, and imbued with a spirit of evangelisation. May it always be a place in which the words of St. John will be reflected: "It has given me great joy to find that children of yours have been living the life of truth as we were commanded by the Father", (2 Jn. 1:4). We make our prayer through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## Warmth For The Soul



Brian Friel's father was a Primary School Head Master in country a school, outside Omagh. One of the services he gave his children was to organise choir for the annual Feis Cheoil, held early in the summer. The Master would call the children to stand at their desks. He'd then strike his table and raise his conductor arms and the singing would commence.

They came first in the Feis on one particular occasion. The Master was very pleased. He wanted to show his appreciation to the children. As the summer days increased and the pace of school work decreased, he struck his table, raised his arms and the children began singing Tom Moore's 'Oft in the Stilly Night'.

When the children were in full flight, the Master turned on his heels and headed out of the classroom, under the school porch and across the courtyard and stood gazing out on the summer landscape while enjoying the sweet unbroken voices of the children, setting his back as it were to the beauty of the performance, absorbed in the melody.

### **Prayer:**

Lord, as a Board, we ask you to bless all our teachers, in this school, who love and work at their art with a warmth that inspires in their students the desire to learn and therefore sow in them the melodious notes of the great Christian symphony. Amen.



## Lord, Give Us Hope

‘Where there is despair let me bring hope’. **St. Francis**



St Augustine, who had such a deep influence on the mind of our new Holy Father, once wrote that, "Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage; anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are."

Are we angry enough about what's wrong with the world; the numerous occasions when people's inhumanity to our fellow beings is so evident? Do we really have the courage of our convictions to change these things?

‘The opposite of hope is cynicism, and cynicism also has two (other) daughters. Their names are indifference and cowardice. In renewing ourselves in our faith, what Catholics need to change most urgently is the habit and rhetoric of cowardice we find in our own personal lives, in our national political life, and sometimes even within the Church herself’.  
(Archbishop Charles J. Chaput 2005)



### **Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, as our Board ponders these challenging ideas, grant that we may be instruments of hope so that we may dismantle the crutches of despair and brokenness in the world around us.  
Amen.

**“The skies proclaim his justice:  
All peoples see His glory” Psalms 96**

‘Earth is crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,  
The rest sit around it and pluck the blackberries’. Aurora Leigh 1897



It was early December and we were experiencing a prolonged period of hard frosty nights and days, instilling delight in the poet and panic in the driver.

This was no ordinary moon I hasten to add. It caught Kevin Myers by surprise too like the rest of us Magi. He wrote, ‘Not knowing it was coming, as I

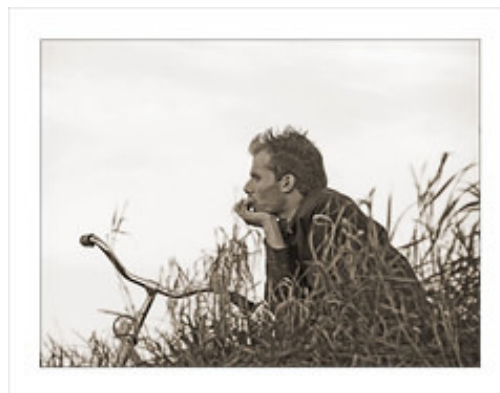
brought my dogs in from their evening walk, astonished, I saw Venus emerge from the heart of the moon’s crescent, just as (Jupiter) closed in from above; and then for about an hour or so, our two planetary companions played around the orbit of the moon all brilliantly bright against the ebony-blue midwinter sky’ (Irish Independent 8 Jan ’09).

For a moment in time, those who gazed into this lunar sky, on this night, became mystic-astronomers as we celebrated the stunning fine tuning of the universe.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you hold all of creation in being. On this night, as we enter into our board meeting, we thank you for the wonders of your universe and the wonders of our very selves. May we always be blessed with the gift of wonder and awe that your Spirit infuses in us all. Amen.

## Lord That We May Trust

Trust doesn't come easy for many of us. And trusting somebody we don't see may often be a step too far indeed. Yet, when we get to know another, as Mary knew the Lord, trusting is the most natural and compelling thing one can do.



