

NON-DENOMINATIONAL INVOCATIONS FOR ROTARY CLUB MEETINGS

Rotary is a non-discriminatory, non-political, and non-denomination organization.

Rotary is comprised of members from a wide range of religious faiths, and for that reason Rotary International recommends nondenominational meeting invocations that give no referral to beliefs of specific religions.

Several individuals and Rotary Clubs have offered the following non-denominational invocations.

Note that the Rotary Club of Bellingham WA club often uses the term, "Lord of the Universe" to remind themselves that no matter what their religion, all good people are guided by the spirit.

So, below are 28 examples of invocations that may be used as is or modified to your liking. Sources are acknowledged when known.

1. Creator and sustainer of all that is or will ever be, accept our thanks for this day and all its blessings. We ask that you guide and direct our club, its leaders and our actions. Grant that each of us may feel our responsibility to Rotary, to our community, to our country, and indeed to all countries and peoples. Bless our fellowship today, and bless this food to the nourishment of our bodies, in your service. Amen.

2. As we gather here today as members of Rotary, we pray that we are ever mindful of opportunities to render our service to fellow citizens and to our community. Keeping in mind always the enduring values of life, exerting our efforts in those areas and on those things upon which future generations can build with confidence. Let us continue to strive to make a better world. Amen.

3. We are thankful for this day that you have given us, for its blessings, its opportunities, its challenges. May we appreciate and use each day that comes to us. We pray for strength and guidance for each day as it comes, for each day's duties, for each day's problems. May we be challenged to give our best always, and may we be assured of your presence with us. Amen.

4. We stay focused on the objectives we have for the world: Peace. Tranquility. A true Brotherhood of Man. Freedom from hunger, from oppression, from sickness. The freedom to choose our own destinies. We reaffirm our commitment to our simple Rotary Four Way Test for all we do and support: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build good will and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? We reaffirm our commitment to high ethics in all we do. And we give thanks for all the blessings, opportunities and responsibilities that befall us as Rotarians. We continue in this new millennium with optimism, renewed energy, and a commitment to service to you and our fellow men and women. Please, Lord of the Universe, help us so to serve! Amen.

Adapted from an invocation by Joseph D. Coons Bellingham WA

5. Let us Pray. Lord of the Universe: One of your wise ministers said recently, You can judge a person by his checkbook stubs.

As Rotarians, we are generally blessed with lives of relative luxury, and opportunities unknown to many. Help us to review our checkbooks, and, indeed, the registers of our lives with honesty as we consider our priorities, and our opportunity to help others. Open our hearts, and our accounts, to those in need, while still providing us with appropriate fruits of our own labors. Help us to share not only our tangible wealth, but also our intangible riches of knowledge, leadership, and creativity to make our city, our nation, and our world, a better place filled with the peace and love that you can bring through us. Amen. *Joseph D. Coons Bellingham WA*

6. Lord of the Universe, Rotarians world-wide acknowledge your power, and your expectation that we be of service to mankind.

Let us renew our obligation to fulfill that expectation, just as the return of spring renews growth in the world around us, with a new commitment to help others in our community, our nation, and our world. With the power, influence, and wealth that we as leaders in this place most certainly have, let us always remember that these are a blessing from you, and that charity is more fulfilling than decadence, and the Golden Rule a much richer yardstick than any bank account. Amen. *Joseph D. Coons Bellingham WA*

An invocation is a traditional prayer for the support, counsel, or indulgence of an almighty power upon the works of a body of people such as our Rotary Club. In preparing today's invocation, I was reminded that several men of science, including Ben Franklin, Albert Einstein, and Steven Hawking all believe in the presence of God, particularly as manifested in the remarkable natural order of the world.

So today I offer this prayer:

Let us bow our heads:

Lord of the Universe, you have given most of mankind a strong desire to do good, to be honest, to serve others, and to faithfully fulfill their obligations to their neighbors.

Help us, as Rotarians and humans, to do good.

Help us, as Rotarians and humans, to be honest and ethical in all our dealings.

Help us, as Rotarians and humans, to serve others.

And help us, as Rotarians and humans, to faithfully fulfill our obligations as neighbors to our community, our nation, and the world. Amen. *Joseph D. Coons, Bellingham WA*

7. Lord of the Universe, we are before you today humbled and puzzled.

We are humbled by the world's loss of a man who served as a symbol of goodness, who though from a different culture and raised in a different faith than most of us, taught us that all humans have the same need for peace and good will among men. Help our leaders and those of other nations follow the example of King Hussein in their quest for a united world where we can find comfort for the poor, opportunity for all, and peace.

On another matter, may we ask you to give us some sign of your purpose? You have reminded us recently that you ARE in charge, and there are things we cannot change and you have humbled us. The torrents, the gusts, and the rest of your recent offerings to us by your bounteous nature are, to be bold, getting a little much! If your point is to show us your authority, we acknowledge it; if you desire to demonstrate your inscrutability, we are convinced, and if your goal is to help us wash away all our misdeeds, we are almost down the drain ourselves!

Thank you for your lessons, oh Lord. We are, however, ready for a different example of your strength. We humbly beg you for an equal demonstration of your ability to bring us sunshine. Amen. *Joseph D. Coons, Bellingham WA*

8. Lord of the Universe, tonight, from two democratic nations which prove that a border can be shared for centuries in peace, we are men and women gathered in the spirit and support of Rotary International, our own Clubs, and Rotary District 5050.

As we enjoy our fellowship, help us to remember how fortunate we are to be able to serve our brothers and sisters around the world through our great organization, and its astonishing Foundation.

That we are prosperous, enables us to give of our material wealth. That we are free, enables us to work together on projects. That we are generous, enables us to work together to achieve amazing successes. And

that we are dedicated, brings us together as our Club=s leaders and workers so that we may continue with these efforts.

Guide us in our service. Keep us well so we can serve. And bless those peoples around the world who our touched by our works, so that they, too, can have the joy of a fulfilling life, full of good health and companionship, in surroundings that are beneficial to all. Amen. *Joseph D. Coons Bellingham WA*

9. Lord of the Universe, this is a time in our year when many of us turn our attention to the spiritual side of our lives, when we consider what light we will follow . . .

Help us to understand that no matter what name it is given and in what language it is expressed, that philosophy called The Golden Rule is indeed the most true guidepost by which we should mark the trails of our existence here . . .

Remind us that if that concept were universally held as a standard, by the people of all nations and faiths, there would be no wars, no hunger, no crimes one against the other . . .

