**Board of Management – Opening Prayer**

**Opening Meeting – Academic Year 2024/2025**

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

**Chairperson:**

We begin with a short anecdote about the anthropologist Margaret Mead

**Reader 1:**

Years ago, anthropologist Margaret Mead was asked by a student what she considered to be the first sign of civilization in a culture. The student expected Mead to talk about fishhooks or clay pots or grinding stones.

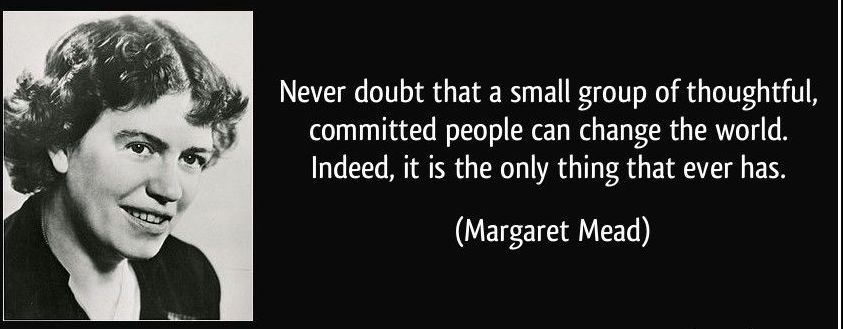
But no. Mead said that the first sign of civilization in an ancient culture was a femur (thighbone) that had been broken and then healed. Mead explained that in the animal kingdom, if you break your leg, you die. You cannot run from danger, get to the river for a drink or hunt for food. You are meat for prowling beasts. No animal survives a broken leg long enough for the bone to heal.

A broken femur that has healed is evidence that someone has taken time to stay with the person who fell, has bound up the wound, has carried the person to safety and has tended the person through recovery. Helping someone else through difficulty is where civilization starts, Mead said.

**Chairperson:**

We take a moment to reflect on the history of our school, from its founding story to today. We reflect on the years and years of care that has been given to the young people who have come here, with all their various questions, challenges, hopes and ambitions, to get an education. We reflect on the civilisation of love, to use the words of Saint John Paul II, that we have tried to build here.

(*Chairperson/principal might say a little more here about the founding of the school and the school’s history. You can, if you wish invite BOM members to share their own stories of the school as a place where students were cared for, where no one was left behind.)*

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**Chairperson:** And so we pray. The response is *Thanks be to God.*

**Reader 2:**

For the ways in which we have tended to students and their families who are experiencing difficulties. **Thanks be to God**.

For the deep traditions and history that root all we do in caring for students and staff in our school. We remember with gratitude. **Thanks be to God.**

For the ways in which students have shown love and care for one another. **Thanks be to God.**

For the ways we have encouraged students to reach out and work for justice and peace in our world. **Thanks be to God.**

For the ways in which students have shown their commitment to care for our common home, our planet. **Thanks be to God.**

For the role our school leaders play in showing others what working for a just world looks like in our school. **Thanks be to God.**

For the ways in which *we* have felt taken care of in our community. **Thanks be to God.**

**Chairperson:**

We take a moment to reflect on the purpose of Catholic education. The vision of CEIST as Trustees of our school, as found in the CEIST Charter is, a ‘compassionate and just society inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.’

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What does that mean for our role as members of (school name) Board of Management?

We take a moment to consider the following words from various sections of the CEIST Charter that speak to the CEIST value of *Being Just and Responsible.* This value is not something that is explored only under this one value in the Charter; it is a core value, writ large in all that Catholic education seeks to do. It might be argued that the Charter vision captures ***the*** defining characteristic of Catholic education.

As each piece is read, we take time to pause with what is said and to reflect on how this value is being lived in (school name). We reflect on these words not only as words of affirmation but also where necessary as words of challenge to us in (school name).

**Reader 3:**

The CEIST school models the Gospel values of compassion, justice, love, tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation by the manner in which conflict is resolved.

**Reader 4:**

Through the curriculum and the various activities of the CEIST school, the staff and students are encouraged to reflect critically on issues of social justice at local and global levels

**Reader 5:**

The school stands in solidarity with those who are powerless and marginalized

**Reader 6:**

The school is sensitive to the economic situation of each of its families

**Reader 7:**

The school promotes and facilitates faith in action programmes, providing opportunities for each member to be active in identifying and alleviating forms of injustice in and beyond the school community.

**Reader 8:**

The school empowers and calls its members to responsible citizenship, to respect for the environment and to good stewardship of the earth.

**Reader 9:**

And finally, in summary, CEIST engages with all people of good will to promote a preferential option for those made poor, to take action for justice, and to exercise care of the earth in a spirit of respect and welcome for diversity.

**Chairperson:** We pause for a moment to hear any challenges being spoken to us as the Board of Management of (school name).

*You may wish if time allows to give space for BOM members to speak to this prompt. If time doesn’t allow, or you think it more appropriate, you can just give a few moments for reflection.*

We listen now to the Word of God.

**Reader 1:**

Ps 71:2-4, 7-8, 12-13, 17

**Response: Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.**

May the mountains bring forth peace for the people

and the hills, justice.

May our Lord defend the poor of the people

and save the children of the needy. R.

In his days justice shall flourish

and peace till the moon fails.

He shall rule from sea to sea,

from the Great River to earth's bounds. R.

For he shall save the poor when they cry

and the needy who are helpless.

He will have pity on the weak

and save the lives of the poor. R.

May his name be blessed for ever

and endure like the sun.

Every tribe shall be blessed in him,

all nations bless his name. R.

**Chairperson:**

The task of a Board of Management is a significant one. In our work making real the vision of a society built on justice and peace, we pray:

**Principal:**

For the students in our school, especially those who are struggling because they and their families have been made poor by the injustices in our society and our world. May we always in (school name) have the courage to empower them and to challenge the injustice that they experience. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

For the students in our school who feel marginalised by virtue of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or because of a disability – visible or invisible. May we always seek first to stand in solidarity with them in our school, celebrating their giftedness and encouraging them to live abundant lives guided by the Holy Spirit. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

For our teachers, SNAs, ancillary staff and all those who work with us in our school to make the vision of (school name) a reality. Bless us all with a deep desire for justice and peace in our world. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

For our work as (school name) Board of Management. May we always seek to discern what is just and fair and what builds peace and community in our school, taking care, in particular, of those who most need our help and support. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

For Season of Creation which began on the 1st September and continues until the 4th October, the feast of St Francis. As this global ecumenical call to action is being celebrated, may we in (school name) always put front and centre the care of our common home, modelling to our students wonder and awe in the natural world and deep care for all the God has created. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

For our beloved dead. We remember in particular ………………….. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

**Chairperson:**

We conclude our prayers now by saying together our CEIST prayer. It reminds us of all that we value here in (school name).

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 **gift**s 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.

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