Mary was asked to make a difficult decision. She was not *told* to be the 'Handmaid of the Lord'. She was asked. She was given a choice. She then had a decision to make. She could have put herself first. Her decision would have a huge impact on her personal life and far reaching implications for all of humankind. The request disturbed her. She was but a girl and she was being asked to be a mother, the Mother of God!

Such an amazing request! What was she to do? But Mary was a person of profound prayer and reflection. She had a technique for making decisions. Every aspect of her life was characterised by a concrete belief that she was not alone. This same confidence was the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. She was full of the Spirit. She did not fully understand but she put all of her trust in the loving Lord she loved and answered 'Yes' to this outrageous request. Later she would 'ponder all these things in her heart'.



**Prayer:** Lord, we turn to your mother at this evening's Board meeting to help us to know you intimately so that, after reflection, we will make good decisions. Jesus is our point of intimacy with the Father. 'My Father is your Father'. Therefore, 'ask and you shall receive'. (Silent pause) Amen.

## Before We Begin

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, St Ignatius of Loyola writes:



‘I will stand for the space of an *Our Father*, a step or two before the place where I am to meditate or contemplate, and with my mind raised on high, consider that God our Lord beholds me. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility.’

If St. Ignatius needed to make such a beautiful and simple act before entering his sacred space how much do we need to do the same before we enter the sacred space of this board meeting.

How wonderful it would be if in the company of Ignatius, in reverence and humility we were able to say:

Here I am Lord,  
Your poor servant,  
In this place on this evening  
With all my thoughts and worries and distractions  
But ready to serve you  
Just as I am.

“Prayer and love are learned in the hour when prayer has become impossible and hearts have turned to stone” Thomas Merton

Our Father...

## Lord, Who Will Be First In Your Kingdom?



The 1936 Olympic Games Berlin: Hitler is well established as the Fuehrer. He is implementing his plan suggesting that the Arian race is superior to all others. He believes in establishing a world of inequality. He sits presiding over the games. The very games he is hoping will provide the convenient evidence to support his thesis. Inconveniently, though, a black American athlete, Jesse Owens, is winning gold after gold, four in all. Indeed, non-Arians dominate the games.

One of the events that Jesse was competing in was the 'Broad Jump', now called the Long Jump. The event was not going well for him. There was a chance that he might not qualify. He was continually breaking the line and forfeiting his opportunity for another potential gold.

Karl Ludwig, the blond German official on duty, was observing this. With great courage, and before the eyes of the Fuehrer himself, he advised Jesse to allow a couple of inches before the board from which the athlete would lift off defying the laws of gravity. Jesse took his advice and won the gold medal for the long jump.

When asked later which of the four gold medals he cherished most Jesse replied, 'You can melt all the cups and medals I have won but nothing compares to the 24 carat friendship with this courageous man'.

**Prayer:** Let us pray with Catherine McAuley, Lord, "There are things that people prize more highly than gold, though they cost the donor nothing; among these are the kind word, the gentle, compassionate look, and the patient hearing of people's sorrows." Lord, bless these Board members for all the good they do for the school and in their private lives. Amen.

## When Strangers Become Friends

Sometimes it may take a city to lose its power to find its humanity



In 2003 the worst power cut the world has ever seen - a loss of 62,000 megawatts - struck eastern North America effecting 50 million people. Traffic lights failed, underground railways were evacuated and people were trapped in lifts in offices and apartments. As one person said, 'It's frightening because the news is eerily reminiscent of 9/11'.

New York came to an abrupt stand still. Workers had a choice, to either walk home or sleep on the street. It was reported that shop keepers handed out runners free of charge to assist people make the arduous journey home on foot. Many residents open their homes and accommodated as many as they could. The remainder chose to make of the street a bed for the night.

The most enduring aspect of this story is the way in which strangers sat down together and began to talk to each other and share their story. Strangers became life-long friends. The city got to know each other. Coming to work every morning, subsequently, meant recognizing and acknowledging newfound acquaintances. As a result, a sense of community developed that did not previously exist.

Visitors to the 'Big Apple' remark, to this day, on the sense of community they experience in the city, known for its sleepless nature, and how safe they feel. Not only was it a night in which the famous insomniac did in fact sleep but it was a day when the city became a village, a village of friends.

**Prayer:** Lord, sometimes it may take a city to lose its power to experience the wealth of potent humanity that lies dormant waiting to be released like the gas from a coke can. May we, as members of a Board, always grasp the opportunity to reach out to others, to decrease the individualism that characterizes our places of living today and to build enduring community and friendships. Amen.