We pray that you continue to bless the work that we as Rotarians, from many nations and of many faiths, do to help those less fortunate, for we believe that one manifestation of this Golden Rule is in our Rotary motto, Service Above Self.

Please give us an international time of peace on earth, good will towards men, inspired by our great leaders and philosophers who themselves were inspired by you, Oh Lord.

And finally, we ask you to guide those who, as our government leaders, make their daily decisions that affect us, so that their efforts, whether international or local, shall be motivated by this same great rule of charity and good will. Thank you, Lord. Amen. *Joseph D. Coons, Bellingham WA*

10. Let us take a moment to remember all the religions represented in the Rotary family,

Let us also recall that when we were invited to join our Rotary clubs we were not asked are you a Protestant, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Jew, a Catholic or a Buddhist, or a Sikh. You were not asked because all religions are welcome in the Rotary family.

Please join me in a moment of reflection and thanks with these words

With our friends beside us,
And no person beneath us,
With the bonds of Rotary Between us,
And our worries behind us,
With our goals before us,
And no task beyond us,
With a thirst for knowledge,
And a dream of a Polio free world,
We are thankful for our Rotary friends and the meal we are about to share.

Thank You, Shalom, Ah-men. *Chris Offer, Governor 5040/99-00*

11. The paths of our lives are filled with peaks and valleys. When we are on the top of our peaks, we become so self satisfied that we tend to ignore the things of importance. When we are in a valley, we feel a sense of abandon and again can focus only on what is directly ahead. Remind us, as You do in nature, that above the tree line the mountain-tops are barren and only in the valleys can we find the opportunity for true growth. Amen. *Ronald Hanson, Rotary Club of Cloquet, MN USA D5580*

12. Invocation for Rotary meeting (script BEFORE silent invocation) composed by

Will you please bow your head with me.
Let us pray silently together, each one of us, according to our individual beliefs.
Let us offer thanks for our food, blessings for one another.
Let us be a source of hope for those in need,
and contentment for those who are lonely.
Let us give gratitude for our opportunity to serve Rotary.
Let the feelings of love, kindness, and a well directed, yet gentle spirit always be reflected in our actions.

(30 seconds of silence) Amen. *Bob Summers, Past President, RC Fort Myers SOUTH D-6960*

13. Blessed are you, Lord, God of Creation. You feed the whole world with your goodness, your grace, your kindness and your mercy. You nourish and sustain us and do good to all. Bless this food to our use and us to your Rotary service. Amen. *Dr. William Dougherty, Rotary Club of Elmira Heights*

14. May those assembled here today enjoy the many offerings of Rotary. May we abide by the rules we have established, those of trust, fellowship and ethics, and may we place Service above Self, in our daily endeavors. And may we always test ourselves and our efforts to be sure they are the truth, good for all concerned, of benefit to mankind, and provide peace and understanding. Amen. *Ken from Wisconsin*

15. Let My Eyes Be Opened
Let me awake and see the beauty
that surrounds me all around.
Let me hear the singing birds
make their wonderful sound.
Let me thank God for my health
that has been good to me so far.
Let all my dreams come true
when wishing upon a star.
Let me be thankful for friendship
that was lovingly given me.
Let me never forget the caring
that was made for me to see.

Betty Opheim, Fargo West Rotary, Fargo, North Dakota District 5580

16. It is good to recognize how different we are. Our talents, our dreams, our backgrounds, our occupations. And it is good to know that when You created each of us, You broke the mold. No one is exactly like anyone else. Even our thumb print and our voice track tell us how unique we are. Yet, we thank You that we can take these differences and mobilize them for the good of Rotary and our community. In our differences we can think the same thoughts and move together toward a common goal. Bless us as we meet together. Thank You for our individuality and also for our common bond. Amen. *Phil Morris - Rotary Club of Furnitureland, High Point, North*

17. Today we pray that we may receive Your special blessing because we are committed to be a real service organization to help humankind. May each of us in our daily routine come to know the joy of caring and sharing with others not as fortunate as we are. May our motto that includes serving, caring and sharing be for us life service as well as lip service. Amen. *Adapted from a published prayer by Phil Morris – Furnitureland Rotary Club, High Point, NC*

18. Help us today to see our opening prayer as conversation, really believing You hear us and care about what we say. Remind us that You are a perfect Father who listens carefully to His children and desires the very best for us. We thank You for this family of Rotarians, to which we belong and ask that You bless us as we meet together. Amen. *Phil Morris - Rotary Club of Furnitureland, High Point, NC*

19. Teach us true discrimination. We need to be able to tell the difference between faith and fatalism, between activity and accomplishment, between humility and an inferiority complex, between a quick salute

to You and a real prayer that seeks to find out Your will. Father, as we make a new beginning this week, teach us true discrimination! Amen. *Phil Morris - Rotary Club of Furnitureland*

20. We pray for the bifocals of faith so that we can see the concern of the moment right under our noses, but also see, further on, Your purpose, in working out Your plan, in the world You have made. We pray for the ability to see at close range -- our part, as a group to become solution-partners in the giving of time and effort and money, and we pray also for the ability to see clearly in the distance, those who are in partnership with us. May we look with new vision through these bifocals of faith and then act. Amen. Adapted from a printed source by Phil Morris - *Rotary Club of Furnitureland*

21. "Will you please bow your head with me.
Let us pray silently together, each of us according to our individual beliefs.
Let us offer thanks for our food, blessings for one another and for absent friends
Let us be a source of hope for those in need, and contentment for those who are lonely.
Let us give gratitude for our opportunity to serve Rotary.
Let the feelings of love, kindness, and a well-directed, yet gentle spirit always be reflected in our actions."
THEN FOLLOWS A 30 SECOND PAUSE AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT "Amen" *Jim Gray*

22. God of the Universe, since we are not conscious enough to fathom your ebb and flow, help us then to bring our best efforts to what we can know.

To love our friends and family.
To treat our employees and fellow workers fairly.
To seek justice.
To help those in need.
To be the best that we can be,
And to live by the four way test:

Of all the things we think, say or do:
Is it the TRUTH?
Is it FAIR to all concerned?
Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

Amen.

