

“Give courage to those who are apprehensive, care for the weak and be patient with everyone”.

1 Thess 5:14



Beginning of the School Year Prayers (in Covid Times)

Most prayer services follow a structure of Gathering, Sharing of Scripture, words of wisdom (homily, poetry, reflection etc.), perhaps some symbolic action and concluding with a some prayers of intercession and a sending out – usually taking the form of a blessing.

This follows the natural progression of

Welcome (Gathering)

Wisdom (Scripture, poem, prayer, reflection and symbolic action)

Witness (Sending out)

Here are a few suggestions that might be of use to you over the coming days.

Welcome

Opening Prayer:

As we gather here today to begin our new school year we take time to pause, and become aware of the presence of God here with us this morning. *(Short silence)*

We ask God to remind us this morning of the good gifts we have received during this strange summer, the moments that brought us joy and a sense of hope, the people who encouraged us when our own courage failed, the places we know well that we have seen again with new eyes and has brought us comfort. We thank God for our new colleagues who we welcome especially to our school community today. We pray for all our students who will return to school over the coming days and will need to adjust to the new normal.

We pray that we will always be mindful of each other as we too adjust to 'living with Covid-19'; may we remain thankful of the gifts and talents of our students, which we will endeavour to enable each to develop to the best of his/her ability.

A suitable piece of music may be played here. Hymn, sacred song or instrumental.

Hymns:

Le Chéile Hymn by Ciaran Coll

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlzzY1JvQvg>

Gather by Liam Lawton <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYiOzbNoRiw>

Calm me Lord by Margaret Rizza

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pHxjX_07n4

Be not afraid by Bob Dufford

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQr4udSiEew>

Siyahamba We are marching in the light of god

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yn16ABWn20c>

I want you to have it all by Jason Mraz

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6d2aWjgNiy0>

Three Little Birds – Bob Marley

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4sNi2PUiWM>

You'll never walk alone – Gerry and the Pacemakers

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV5_LQArLa0&list=OLAK5uy_I0OwS78djtkrpNiCdNYykaE-4A3voV9jU&index=26

Roar by Katy Perry <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UW5SMrURVbM>

(Shake of some of the frustration with the DES!! Just play it for yourself!)

Wisdom

Scripture Reading

Old Testament

A reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

(NIV)

New Testament

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans (5:2-5)

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Gospel Reading

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

With the coming of evening that same day, he said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side'. And leaving the crowd behind they took him, just as he was in the boat, and there were other boats with him. Then it began to blow a great gale and the waves were breaking into the boat so that it was almost swamped. But he was in the stern, his head on the cushion asleep. They woke him up, and said to him, 'Master, do you care? We are lost!'. And he woke up, and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Quiet now! Be calm!'. And the wind dropped, and there followed a great calm. Then he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened? Have you still no faith? They were overcome with awe and said to one another, 'who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him.'

Reflections

People of goodness do not need to bestow blessing; instead they become a blessing. Their presence is goodness and they engender new life, strength, courage and vitality by their presence. That was exactly how Jesus blessed the people around him.

Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.
We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant,
gorgeous, talented, fabulous?
Actually, who are you not to be?
You are a child of God.
Your playing small does not serve the world.
There is nothing enlightened about shrinking
so that other people won't feel insecure around you.
We are all meant to shine, as children do.
We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.
It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone.
And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously
give other people permission to do the same.
As we are liberated from our own fear,
our presence automatically liberates others.

Marianne Williamson

Insha'Allah by Danusha Laméris (2014)

I don't know when it slipped into my speech
that soft word meaning, "if God wills it."
Insha'Allah I will see you next summer.
The baby will come in spring, insha'Allah.
Insha'Allah this year we will have enough rain.
So many plans I've laid have unravelled
easily as braids beneath my mother's quick fingers.
Every language must have a word for this. A word
our grandmothers uttered under their breath
as they pinned the whites, soaked in lemon,
hung them to dry in the sun, or peeled potatoes,
dropping the discarded skins into a bowl.

Our sons will return next month, insha'Allah.
Insha'Allah this war will end, soon. Insha'Allah
the rice will be enough to last through winter.
How lightly we learn to hold hope,
as if it were an animal that could turn around
and bite your hand. And still we carry it
the way a mother would, carefully,
from one day to the next.

Hope is the Thing with Feathers by Emily Dickinson (1861)

Here Dickenson imagines "Hope" as a bird ready to sit out the worst kind of storm. Yet it is also confident and dignified, accepting no threats nor favours from others.

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -
And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -
I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

Invictus by William Ernest Henley (1875)

Out of the night that covers me,
 Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
 For my unconquerable soul.
In the fell clutch of circumstance
 I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance

My head is bloody, but unbowed.
Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.
It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

Symbolic Action

Lighting of Candles for different groups of the school community or for various situations or groups of people you wish to remember.

This prayer could be said as candles are lit for each grouping

Litany of Solidarity and Hope During a Pandemic

For those who are sick.

For those with chronic illnesses and underlying health concerns.

For all those who are suffering.

For those who are lonely.

For those who have no one to check on them.

For families that are separated.

For those who are unemployed.

For those suffering financial hardships.

For those who face an uncertain future.