## A Prayer Of Thanksgiving



*Saying “Thank You” is one of the most gracious gestures that keep us humble. It’s simple and yet it holds a very powerful message when used sincerely.*

### A Reading from St. Paul to the Colossians (3:16-17)

Let the message about Christ completely fill your lives, while you use all your wisdom to teach and instruct each other. With thankful hearts, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. Whatever you say or do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks to God the Father because of him.

### Reflection:

O God, when I have food, help me to remember the hungry.  
When I have work help, me to remember the jobless.  
When I have a home, help me to remember those who have no home at all.  
When I am without pain, help me to remember those who suffer.  
And when I remember, may my complacency be destroyed, my compassion stirred and my concern for others enhanced.  
And may I help by word and deed, those who cry out for what I take for granted. Amen

**Prayer** Loving God, as our Board gathers here this evening, we take the time to thank you for all of the wondrous gifts which you have given us. Sometimes we get caught up in the business of life and we forget to appreciate your generosity. In valuing your gifts may we always strive to improve our lives and to build communities of peace and joy. Amen.

## Lord That We May Listen



A French man called Moreno invented the 'Credit Card'. When he first approached the major banks he was written off as a crackpot. The bankers considered the idea utterly stupid. Putting a card in a wall to withdraw one's money was absolutely ludicrous. Moreno believed in his invention

and continued to approach banks and try to convince them of the merits of this new ATM system. The more he tried the more he was rejected. He eventually ended up on the street poverty stricken.

One day he was crossing the road when a long slick chauffeur-driven car knocked him down. An Italian business man leapt out of the back seat highly concerned, fearful that the injured man would take him to court pressing for compensation. The Italian confessed he was a banker and promised Moreno the moon and the stars to keep him happy. On hearing this Moreno sat into the limousine and told him of his invention. Moreno's dream became a reality. All it needed was a listening ear and an open heart and mind.

When we dream a dream alone it remains a dream. When we dream a dream together it becomes a reality.

(N.B. Many have claimed to have invented the Credit Card)

**Prayer:** Lord, give us the ears to hear and an open heart and mind, as we sit at this board meeting this evening. Amen.

## Community Has To Be Fought For

The following excerpt comes from 'Dreams From My Father' Barack Obama



'I was operating mainly on impulse, like a salmon swimming blindly upstream toward the site of his own conception. In classes and seminars, I would dress up these impulses in the slogans and theories that I'd discovered in books, thinking – falsely – that the slogans meant something, that they somehow made what I felt more amenable to proof. But at night, lying in bed, I would let the slogans drift away, to be replaced with a series of images, romantic images, of a past I had never known.

They were of the civil rights movement, mostly, the grainy black-and-white footage that appears every February during Black History Month, the same images that my mother had offered me as a child. A pair of college students, hair short, backs straight, placing their orders at a lunch counter teetering on the edge of a riot. SNCC workers standing on a porch in some Mississippi backwater trying to convince a family of sharecroppers to register to vote. A country jail bursting with children, their hands clasped together, singing freedom songs.

Such images became **a form of prayer** for me, bolstering my spirits, channelling my emotions in a way that words never could. They told me... that I wasn't alone in my particular struggles, and that communities had never been a given in this country, at least not for blacks. **Communities had to be created, fought for, tended like gardens. They expanded or contracted with the dreams of men...**

### Reflection

Where is God leading us?  
How do we pray the direction we are taking?  
If community has to be created, fought for, tended like gardens, where are we creating, fighting for, tending to?

### Prayer

O Lord who said you were 'the way the truth and the life', lead us ever onwards on your way and in your truth; meet us in the prayers of our minds eye and build in us dreams that are larger than we ever imagine possible.

## Lord We Need You This Evening



Eckhart Tolle wrote,

*‘You are here to enable the divine purpose of the universe to unfold.  
That is how important you are’*

The Psalmist is aware of and amazed at this importance and asks, ‘What is man that You should keep him in mind? Mortal man that You should care for him’. The human person is wonderful. We reach our penultimate purpose in a life of faith, a faith in Jesus our Lord and Saviour. Only Jesus fills the gap between my reaching for God and He for me.