Invocation given by Rotarian Len Scheffler December 7, 1993 Rotary Club of Columbia-Northwest Columbia, MO D-6050

23. A `grace' requested follows:

For friends, food, fun and fellowship, especially the fellowship of Rotary we get our sincere thanks. May these tokens of your bounty nourish our physical bodies in preparation for the challenges that are ours in Rotary. Keep us always mindful of the needs of others and keep us always attuned to our calling in Rotary. We ask these things in the Name of your eternal truth. Amen. (Rev.) *Kenneth D. Benner Rotarian, Rotary Club of Strathcona Sunrise Comox Valley, British Columbia*

24. We are grateful, Our Father, for the privilege of training ourselves for service. Give us open minds, a clear understanding and a steady purpose to make the most of our talents, and lead us into the fields of work where we can best serve Thee. Amen.

For food to nourish the body and conversation to enrich the mind, may the Lord make us truly thankful. Amen.

O Lord and giver of all good
we thank you for our daily food

May Rotary friends and Rotary ways
Help us to serve thee all our Days

Amen. *"Adolf"*

25. Lord as u blessed the loaves and fishes
Bless this food upon our dishes
Like the sugar for our tea
May our lives be stirred by Thee

Tom Telfer Rotary Club of London West District 6330 London, Ontario

26. A Prayer of Thanksgiving

We offer you this special prayer this year, dear Lord, because we want it to be everlasting. We do not, like too many times in the past, wish to soon forget these words of thoughts that we, heartfelt, and under no sense of obligation, now present to you.

Please bless this abundant food which, once living, has been sacrificed so that our bodies can be nourished with its life giving minerals and vitamins. From this meal forward, please guide all of our physical actions so that we can continue to claim worthiness of such a sacrifice.

Please remind us daily to use the time you have given us to add something of value to the day. Please help us to realize that this added value is especially beneficial to us when, without obligation or expectation of payback, it is freely given away to those who are less fortunate. Please show us that a smile, a wave, a helping hand-seemingly simplistic things do, add much more value to the day than we normally realize.

Impress upon us that everything on your earth and in your universe are intricately interconnected and that we humans need to show more respect for these connections of your design. Please foster our internal growth so that we will show more compassion for the plights of all of the living things you have placed around us. Please make us comprehend that the various talents you have allowed each of us are gifts from you and must be shared with others and with proper humility. Please encourage us to remove from our minds the many emotional blinders that daily keep us from seeing the overwhelming beauty surrounding us.

Finally, we fervently ask that you widely open our hearts and shine your light of love into the depth of our souls so that we will truly see that part of You which you, dear Lord, in your infinite wisdom have placed within us all. Please show us that if we can just sensitize ourselves to your Love which, unknowingly to most of us, continuously circulates throughout our bodies, then and only then, will we be able to spontaneously metamorphose into radiant beacons which can then happily reflect back to others just a fraction of the overflowing warmth of your all encompassing Love. Though we now bask daily in this Love, we seldom allow ourselves to truly see and feel it. Please make us see!!

Jeff Mabe "A Sincere Gift of Giving Never Travels in a Straight Line."

27. In those many years during which I was the " designated Prayer" [I am an episcopal Priest, now retired] I generally began "Baruch attai Adonai" "Blessed are you O God" and then followed with any specifics I felt needed at that particular meeting [such as illness, etc] then blessed God for allowing us to meet together in " fellowship, in peace and in service" Thanked God for our blessings at His hand, gave thanks for the food and the chance to serve all His creatures and asked God to continuously remind us of the needs of those people who depend upon us " I never used the name of Jesus, Our club had many good Jewish members. It did NOT, however have Moslem or Buddhist or any other religious body represented and so, unless we had guests I didn't recognize who could have been other than Christian or Jewish I did not especially attempt to include blessings from those disciplines [although I know some]. Occasionally I would vary by using Native American blessings such as the " Four Winds " blessings . Thanks to my age and infirmities I am now only an occasional prayer and others have taken over. If you would like the exact

wording of special graces [although I believe that my words wouldn't fit your particularities] I would be happy to recollect some for you. Good luck and God bless you. Amen. *Bob Mason*

28. As each of us give our own thanks according to our personal persuasions let us dwell on some thoughts that bind us together:

"You've blessed us with friends and laughter and fun
With rain that's as soft as the light from the sun ---
You've blessed us with stars to brighten each night
You've given us help to know wrong from right --
You've given us so much please, Lord give us too,
A heart that is always Grateful to you."

Amen. *An Irish Prayer. Tim Creedon PDG Rotary Club of Phoenix # 100, Arizona*

Invocations collected by Harry Heflin, Rotary Club of Azusa, Rotary District 5300

Invocations for Rotary

Compiled from many sources, attributed, where possible.

Rotary Themes

New Rotary Year

Our thanks, Lord, for those gathered here and for the sense of high purpose we share. As we begin a new year, grant our new officers stamina, patience and a sense of humor, that we may relax together and so create meaningful fellowship and selfless service, without taking ourselves too seriously in this your world and Rotary service. *Amen.*

Pastor Clifford J. Swanson, Northfield Rotary

Local Club Special Occasion

We pause in the daily flow of life to pay special tribute this hour for what it signifies in the history of our Club. We have often heard mentioned our motto, "Service Above Self." In your divine wisdom, you know how difficult it is for us (with all our human weaknesses) to actually achieve such a high standard, either in part or in full measure. We ask that you sustain us, both individually and collectively, in our efforts to come closer to this goal we are striving to achieve.

May Rotary, with its vast interlocking membership, be an influence for good throughout the world, and may the ongoing precepts of our club be acceptable in your sight. *Amen.*

Gene McLaughlin, Austin Rotary

Peace and Leadership

Thank you, God, for giving us citizenship in this "Sweet Land of Liberty." We offer praise to you for its bountiful gifts. We are humbly mindful and appreciative of those who are willing to risk their lives, and those who have released their loved ones to answer the call to arms for freedom. We prayerfully remember those who sleep and wake to danger so that we may sleep in peace. We ask your strength and sustenance for those who wait with vigilant hope for the safe return of their loved ones from the battlefield. Please give our world leaders knowledge and wisdom as they seek to lead our world to peace. Watch over us, God – and bring us safely through this day. Thank you for this food, this fellowship of friends, and this glorious day. *Amen.*

By Diane Confer, District 5950/5960 Youth Exchange Executive

Science Speaker or Topic

O God, Creator of the Universe, we thank you that we live in this age of scientific discovery. We listen as science tells us of other planets, solar systems and galaxies in the limitless space of your creation. How little we are compared with all that you have made, how amazing is your love, the heavens declare your glory, and the world around us shows your handiwork. How great you are . . . and greatly to be praised. *Amen.*