For those who are suffering from physical or emotional abuse.

For those who are disproportionately suffering because of societal structures and unjust policies.

For those who are struggling with physical or mental disabilities.

For those who are overwhelmed by anxiety and stress.

For those who are dying.

For those who have died while saving the lives of others.

For all who have lost their lives.

For those who have survived.
For those who have lost their spouses.
For children who have been orphaned.
For all those who mourn and those who comfort them.

For firefighters, police, and emergency medical workers.
For doctors, nurses, and all health care professionals.
For those who serve in the armed forces.

For public officials.
For business leaders.
For educators.
For innovators and inventors who provide new solutions.

For peace in our city and in our world.
For renewed friendships among neighbours.
For solidarity and unity among all peoples.
For a greater appreciation and love of all humanity.

For patience and perseverance.
For calm in the midst of fear.
For the grace to overcome adversity.

For generosity of spirit.
For hope in times of despair.
For light in the darkness.

Gracious and Loving God,
You are our comforter and our hope.
Hear our prayers as we come before you.
Strengthen us in this time of need.
Inspire us to acts of solidarity and generosity
and give us hope of a brighter future.

Joseph P. Shadle

WITNESS

Intercessions

SET A

Let us pray to God,
who alone makes us dwell in safety:

For all who are affected by coronavirus,
through illness or isolation or anxiety,
that they may find relief and recovery:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

For those who are guiding our nation at this time,
and shaping national policies,
that they may make wise decisions:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

For doctors, nurses and medical researchers,
that through their skill and insights
many will be restored to health:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

For the vulnerable and the fearful,
for the gravely ill and the dying,
that they may know your comfort and peace:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father,

accept these prayers

for the sake of your Son,

our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

SET B

Let us pray to the Lord,
who is our refuge and stronghold.

For the health and well-being of our nation,
that all who are fearful and anxious

may be at peace and free from worry:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For the isolated and housebound,
that we may be alert to their needs,
and care for them in their vulnerability:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For our homes and families,
our school and young people,
and all in any kind of need or distress:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For a blessing on our local community,
that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship,
where all are known and cared for:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.
Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Final Prayer/Blessing

We Bring Your Love

Loving God,

Help us

to focus on what we have
not on what is removed or changed.

Strengthen

us

when we feel discouraged
or overwhelmed.

Embrace us

so that we know your loving presence
within us and among us.

Walk with us

as we bring your love,
and carry your light,
into our world.

Amen.

- Sandra Lucas, MDiv., BCC

Prayer for the Safety of Returning to School in a Pandemic

Father please hear us when we tell You of our concerns of going back to school.

Know that we are striving to make all of the right decisions and need Your love and power to help us overcome any difficulties.

Please watch over everyone as times and routines are about to change once again.

We know that we can do anything through You, so please help us ensure health and semi-normalcy in the coming months.

We give our hearts to You, now and forever. Amen

~Author Unknown

God Our Father,

We ask that, during this school year, your Holy Spirit will guide us in all we do:

- In our relationships with colleagues - that we will always be supportive of each other.
- In our teaching - that we may inspire a love of learning in our students.
- In our interactions with our students – that, no matter how difficult, we will always remember that each is a child of God.
- In meeting with parents – that we will be the friendly face, and caring soul they need to meet when they speak to us.

We pray that we may always be inspired by the teaching of your Son; that we will remember to make space for silence and reflection in our own lives; and that we will always use the gift

you have given us to enable our students to discover their own gifts and become the best people they can be.

May our school community be a place of faith; of hope; and of love.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

OR

A Prayer for Our Uncertain Times

May we who are merely inconvenienced remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have to cancel our trips remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market remember those who have no margin at all.

As fear continues to grip our country, let us choose love.

And during this time when we may not be able to physically wrap our arms around each other, let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our school community. Amen.

- Adapted from *prayer by Rev. Dr. William J Barber II*

An Ignatian Examen on Working During The Pandemic

Lord,

I am thankful for good colleagues and the opportunity to collaborate with so many around me.

I am thankful for the opportunity learn and practice new things.

I am grateful for extra time with family, and for all the new ways I have found to connect with friends.

I am grateful for my health and for the health of my family.

Over the course of the last months,

I have felt your presence in the care and compassion of those working around and with me to find the best path forward for our community.

I have felt your presence in our continuous striving for better, striving to find solutions that serve the greatest number of people in the best way possible with the least risk of harm.

I have felt your presence on days when my work – at my workplace or at home – was not great, and I was humble or needed to make apologies.

I have been challenged and needed your guidance in thinking with a community-focus rather than an individual one, and I've been challenged in finding the right response on other occasions when I judge that others are falling into that same pit.

I have felt challenged by all the meals I've cooked and dishes I've washed. I have felt true joy in the quiet moments of fellowship and connection that only could have happened because of this common event.

I continue to welcome and be open to your presence in my life and in this work.

As I look ahead to the coming academic year,

I pray that we make sound decisions for our students, , our staff, that protect them and serve them well, and also serve the institution well.

I pray that we continue to be inclusive and broad in our thinking, that we continue to be imaginative and innovative, that we have the energy required to sustain us.

I pray that we continue to be intentional collaborators, guided by your spirit.

by Rebecca L. Cull