This is great news because now we have somebody who wants to help us every day in whatever we do.

*‘I am the vine, and you are the braches, he who lives in me and I in him will bear much fruit. For without me you can do nothing’.*

**Prayer:** As we gather this evening as a Board, that we are reminded that we can not do it all on our own but that all things are possible ‘Through Him, with Him and in Him’.

‘Glory be to him, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory be to him from generation to generation in his church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen’. (Eph 3: 20 - 21).

## Prayer For Illumination



In the summer of 1833, a young minister of the Church of England was a passenger on a ship in the Mediterranean Sea on his way back to England. Because there was no wind, the ship was stranded in fog for a whole week in the Straits of Bonifacio between Corsica and Sardinia. Everything was obscured by the relentless and motionless fog.

The young minister, John Henry Newman, had been gravely ill during his stay in Sicily and was undergoing a deep crisis in his life. The fog reflected in his mind a deep uncertainty about where the future would take him and it weighed heavily on him.

History records that John Henry Newman would go on to convert to Catholicism and become one of its greatest figures. His thinking had a huge impact on Vatican II and on the emergence of the laity within the church. He is soon to be a saint of the Church.

History also records that in that interlude of physical and spiritual fog Newman wrote one of Christianity's great prayer-hymns in which he entrusted himself totally to God's help and will. Among those most touched by this prayer was the great Indian leader, Mahatma Gandhi.

On this evening of our board meeting, when we are uncertain about decisions we have to make, we offer up that same prayer that a great churchman penned on the deck of a becalmed ship all those years ago and entrust ourselves to God's help and will.

**Prayer:** Lead Kindly Light, amidst th'encircling gloom  
Lead thou me on!  
The night is dark, and I am far from home –  
Lead thou me on!  
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene – one step enough for me.

## A Prayer Of Gratitude



It is often said in our Christian tradition that the one thing all of our great mystics have in common is an attitude of profound gratitude.

The more you reach towards the heart of God and the reality of things the more grateful you become.

### Reflection

Take a few moments to ponder the following:

- Where is gratitude in our hearts this evening?
- Are we grateful for those others around our table who by their generosity and example lift our lives and lift the life of this school?
- Are we grateful for the call we have received to serve here?
- Are we grateful for all the good things in our lives and all the good things in this school?
- Are we grateful to our Lord and God who has saved us?

### Prayer

Lord, give us grateful hearts this evening and always.

## The Power Of The Spirit

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has transformed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. It is a world wide fellowship of women and men who are banded together to solve their common problem and to help follow sufferers in recovery from that age-old, baffling malady, alcoholism. AA members, regardless of who they are or what they believe, pray this prayer at the conclusion of every meeting:

*Grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.*

For alcoholic sufferers, alcohol has a way of disabling their free will. They lose the power of choice. The AA program involves Twelve Steps, which if practiced as a way of life, can overcome the obsession to drink, restore the power of choice and enable the sufferer to live a happy and useful alcohol-free life. The Twelve Steps are spiritual in nature. This is why the First Step is not about alcoholism, it is about knowing one's need for a "Higher Power."

Christianity has a name for this Higher Power. It refers to the God that blows in and through us, ordering our lives and our behaviors with our cooperation. That name is God the Spirit.

### **Prayer**

Gracious God, Holy Spirit  
Grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.



## That We Remember Who We Are



Loving God, as we gather at this meeting we remember the founding members of our CEIST trust. We thank you for the faith tradition which they gifted us. May we always appreciate these entrusted gifts and do our best to continue the mission which they started. We ask your guidance and courage in this endeavour as we pray tonight. Amen

### Prayers of Intercession

Response    Hear our prayer

May we always keep the dignity and rights of the human person to the forefront of our decision making here in this school. Lord, in your mercy...

May we always create a rich heritage of hospitality excellence and compassion in our school environment which is inspired by Gospel values and the unique wisdom of the Founders. Lord in your mercy...

May we continually challenge the members of our school community to reach their full potential spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically so that they are a true embodiment of Jesus Christ. Lord, in your mercy...

May our school always value the importance of good relationships and of fostering good communications within the school community, so that everyone feels valued, heard, and consulted. Lord in your mercy.....

## Humanity Cannot Live Without Hope!



We are living in hard times. The culture of death is pernicious, widespread and morbid.