Roland D. Wilsey, Past District Governor, Roseville Rotary

Club Assemblies and Board Meetings

Almighty God, as Rotarians we have each accepted a responsibility far beyond our ability to completely fulfill. We ask for your blessing upon our club and its activities. Help us to select and engage ourselves in activities that meet the Four Way Test and may our conduct be exemplary when dealing with one another and those around us. *Amen.*

Roland D. Wilsey, Past District Governor, Roseville Rotary

Peace

Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of peace proceed, we pray for the peacemakers of the world. Give your grace and blessing to all agencies that are working for peace among nations. Give to all national leaders a vision of peace through justice, and to all people a new enthusiasm for the cause of peace. Confound the peace-breakers and hasten the day when peace shall come to reign forever and ever. *Amen.*

Roland D. Wilsey, Past District Governor, Roseville Rotary

For International Guests

Thank you, God for bringing us together today at this wonderful event of world friendship and goodwill. We ask for a special blessing on our international guests. We thank you for the leadership of this Rotary Club and those who have organized this program. Thank you for all you provide for us as we go forward in service. *Amen.*

Austin Rotary Club

Is It The Truth?

O God of Wisdom, Light and Truth, help us to renew our dedication to truth in our personal and business lives. We trust your changelessness and reliability. Your truth undergirds the whole universe. O God, we honor you today by respecting truth wherever it is found; by speaking truth with integrity; and by practicing truth in all dealings. Enrich our friendship in Rotary as we share our time together today. Bless us as we serve. *Amen.*

Is It Fair to All Concerned?

O God, who claims all the children on earth to be your children, teach us to live together as brothers and sisters, members of a common family. Teach us to be fair to one another, trusting everyone with the same respect and dignity that are found in the noblest families. Let us reach out as friends to all with whom we do business, trusting them and encouraging their trustful response. Help us always to give the benefit of the doubt to those who appear to differ with us, creating a climate of cooperation rather than nurturing suspicion. You have blessed us with goodness and mercy far exceeding anything we deserve. Make us equally generous in all our dealings with our associates. Bless the time we spend together as Rotarians, and to you be the glory. *Amen.*

Will It Build Goodwill and Better Friendships?

O Lord, whose will it is that all your people should dwell together in harmony, we give you thanks for the opportunities we find in Rotary to widen our circle of friendship and goodwill. We are grateful for new friends whom we have come to know in this club and for the joys we have found in sharing our own friendship with others. Lead us daily to find new avenues of goodwill in our business and professional life. Give us patience in dealing with those who are sharp and bitter. Give us creativity in finding ways to express ourselves, which will build better relationships. And Lord, give us a sense of humor that we may not take ourselves too seriously. Bless this club in its activities and its outreach to our own

community. May our world be a better place because we have been here. *Amen.*

Will it be Beneficial to All Concerned?

O God, who has compassion and concern for all people of every race and place, keep always before us, as Rotarians, that same loving concern. May it infuse our relationships with each other and with our friends and neighbors. May we extend it to all with whom we deal in daily business and social life. Whenever we sign a contract, establish a policy, or give an order, may the welfare of the other parties involved be taken into account. O Lord, in humble recognition of your abundant goodness to us, may we never permit selfishness and greed to control our affairs. Bless us as we gather today and may joy and peace be among us. *Amen.*

Stanley Borden, Roseville Rotary

Four Way Test

O Lord, in our daily application of the Four Way Test, grant us
The vision of Faith,
The inspiration of Hope, and
The blessings of Charity. *Amen.*

Al McCormick, St. Paul Rotary

Our Best Efforts

God of the Universe, since we are not conscious enough to fathom your ebb and flow, help us then to bring our best efforts to what we can know: to love our friends and family, to treat our employees and fellow workers fairly, to seek justice, to help those in need, to be the best that we can be, and to live by the Four Way Test of all the things we think, say or do:

Is it the TRUTH?

Is it FAIR to all concerned?

Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?

Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned? *Amen.*

Len Scheffler Rotary Club of Columbia-Northwest, Columbia, MO

Bonds of Rotary Between Us

Let us take a moment to remember all the religions represented in the Rotary family throughout the world. Let us also recall that when we were invited to join our Rotary clubs we were not asked, "Are you a Christian, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Jew, a Buddhist, or a Sikh?" We were not asked because all religions are welcome in the Rotary family. Please join me in a moment of reflection and thanks:

With our friends beside us,

And no person beneath us,

With the bonds of Rotary between us,

And our worries behind us,

With our goals before us,

And no task beyond us,

With a thirst for knowledge,

And a dream of a Polio-free world,

We are thankful for our Rotary friends and the time we are about to share.

Thank You, Shalom, Amen.

Chris Offer, Past Governor 5040

Bidding to a 30-second Silent Prayer

Announce: *"I invite you to a 30-second silent prayer... Will you please bow your head with me?"*

- Let us pray silently together, each of us according to our individual beliefs.
- Let us offer thanks for our food, blessings for one another and for absent friends
- Let us seek to be a source of hope for those in need, and companionship for those who are lonely.
- Let us give gratitude for our opportunity to serve as Rotarians.
- Let the feelings of love, kindness, and a well-directed, yet gentle spirit always be reflected in our actions.

A 30-second pause followed by: "Amen."

Jim Gray

Life Service Not Lip Service

God of all, today we pray that we may receive your blessing because we are committed to be a real service organization to help humankind. May each of us, in our daily routine, come to know the joy of caring and sharing with others who are not as fortunate as we are. May our motto that includes serving, caring and sharing be for us life service not just lip service.

Amen.

Phil Morris, Furnitureland Rotary Club, High Point, NC

Service Above Self

May those assembled here today enjoy the many offerings of Rotary. May we abide by the rules we have established, those of trust, fellowship and ethics, and may we place service above self, in our daily endeavors. And may we always test ourselves and our efforts to be sure they are the truth, good for all concerned, of benefit to mankind, and provide peace and understanding. *Amen.*

Ken from Wisconsin

Always in Your Presence

Gracious God, as we gather together as Rotarians and friends, we acknowledge that wherever we go, we are always in your presence. We pray that our actions may reflect this awareness as we seek you and as we count our many blessings. In the weeks and in the months ahead, clothe our lives with charity, deepen our lives with loyalty, and hallow our lives with integrity. Help us to live our lives so that we may enhance the future of those whose lives we touch. May your radiant spirit guide us, and our loved ones, all of our days.

