**Staff Meeting - Opening Prayer (Academic Year 2023/2024)**

A silhouette of a person holding a guitar

Description automatically generated

**Reader 1:** We begin our Prayer, together, “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.” And we light our CEIST candle, we do so as a sign and symbol of God’s loving presence with us as we begin our first meeting of this academic year.

**Reader 2:**

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and world’s deep hunger meet.” Frederick Buechner.

**Reader 3:**

A young teacher working in a school for the deaf tells this story.

Every year our school holds a school musical; it’s the highlight of the school calendar. All the students get involved, boys from the local school take part, all the parents/guardians come along, the whole community get behind us with prizes for the raffle and sponsorship and it’s all hands on deck for the entire staff. It might seem strange to have a school musical in a school for deaf children but it absolutely works. The joy and happiness from that one night seems to power the school for the whole of the year.

Last year was my first year in the school. I was a mature student when I did the PME and this was my first full time teaching post. I’d worked in a variety of other jobs including in IT. When this job in the school for the deaf came up for my subjects, I went for it and I got it. And I’ve loved every minute of it. Well almost every minute of it. There are significant challenges. And I’m trying to learn sign language. Many of the students have complex needs. It can be heartbreaking but it’s an amazing place to be. The students and staff are amazing.

For my first school musical experience, I was put in joint charge of make-up. It was dress rehearsal night and the buzz around the school was incredible. I was walking down the corridor towards the hall where the stage was set up. I could hear the noise of the girls getting themselves set up with costumes. I could hear the musicians tuning up. I was carrying two small buckets of water in my hands and under my arms was a various assortment of pouches with make-up. A few of the students were walking just behind me carrying stools and small tables. The energy coming from them was infectious. At one point, I dropped something. They offered to help. I beckoned them on. They were busy ladies!

And as I reached down for what I had dropped, I had an overwhelming sense of ‘rightness’. What a strange time to feel that! Carrying those two buckets of water, laden down with bits and pieces of make up! Yet in that moment, I knew with absolute certainty this was exactly where I needed to be in. I was taken by surprise! I felt tears come into my eyes. And the sense of deep joy and peace I got was almost overwhelming.

I kept going with my buckets of water, the dress rehearsal went well and the following night’s musical was amazing! What a great job they did! What an incredibly privileged job I’m in.

**Reader 4: The Summer Day by Mary Oliver.**

Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean—

the one who has flung herself out of the grass,

the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down—

who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.

Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me, what else should I have done?

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?

**Principal: Words of Welcome**

*You might speak some words of**welcome here in the context the theme of ‘teaching’ as more than just ‘a job’.*

*You can adapt these words and of course add to them as well according to your own context and your own style of engagement:*

*The word ‘vocation’ can be toxic for some people because it was arguably used in the past as a way of diminishing the value of a role, particularly in terms of a role’s monetary value. However, in the Christian tradition, the word ‘vocation’ speaks to a journey; a journey that puts one’s relationship with God and with the world at the centre. And when we dwell deeply in that place where our vocation meets the world’s needs, deep joy happens. We’ve all probably had experiences of that deep joy that we heard about earlier; those ‘buckets of water’ moments where we just know we are where we are meant to be. Yes, the job can be very hard, yes, we all have incredibly busy lives, yes, there’s complexity to it all, yes there are so many demands. But my prayer for you this Year of Vocations is that you’ll reconnect deeply with your own calling in our school; whatever your role is in our school. And that you’ll feel supported by management and your colleagues to really enjoy the year and to grow through all that you do.*

**Reader 5:**

A Reading from St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as He wishes.

The Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

**Reader 6:**

And so we pray:

For our students, that they too will come to know the purpose to which they are called. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

For our families, in gratitude for what moments of joy and contentment we got with them over the Summer. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

For our friendships here in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. May they sustain us in our work together in the coming year. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

For our dead. We pray in the silence of our own heart for those we mourn. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

For peace in our world. Bless leaders with the wisdom to make the best decisions for our world. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

For our own private intentions, said silently now in our own hearts………………. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

**Principal:**

We conclude now with our CEIST prayer. As we pray this prayer, we remember those who have asked us to pray for them or who are in need of our support. We say together….

Lord Jesus, you know me and you love me. You call me into **friendship** with you.

You call me to know and love you, especially through the **care** I give to others and the care I receive from others.

You call me to do my best, especially in the ways I seek to **learn** more about myself, others, and our world. In learning all of this, I learn also about you, my creator God.

All that I am you have given me and when I do my best I give glory to you my creator. You are very proud of me. In you, I know that my **dignity** is as wide as the ocean, my worth as deep as the sea.

You call me to **respect** myself and to respect others; to know that my **value** and the value of all the people in my school doesn’t come from results or achievements but from you, our creator.

You call us to be part of a school **community** that cares for us, that enjoys life, that has fun together and that comes to our help when we are sad or feeling alone.

You call our community to **celebrate** all the unique and wonderful gifts of the community, including my own gifts.

You call us to be **just and responsible**; to care for our planet, to have energy and passion for a more just world.

Lord Jesus, you know me and you love me. Help me to know and love you. AMEN.