However, the world is not all darkness; humanity is not dominated by evil. As St. Paul reminds us, where evil abounds, good abounds all the more.

Christianity demands that we, as Christians, recount the good that gives life and nourishes our civilization. We are not naive. Every day we come face to face with reality and its shadows, but we seek the most beautiful stories - those that nourish hope.

We are absolutely convinced that humanity was created by Love to love. We discover this every day, when we come upon and recount the many stories of conversion, of acceptance and help for the poor and the sick, of charity, of forgiveness, of peace-building, of human solidarity and even of martyrdom.

It is these realities that we want to make known. This is the good news that is renewed every day. And it is with such a voice that we intend to continue nourishing hope and making it grow.

Humanity cannot live without hope! Without hope the person does not embark upon any journey. With hope, there is a greater chance of bringing good to every situation that life offers each day. We are consoled by what Jesus, the Lord of Hope, says when he reminds us; 'In the world you will have much trouble; but, take courage! I have conquered the world' (Jn 33:16).

**Prayer:** Lord, as we begin our Board Meeting this evening, we will endeavour, with your grace to be a story of hope for our school. Amen.

## **Prayers For Special Occasions**



**Prayer before Beginning the Interview Process**

**Prayer for When a Tragedy has occurred**

**Prayer on the occasion of a death**

## Prayer Before Beginning The Interview Process

### Opening Prayer



Loving God, we ask you to be with us today as we face an important decision making moment. May we use the gifts of wisdom, courage and right-judgment, which we received from your Spirit, to choose the best person to join our school community. May the interview process today bring out the best in the candidates that we will interview and may our selection process be fair and just. Be with us Lord. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

*May your integrity shine like the dawn*  
Psalm 37:6

We all have difficult decisions to make, at home, at work, as members of this Board of Management. Each decision is based on different criteria. What criteria are you going to base your choice on today? What skill will you look for in choosing the right person for your school community? The inheritance which God gives us is rich. Think on that richness now. Reflect on those gifts of wisdom and courage and right judgment spoken of in the reading, Ask God to help you to make a truly right decision today.

### **Prayer**

Mary too had many decisions to make through out her life. At these times she asked God to be with her and to help her. Today, as members of this Board, we emulate her actions as we say; Hail Mary.....

## Prayer For When A Tragedy Has Occurred

### Opening Prayer

Loving God, we come to you in this time of tragedy in our school community. Be with us during this challenging time. May we feel your healing presence with us over the coming days and be strengthened by it. May our lives be filled with hope and faith in your love for us. **Amen**



### Scripture Reading Isaiah 43

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you. O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel. Do not fear, for I have saved you. I have called you by your name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you and through the rivers and they will not overwhelm you. For I am the Lord your God, your Saviour.

### Moment of Silence

In your heart now ask God for help tonight. Ask him to show you his guiding arm for you.

### Closing Prayer

We come to you tonight in our distress. Let us gain comfort from your words in the reading tonight when you tell us that you have called us by our names and that we are yours. We may be feeling inadequate and overwhelmed so as we gather here so we ask you for the strength to say and do the right thing and to experience the peace of your spirit in our hearts and minds. Be with us Lord. **Amen**

## Prayer On The Occasion Of A Death

### Opening Prayer

Compassionate God, we come to you tonight at this very sad time for our school community. \_\_\_\_\_ touched our lives by his/her presence here with us. Life is a series of beginnings and endings. Comfort us as we cope with this ending and lead \_\_\_\_\_ into a new beginning in the shadow of your love.



**Reading: Matthew 11:28-30**

Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

### Prayers of Intercession

**Response** *Hear our Prayer*

For \_\_\_\_\_ who has died and is on his/her way to you, Lord. Give him/her the fullness of life and happiness. In your mercy....

For those who are mourning the loss of \_\_\_\_\_. Give them strength in the days ahead and help them to feel your healing presence. In your mercy....

For our school community; May we remember with joy the life of \_\_\_\_\_ and be grateful for the gift of his/her presence here with us. In your mercy ...