Amen.

A Strong Desire To Do Good

Lord of the Universe, you have given most of mankind a strong desire to do good, to be honest, to serve others, and to faithfully fulfill their obligations to their neighbors.

Help us, as Rotarians and humans, to do good.

Help us, as Rotarians and humans, to be honest and ethical in all our dealings.

Help us, as Rotarians and humans, to serve others.

And help us, as Rotarians and humans, to faithfully fulfill our obligations as neighbors to our community, our nation, and the world. *Amen.*

Joseph D. Coons, Bellingham WA

Individuality and Common Bond

Creator of all: It is good to recognize how different we are in our talents, our dreams, our backgrounds and our occupations. And it is good to know that when you created each of us, you broke the mold. No one is exactly like anyone else. Even our thumbprint and our voice track tell us how unique we are. Yet, we thank you that we can take these differences and mobilize them for the good of Rotary and our community. In our differences we can think the same thoughts and move together toward a common goal. Bless us as we meet together. Thank you for our individuality and also for our common bond. *Amen.*

Phil Morris, Furnitureland Rotary Club, High Point, NC

Guide and Direct Our Club

Creator and sustainer of all that is or will ever be, accept our thanks for this day and all its blessings. We ask that you guide and direct our club, its leaders and our actions. Grant that each of us may feel our responsibility to Rotary, to our community, to our country, and indeed to all countries and peoples. Bless our friendship today, and bless this meeting. *Amen.*

Mindful of Opportunities

As we gather here today as members of Rotary, we pray that we are ever mindful of opportunities to render our service to fellow citizens and to our community. Keeping in mind always the enduring values of life, exerting our efforts in those areas and on those things upon which future generations can build with confidence. Let us continue to strive to make a better world. *Amen.*

Review Our Checkbooks

Lord of the Universe: many have said that you can judge a person by their checkbook records. As Rotarians, we are generally blessed with lives of relative luxury, and opportunities unknown to many. Help us to review our checkbooks, and, indeed, the registers of our lives with honesty as we consider our priorities, and our opportunity to help others. Open our hearts, and our accounts, to those in need, while still providing us with appropriate fruits of our own labors. Help us to share not only our tangible wealth, but also our intangible riches of knowledge, leadership, and creativity to make our city, our nation, and our world, a better place filled with the peace and love that you can bring through us. *Amen.*

Joseph D. Coons, Bellingham WA

Thankful for the Blessings of the Day

We have gathered in the spirit of truth, fairness, goodwill, friendship and concern for others. We are thankful for the blessings of this day, this country, and for this unique gathering of service-minded community leaders.

Lord, even as we pray these words and express these thoughts, we are not always the people we would like others to think we are. In this paralysis of spirit, we contribute to unrest, indifference to our neighbor's needs, and pre-occupation with material standards.

Dear God, you who are so patient, so caring, and so understanding, forgive our inadequacies and help us to model your direction and love. Now we humbly ask that you would bless this gathering and us to a deeper commitment to service. *Amen.*

Ron Phillippo, St. Paul Rotary

Serve Others, Serve God

Our God, we ask you to look upon us and grant us your love, your mercy and your understanding. Forgive us for anything you have seen amiss in us today. Put into our hearts the ideal of service; keep us alert to the needs of others; bless the work of Rotarians everywhere and let us remember that when we serve others, we serve you.

Bless and watch over those absent from us today. We thank you for all the good things you have bestowed upon us. We thank you for our club and this meeting. *Amen.*

Woodbury A. Palmen, Wabasha Rotary

Strengthen Us

We are not at all sure what tomorrow holds, but we are very sure who holds tomorrow. We thank you Lord for having called us to this community to live our lives and do our work with Rotary. Grant us the wisdom and the foresight to discern what is for our own betterment and the betterment of all humankind. Strengthen us in being a part of your power and influence. Prosper us in our calling, help us in our needs, guide us in our work as people pursuing peace. May peace and goodwill abide among us this day and always. *Amen.*

Good in the Worst of Us, Bad in the Best of Us

Thank you for our Rotary meeting, for everyone that puts something into it, and everyone that gets something out of it. We ask your blessings on this meeting and all who grace it with their presence. Lord, help us to be gentle with ourselves and one another, not expecting more than any of us can produce. We know there is so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us that it hardly behooves any of us to talk about the rest of us. Be with us this day and always by strengthening our belief in the ultimate triumph of truth and right. This prayer we make in the name of the way of truthful living. *Amen.*

Strength Sufficient

We ask God's blessing upon this meeting and on people of goodwill everywhere. May we prove ourselves worthy citizens of our country: devoted to truth, sincere in fellowship, given to service, and confident in steadfast faith. Preserve us faithful to these ideals. Let us stand firm when the fight is hard. Give us strength sufficient for this day. Make us as big as our problems and to stay bigger than our responsibilities. God help us to live up to our capabilities. *Amen.*

Past and Present

Bless all the former members of our Rotary club who have moved on, passed on or opted out. We pray that each one caught something of the spirit of our service. Bloomed a little fuller, shined a little brighter because of the service experience.

We ask you to bless all the present members of our club that each will show a little more, give a little more, and be a little more because of the service experience. We pray for the spirit that is best qualified to minister to the community's highest welfare, the spirit that makes for better friendships, understandings, goodwill and cooperation, and the spirit that permeates life, making it more harmonious and beneficial to all. *Amen.*

The Rotary Wheel

Dear God, as we gather, let us be thankful for those dedicated to the principles of Rotary

through their shining example of love, leadership and the gift of giving.

The spokes of the Rotary wheel are representative of the rules of pure conduct. We pray justice will be their uniform length, wisdom the circle, modesty and thoughtfulness the hub in which the immovable axle of truth is fixed.

All who recognize the existence of suffering, its cause, its remedy and its cessation have recognized the four noble truths that bind us as Rotarians. We pray we will walk in the right path, that the right view will be the torch to light our way, that right aspirations will be our guide, right speech will be our dwelling place on the road to helping others, and that contemplation on right efforts will give us the peace that follows.

As our Rotary wheel rolls forward, it is moving with the same strength of Rotarians of years gone by and who continue to keep the hope of Rotary alive today. Rotary is only as strong as the building blocks of the Rotarians who truly care.

