**Staff Meeting - Opening Prayer (Academic Year 2024/2025)**

**Principal:** Words of welcome to the prayer service.

**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 as a sign and symbol of God’s loving presence with us as we begin our first meeting of this academic year.

**Reader 2:** We take time to reflect on our sacred space. A Bible, our school mission statement, a logo and a sapling. The Word of God directs our path and provides a way for us to know God and God’s love, and our school mission statement is a modern-day expression of that belief in God’s love. A logo is part of our Sacred Space. It is the logo of this year’s Season of Creation. Finally, a sapling represents the theme of hope, the theme of our prayer today. Trees are resilient. They have been on earth for hundreds of millions of years and always seem to find a way to adapt and thrive in their environments. It is no surprise then that trees often become symbols of resilience, perseverance, and hope.

**Principal:** We listen now to a reflection on the theme of Hope.

**Reader 3:**

**“Hope”**

**by Victoria Safford**

**Our mission is to plant ourselves at the gates of hope — not the prudent gates of Optimism, which are somewhat narrower; nor the stalwart, boring gates of Common Sense; nor the strident gates of self-righteousness, which creak on shrill and angry hinges; nor the cheerful, flimsy garden gate of “Everything is gonna be all right,” but a very different, sometimes very lonely place, the place of truth-telling, about your own soul first of all and its condition, the place of resistance and defiance, the piece of ground from which you see the world both as it is and as it could be, as it might be, as it will be; the place from which you glimpse not only struggle, but joy in the struggle — and we stand there, beckoning and calling, telling people what we are seeing, asking people what they see.**

**Reader 4: We take a moment to reflect on this small tree as a symbol of hope as we begin a new school year. What are our own personal and professional hopes for the year?**

***Note for Principal: if you wanted to extend the prayer a little, you could provide a space for conversation in pairs, or you could have small pieces of paper on which colleagues could write their hopes and place those hopes in the sacred space. Alternatively, you can just allow for that quiet few minutes, perhaps with music playing in the background to help create a prayerful atmosphere.***

**Principal:** We listen now to the Word of God.

**Reader 5:** A reading of St Paul’s Letter to the Romans. (15:5-7, 13, 33)

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The God of peace be with you all. Amen.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Reader 6:** The final Symbol in our sacred space is the logo of the Season of Creation 2024 which begins on the 1st September and ends on the 4th October, the feast of Saint Francis.



This is a global ecumenical event that inspires millions of Christians to take action for climate justice. The theme of this year’s Season of Creation is ‘to hope and act with creation’. As we pause to consider our own hopes for the year, we pray also for our hopes for the work we do in our school to protect and nurture our common home.

**Principal:**

We pause now together to present our prayers.

**Reader 7:**

For our students. Each of them begins this year with their own hopes. May our school be a place where these hopes are gently nourished and encouraged, and a place where students can express their deepest hopes for themselves, one another and our world. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

**Reader 8:**

For one another as a staff. Each of us begins this year with our own hopes. May we find in (school name) a place where we know these hopes can be nurtured and through that nurturing we can grow. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

**Reader 9:**

For the families of the students who attend our school. We pray in particular for families that have been recently bereaved and for all families struggling at the moment with physical or mental ill-health. May they find in our school community a place of loving support. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

**Reader 10:**

For Season of Creation. As Season of Creation begins may we in (school name) be inspired to care for our common home. May we find hope and consolation in time spent in nature. And may we inspire our students to always take seriously their responsibility to act as stewards of creation. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

**Reader 11:**

We take a moment to pray in the silence of our hearts for our own private intentions. …….. 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.