### Closing Prayer

O Lord, support us all the day long,  
Until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed,  
and the fever of life is over, and our work is done.  
Then, Lord, in your mercy, grant us safe lodging,  
A holy rest, and peace at last:  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## **Prayers To Celebrate Our Heritage**



**Celebrating Nano Nagle**

**Celebrating Catherine McAuley**

**Celebrating Catherine McAuley**

**Celebrating Jules Chevalier**

**Celebrating St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac**

## Celebrating Nano Nagle

Nano Nagle responded to God's call in the most difficult of circumstances.



“She opened her first school in Cork in 1754 in defiance of the Penal Laws. She challenged the institutional injustice that perpetuated marginalisation and poverty. In keeping with that ideal, Presentation schools promote a faith community inspired by Gospel values and a holistic response to the spiritual, moral, social, intellectual and physical needs of each student”. CEIST Charter

### Profile of Nano Nagle

In the face of fear, she chose to be daring,  
In the face of anxiety, she chose to trust,  
In the face of impossibility, she chose to begin.

To universal misery she proposed ministry to persons,  
To ignorance, knowledge,  
To disillusionment tenacity of purpose,  
And to multiple vexations, singleness of heart.

Faced with failure, she held fast to hope,  
Faced with death, she believed in a living future,  
And programme for that future she gave in one word, LOVE.

Raphael Consedine P.B.V.M.

### Prayer

God, our Father, as we meet here this evening we reflect upon your call to Nano Nagle and her unwavering response to you. As a CEIST school in the Presentation tradition we pray that ours may always be a place in which the lantern of Nano's faith will burn brightly and in which our students will be inspired by Gospel values and come to know you in their lives. May we be ever mindful of the tradition of the Presentation Sisters which we have been entrusted to embrace and carry into the future. Bless us with the wisdom to always allow your Holy Spirit to lead us in our work here. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.



## Celebrating Catherine McAuley



Catherine McAuley opened her first school in Dublin in 1827 in response to God's call to work towards empowering the poor to overcome the crushing poverty in which they lived. Her first schools were primary schools for the improvement of literacy and the teaching of the Catholic faith to those who had no other opportunity to learn.

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy education is committed to the full development and the achievement of the potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalized, conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy.

CEIST Charter p.20

In our work here as Board of Management, let us listen to Catherine's words:

"I leave you free to do what you think best.  
I am satisfied you will not act imprudently, and this conviction makes me happy"

Catherine McAuley



### Prayer

God, our Father, as we meet here this evening we reflect upon your call to Catherine McAuley and her unwavering response to you. As a CEIST school in the Mercy tradition we pray that ours may always be a place in which the example of Catherine's faith will burn brightly and in which our students will be inspired by Gospel values and come to know you in their lives. May we be ever mindful of the tradition of the Mercy Sisters which we have been entrusted to embrace and carry into the future. Bless us with the wisdom to always allow your Holy Spirit to lead us in our work here. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Celebrating Jules Chevalier



Jules Chevalier founded the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in 1854... to bring the Good News of God's love to all people. He believed the lives of all could be enriched by a spirituality centred on the heart of Christ. CEIST Charter p.21.

### Reflection

Jules Chevalier was convinced that the Jesus he found in the Gospels

was a person of deep compassion, love and understanding.

This open-hearted

Jesus is the one who wants to bring hope and healing to all human beings.

Fr. Chevalier wanted all to come to know and experience the love of God

revealed in the heart of Christ.



MSC website

Let us quietly consider, for a moment, how we, in our work here, are continuing the tradition of Jules Chevalier and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in supporting the members of our school community in their journey of faith.

### Prayer

God, our Father, as we meet here this evening we reflect upon your call to Jules Chevalier and his unwavering response to you. As a CEIST school in the tradition of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart we pray that ours may always be a place in which the example of Jules' faith will burn brightly and in which our students will be inspired by Gospel values and come to know you in their lives. May we be ever mindful of the tradition of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart which we have been entrusted to embrace and carry into the future. Bless us with the wisdom to always allow your Holy Spirit to lead us in our work here. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Celebrating Anthony Receveur

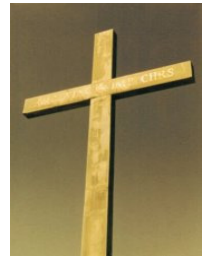


At the time of the French Revolution in 1789 Anthony Receveur founded the Sisters of the Christian Retreat ... Their aim is to awaken an alienated world to God through reflection, prayer and retreat. This objective is embodied in their approach to Catholic Education. CEIST Charter p.21

As Sisters of the Christian Retreat our mission is twofold: to bring people to reflect on the Word of God and to meditate on its significance for them as “Good News” ... to help people of all ages realise their full potential and to take their place in the mission of the Church. Our founder, Fr. Anthony Receveur, began with a small group of men and women during the time of the French Revolution (circa 1789), a time when faith and morals were in decline. Today, we see a breakdown in our own society, in family life and in spiritual values.