May the enduring spirit of Rotary inspire us today. *Amen.*

Divine Assistance

We know that people who strive without divine assistance will find only cures that do not cure, blessings that do not bless, and solutions that do not solve. Send us your divine truth to heal us and our land. We pray for enough failure to keep us humble, enough success to keep us encouraged. We pray you keep us low enough that we will always want to look up to you and high enough to help pull all those around us to a higher plateau of living. God, keep us in need enough so we will always want to produce and blessed enough to share what we have with others. Keep us weak enough so we will always call for divine assistance and strong enough to bear one another's burdens. Thank you for Rotary and the ideal of service. May your blessings rest upon us as we seek to serve. *Amen.*

Privilege of Service

We are grateful, O God, for the privilege of offering ourselves for service. Give us open minds, a clear understanding and a steady purpose to make the most of our talents, and lead us into the fields of work where we can best serve you. *Amen.*

We Are All Responsible

Dear Lord, we do not love you until we love our neighbors as ourselves. Help us to bring the blessing of love and fellowship to others. Let us not be content, O Lord, when others go hungry, or be serene while some lack their daily bread. Help us to be among those who are willing to sacrifice that others may not be hungry, who dare to be bearers of light to the dark loneliness of stricken lives. Let us not harden our hearts nor close our hands against the poor. Let our hearts be moved by the misery of others, and let us dare what must be dared. We are all responsible. *Amen.*

Jane Dickinson, Stillwater Rotary

Seasonal, Holiday and Special

Spring

Almighty God, giver of life, creator of the universe, we your humble tenants desire your help and guidance as we exercise the purpose of Rotary. We appreciate the privilege given us as Rotarians to farm the field of human relationships. It is our great desire to close the gap

between what is and what could and should be.

Help us to remember that in Rotary, we are loaned an identification. So, in most of life, what we have has come as a gift from others. In our world we are laced together with inter-relationships. Like the seed and the soil, we are dependent upon one another.

Please help us to use this Rotary meeting to your desires. May those in leadership know your guiding presence and purpose. And now bless all who gather at these tables. *Amen.*

Reverend Paul W. Neal, South St. Paul/Inver Grove Heights Rotary

Springtime, Renew Our Obligation to Be of Service

Lord of the Universe, Rotarians worldwide acknowledge your power, and your expectation that we be of service to mankind. Let us renew our obligation to fulfill that expectation, just as the return of spring renews growth in the world around us, with a new commitment to help others in our community, our nation, and our world. With the power, influence, and wealth that we as leaders in this place most certainly have, let us always remember that these are a blessing from you, and that charity is more fulfilling than decadence, and the Golden Rule a much richer yardstick than any bank account. *Amen.*

Joseph D. Coons Bellingham WA

Summer

O Lord, in the beauty of this summer day we find assurance that in addition to the order of the universe and the reasonableness of creation, you have willed beauty and loveliness to give special meaning to all that you have made. In the joy and gladness that we feel on such a day, we know that we are your own creation, brought forth in goodness and called to higher things. Strengthen within us our commitment to find eager satisfaction in service above self.

On this summer day we ask your special blessing on Rotary, that it may continue to build harmony and create justice and promote peace among the people of the world. Bless its efforts for the welfare of children, its concerns for training and educating youth, its leadership in building ties of friendship and cooperation among the nations and races of the world. Bless our leaders and our companionship this day. *Amen.*

Stanley Borden, Roseville Rotary

Independence Day

Almighty God we thank you for all your goodness to us.

We thank you for the white drifting clouds in the blue sky.

We thank you for the red of blooming roses.

We thank you for our banner of these same beautiful colors and for the Independence we have enjoyed under it.

We thank you for food, fellowship, and opportunities to serve. *Amen.*

Harold E. Anderson, Alexandria Rotary

Labor Day

O God, who is the master craftsman, whose exquisite detail and whose soaring splendors we vainly strive to emulate, we turn to You this Labor Day weekend to bring the work of our minds and hands to the touchstone of Your high standards.

When we think of the work of your hands, like the beauty of butterfly wings, or a moonlit sea, our own work seems so poor and crude and so much is left undone.

Yet we thank You that we can work and serve and while doing so, we can pray that You will inspire us with Your passion for excellence, so that while we build we may beautify, while we serve we may heal, while we work we may worship. *Amen.*

Pastor Donald Carlson, Edina Rotary

Autumn

Almighty God, we thank you for this beautiful season when the greens of summer gloriously turn into the reds and golds and purples of autumn, truly we see your handiwork in all things. May we see your abundance in the harvest. In the midst of the changing seasons, help us to remember that you are the same yesterday, today, and forever, that your love shall always keep watch over humanity. Today may we place ourselves in the hollow of your hand and face the new dawn and its experiences with a simple trust in your love for every person.

Amen.

Roland D. Wilsey, Past District Governor, Roseville Rotary

Autumn

Mysterious God who comes out of misty mornings to say we're okay, and that there is hope, and life is worth living, and that you care about us, help us Rotarians take the marvel of an autumn day, with all its bountiful splendor and its wistful wonder, as a sign of your caring, not just about us, but about all the world's children.

Help us to care about people who are hurt. Give us a conscience about the cruelty of war. Show us how we can be healers, and reconcilers, and lovers in the world. Let our sharing together around these tables make us better able to be your servants in this tough world today. *Amen.*

Reverend Arthur A. Rouner, Jr., Edina Rotary

Harvest

Let us give thanks for a bounty of people.

For children who are our second planting, and, though they grow like weeds and the wind too soon carries them away, may they forgive us our errors in cultivation and celebrate their roots.

Let us give thanks...

For generous friends, with hearts and smiles as bright as their blossoms;

For feisty friends as tart as apples;

For continuous friends, who, like scallions and cucumbers, keep reminding us that we've had them;

For crotchety friends, as sour as rhubarb and as indestructible;

For handsome friends, who are as gorgeous as eggplants and as elegant as a row of corn, and the others, as plain as potatoes and so good for us;

For funny friends, who are odd as brussels sprouts and as amusing as artichokes, and serious friends, as complex as cauliflower and as intricate as onions;

For friends as unpretentious as cabbages, as subtle as summer squash, as persistent as parsley, as delightful as dill, as endless as zucchini, and who, like parsnips, can be counted on to see us through the winter;

For friendships that are hard won, like nuts that are hard to crack;

For the potential of every person, who, like grapes can become fine wine;

For old friends, nodding like sunflowers in the evening-time and young friends coming on as

fast as radishes;

For loving friends, who wind around us like tendrils and hold us, despite our blights, wilts and witherings;

And, finally, for those friends now gone, like gardens past, that have been harvested, but who fed us in their times that we might have life hereafter;

For all these we give thanks. *Amen.*

*Reverend Max Coots, First Universalist Society, New York
Submitted by Phil Oswald, St. Paul Rotary*

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is Thanks-Living, and all who call themselves Rotarians have good cause to thank God for the country in which we live and in being blessed beyond our fondest dreams.

For the fertility of the soil, its rivers and streams, its lakes and its forests: God be praised!

As Rotarians we need not be reminded to be thankful for all the rich natural resources by which humanity is enabled to make provision for every need, both spiritual and material.

Thanks be to God! In our assembling today, may we be a witness of our faith to our fellow beings and the provisions that we enjoy on the table.

In Your name we rejoice. *Amen.*

Reverend Walter F. Pearson, St. Peter Rotary

Christmas/Hanukkah

Gracious Eternal God, this is the season of light: light from the festive glow of the Menorah, warmth from the Yule log fire, radiant beams from the tender face of the babe born in Bethlehem.

In this the darkest of months, we give thanks for the light you bring to humankind. We give thanks for the light this Rotary Club has shed throughout its long history on so many others, both here at home and throughout the world.

We ask that we be nourished by food, fellowship and reflection on our past... and energized to convey your perpetual light... forward into the future. *Amen.*

Craig W. Johnson, Austin Rotary

Christmas/Hanukkah, Golden Rule

Lord of the Universe, this is a time in our year when many of us turn our attention to the spiritual side of our lives, when we consider what light we follow...

Help us to understand that no matter what name it is given and in what language it is expressed, that philosophy called The Golden Rule is indeed the most true guidepost by which we can mark the trails of our existence here...

Remind us that if that concept were universally held as a standard, by the people of all nations and faiths, there would be no wars, no hunger, no crimes one against the other . . .

We pray that you continue to bless the work that we as Rotarians, from many nations and of many faiths, do to help those less fortunate, for we believe that one manifestation of this Golden Rule is in our Rotary motto, Service Above Self.

Please give us an international time of peace on earth, good will towards men, inspired by

our great leaders and philosophers who themselves are inspired by you, O Lord.

And finally, we ask you to guide those who, as our government leaders, make their daily decisions that affect us, so that their efforts, whether international or local, shall be motivated by this same great rule of charity and good will. Thank you, Lord. *Amen.*

Joseph D. Coons, Bellingham WA

New Calendar Year

Almighty God, set us free this day from the spirit that makes for discord, from the temper that has no desire to forgive or forget, from the lack of faith in Your power to change the hearts of all who quarrel, enlarge our capacity to love all people, expand our wisdom to handle our responsibilities and to meet the demands of the New Year. *Amen.*

Roland D. Wilsey, Past District Governor Roseville Rotary

New Calendar Year, Stay Focused

God of All Time: We stay focused on the objectives we have for the world: Peace, tranquility, a true Community of Humanity, freedom from hunger, from oppression, from sickness, freedom to choose our own destinies. We reaffirm our commitment to our simple Rotary Four Way Test for all we do and support: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build good will and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? We reaffirm our commitment to high ethics in all we do. And we give thanks for all the blessings, opportunities and responsibilities that come to us as Rotarians. We continue in this New Year with optimism, renewed energy, and a commitment to service to all men and women. Please, Lord of the Universe, help us so to serve! *Amen.*

Joseph D. Coons Bellingham WA

Divine Imagination/Scout Law

God who is Creator of us all, we give thanks for divine imagination. We are truly blessed as God's children . . . boys and girls, women and men, unique and individual.

O God, the tapestry of life that you have woven together is good, beautiful, warm, intimate, vivid, creative, rich and textured with the threads, stories, tales, histories, and yarns of individuals, families and communities. We give thanks for the sharing of ourselves that life, conversation, and communication make possible.

For the centering and grounding that enables us to stand strong and alert; purposefully committed to helping others and to building a community that is just and inclusive, we give You thanks. For the blessings of guidance, support and advice from our teachers, our leaders, our mentors, and our family, we give thanks.

We give thanks, O God, for our talents, our strengths and our values. Encourage our minds, embolden our hearts, and empower our spirits to be children, men and women, who are trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent.

So be it. *Amen.*

Indianhead Council, Boy Scouts of America

Vision of Universal Peace

Give us, O God, the vision that can see your love in the world in spite of human failure. Give us the faith to trust your goodness in spite of our ignorance and weakness. Give us the

knowledge that we may continue to pray with understanding hearts, and show us what each one of us can do to set forward the coming day of universal peace. *Amen.*

Astronaut Frank Borman's Christmas Eve invocation from the Apollo spaceship when other astronauts read Genesis, Chapter One over the radio (12/24/68)

Peaks and Valleys

God of Creation: the paths of our lives are filled with peaks and valleys. When we are on the top of our peaks, we become so self-satisfied that we tend to ignore the things of importance. When we are in a valley, we feel a sense of abandonment and can focus only on what action lies directly ahead of us. Remind us, as you do in nature, that above the tree line the mountain-tops are barren and only in the valleys can we find the opportunity for true growth. *Amen.*

Ronald Hanson, Rotary Club of Cloquet, MN

Strength, Determination, Willpower

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end war, for we know that you have made the world in a way that we must find our own paths to peace within ourselves and with our neighbors.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end starvation, for you have already given us the resources with which to feed the entire world, if we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God to root out prejudice, for you have already given us eyes with which to see the good in others, if we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end despair, for you have already given us the power to clear away slums and to give hope, if we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end disease, for you have already given us great minds with which to search out cures and healings, if we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray to you instead, O God, for strength, determination, and will power, to do instead of to pray, to become instead of merely to wish, for your sake and for ours, speedily and soon, that our land and our world may be safe, and that our lives may be blessed.