Sr. Anne Dunne

Quietly consider how we, in our work here, are continuing the tradition of Anthony Receveur and the Sisters of the Christian Retreat in supporting the members of our school community in their journey of faith?



### Prayer

God, our Father, as we meet here this evening we reflect upon your call to Anthony Receveur and his unwavering response to you. As a CEIST school in the tradition of the Sisters of the Christian Retreat we pray that ours may always be a place in which the example of Anthony Receveur’s faith will burn brightly and in which our students will be inspired by Gospel values and come to know you in their lives. May we be ever mindful of the tradition of the Sisters which we have been entrusted to embrace and carry into the future. Bless us with the wisdom to always allow your Holy Spirit to lead us in our work here. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Celebrating St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac



The company of the Daughters of Charity, founded in France in 1633 by St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, provided free schooling for the poorest girls. These first schools were concerned with literacy, helping girls to come to know and love God and also acquire skills that would make them independent. CEIST Charter p.21

### Reflection

Vincent “was content to lay out a road, to clear the paths, inviting his disciples to continue the charitable works which he had begun”.

Bernard Pujo

“Wherever we may be God is with us and so we must be always joyful”.  
St. Louise de Marillac.

Quietly consider how we, in our work here, are continuing the tradition of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac and the Daughters of Charity in supporting the members of our school community in their journey of faith?

### Prayer

God, our Father, as we meet here this evening we reflect upon your call to Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, and their unwavering response to you. As a CEIST school in the tradition of the Daughters of Charity we pray that ours may always be a place in which the light of faith will burn brightly and in which our students will be inspired by Gospel values and come to know you in their lives. May we be ever mindful of the tradition of the Daughters of Charity which we have been entrusted to embrace and carry into the future. Bless us with the wisdom to always allow your Holy Spirit to lead us in our work here. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Acknowledgements

This book has been edited and compiled by Lloyd Bracken on behalf of the Faith Development Team **CEIST**.

The following prayers were written by Margaret Farrell

Celebrating Nano Nagle  
Celebrating Catherine McAuley  
Celebrating Jules Chevalier  
Celebrating Anthony Receveur  
Celebrating St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillacand  
Lord That We May Trust  
To Be a Faith School  
Thy Kingdom Come

Antonya Hanly wrote the following;

Opening of the School Year  
That We Remember Who We Are  
Deepening Our Sense of Community  
New Year Prayer  
A Prayer of Thanksgiving  
Prayer before Beginning the Interview Process  
Prayer for When a Tragedy Has Occurred  
Prayer On The Occasion Of A Death

Lloyd Bracken wrote;

Lord Come into this Space  
Being Free and Responsible  
Warmth for the Soul  
Lord Give Us Hope  
'The skies proclaim his justice: All peoples see His glory'  
Lord That We May Trust  
Lord, Who Will Be First In Your Kingdom?  
When Strangers Become Friends  
Lord That We May Listen  
Keeping Focus  
Lord We Need You This Evening  
Time To Go Home  
Humanity Cannot Live Without Hope

Amalee Meehan wrote; The Power of the Holy Spirit

Ned Prendergast wrote;

Why Pray at a Board Meeting  
Before we Begin  
Bless Us Lord  
What We Seek  
Crossing Over  
Community Has To Be Fought For  
A prayer of Gratitude  
Prayer for Illumination

## Time to go Home

Lord, we pray that our meeting tonight  
Was a humble and sincere effort  
To listen to the many voices  
About the many concerns  
That affect our school community.

We pray that we also listened to Your Spirit  
Yelling in our hearts  
When difficult decisions had to be made.  
Thank you for the Spirit of right judgment  
The Spirit of discernment and courage.

May the consensus we reached be a gift,  
an acorn that will  
Grow and achieve its potential  
For all who teach and learn here. Amen.