May the words that we pray and the deeds that we do be acceptable to you, O Lord. *Amen.*

Written by Jack Riemer

Nothing Does Itself

Dear Lord, We honestly believe the purpose of each life is to make a difference that we lived at all. We also are aware that nothing does itself... machines don't make or run themselves, bricks don't lay themselves, nails don't drive themselves, buildings don't build themselves, lessons don't learn themselves, classes don't teach themselves, words don't memorize themselves, food doesn't prepare itself, skills don't develop themselves, projects don't plan themselves. Someone has to do everything that is done, make everything that is made, and think everything that is thought. We know the next move is up to us, therefore, we pray for your divine guidance in our every thought, intention and action. *Amen*

Irish Prayer

As each of us give our own thanks according to our personal persuasions let us dwell on

some thoughts that bind us together:

You've blessed us with friends and laughter and fun. With rain that's as soft as the light from the sun. You've blessed us with stars to brighten each night. You've given us help to know wrong from right. You've given us so much please, Lord give us too, a heart that is always grateful to you." *Amen.*

An Irish Prayer. Tim Creedon PDG Rotary Club of Phoenix # 100, Arizona

Mealttime

O Lord and giver of all good we thank you for our daily food. May Rotary friends and Rotary ways help us to serve thee all our Days. *Amen.*

Sung to the tune Tallis, Old 100th (Doxology)

Be present at our table Lord, be here and everywhere adored. These mercies bless and grant that we may feast in paradise with you. *Amen.*

Our thanksgiving to you, O Lord, for the opportunity to relax and share a common meal. To our bread, add the pleasure of good talk, and be welcome among us. *Amen.*

Pastor Clifford J. Swanson, Northfield Rotary

Almighty God, with grateful hearts, we thank you for this food; for the sun, soil and rain that nurtured it; the industry of the farmers who produced it; the skill of those who prepared it; the humility of those who serve it. May we enjoy the companionship it creates and be strengthened for service as we partake in peace and joy. *Amen.*

Pastor Clifford J. Swanson, Northfield Rotary

O God, we've dashed in here to this knife and fork club to stuff our overstuffed bodies. Help us to be as consistently concerned with: "Is it the truth, Is it fair to all concerned, Will it build goodwill and better friendships, and Will it be beneficial to all concerned" as we are about satisfying our own hunger pains. *Amen.*

Oley Wilson, St. James Rotary

We pray, Lord, that we may feel your presence with us at this meal. When we leave may we have fed on companionship as well as bread. *Amen.*

Reverend Loren Espeland, Redwood Falls Rotary

Almighty God, we thank you for this day and for this privilege of being gathered in Rotary fellowship. Please bless this food to our use, and us to your service. *Amen.*

Don Duerre, Wabasha Rotary

Eternal God, we offer our gratitude for this moment: for food, for our time together with friends, for this day's work. Grant the gifts of insight and wisdom for our work; give faithfulness and honesty to all. Bless our world with your peace. *Amen.*

Bruce Buller, Greater Rochester Rotary

Dear Lord, we thank you for this food and for the fellowship of Rotary. We pray that this food may strengthen us physically and our friendships may enrich us spiritually, that we may better do your will. *Amen.*

Jane Dickinson, Stillwater Rotary

Lord, we thank you for this food, for all the blessings that you give. Strengthen our bodies and our souls, and let us for service live. Amen.

Jane Dickinson, Stillwater Rotary

Almighty Giver of Good, we thank you for your loving kindness to us. You open your hand, and we are fed. Be at these tables, we pray, and bless our gathering together. *Amen.*

Jane Dickinson, Stillwater Rotary

We thank you, Lord, for happy hearts, for rain and sunny weather. We thank you, Lord, for this our food, and that today we are together. Amen.

Jane Dickinson, Stillwater Rotary

Dear Lord, we acknowledge your presence as we gather together on this day. We ask you to bless our time of fellowship and fun. We are grateful for the food that we are to be served. As we partake of this meal, help us to be mindful of those less fortunate than we. *Amen.*

Jeanne Doheny, Le Sueur Rotary

Eternal God, we offer our gratitude for this moment: for food, for our time together with friends, for this day's work. Grant the gifts of insight and wisdom for our work; give faithfulness and honesty to all. Bless our world with your peace. *Amen.*

Bruce Buller, Greater Rochester Rotary

Invocation Handbook



**The Rotary Club of
North Colorado Springs**



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Rotary International President D.K. Lee selected the theme for his 2008-2009 term to be:

Make Dreams Real

"In 2008-09, I will ask you all to Make Dreams Real for the world's children. This will be our theme, and my challenge to all of you."



Invocation Traditions

We are wise to take a moment from time to time, to revisit core principles. Invocations serve this purpose. In ceremonies and group assemblies, the invocation is often a prayer, such as the grace at the occasion of a meal or banquet.

“Invocation” is “the act of invoking or addressing in prayer or calling for the assistance of presence of any being, particularly of some divinity; a prayer said at the opening of a ceremony or service; the summoning of a spirit . . . or a calling upon a legal or moral standard or right.” *The Living Webster*, published by The English Language Institute of America, 1977.

Invocations draw us together to recommit to fundamental values, such as the simple acknowledgment of a divine authority, a statement of gratitude, or the yearning for common goals. We often invoke the guidance of the Deity to remind us by whose grace we received the gift of life and how to use that gift.

An invocation may simply be a moment of silence. Shared silence gives each person a chance to invoke his or her own moral or spiritual authority. It honors the sanctuary of the individual conscience as the wellspring of moral conduct.

Rotarians dedicate their talents and resources to the well being of their fellow humans. The principles of Rotary call upon each member to appreciate (and share) the gifts we might otherwise take for granted.

Meals present excellent opportunities to make invocations. Marcia and Jack Kelly stated this eloquently:

Saying grace is an ancient and vital tradition the world over.

To begin with, it provides a space, a moment of stillness, in which to relinquish the activities of the day and allow the mind to settle. Then, as we acknowledge the source of our nourishment, we are filled with astonishment at the generosity of the Creator, with gratitude, and with praise.

In bringing the body, mind, and heart together, we come to know ourselves, and remember who we are and why we are here. For some families, a meal is the only time everyone is present, and so the opportunity to enjoy one another and really celebrate the occasion is not to be lost. For many, a meal is also the only time that there is any memory of the Divine.

Saying grace establishes an immediate connection with that memory. In such a moment, when our minds are clear and the truth is reinforced by being sounded aloud, we can dedicate the meal and the strength we receive from it to the service of whomever or whatever is before us.

(*One Hundred Graces*, published by Harmony Books, a division of the Crown Publishing Group. 1992.



We respect all sincere religious traditions. This does not mean we purge all references to God from our public lives. Just as we honor individuals by respecting their diversity, we can respect the traditions that produced those diverse individuals.

In addition to many non-devotional and non-denominational invocations, this Handbook includes examples drawn from particular religious traditions. They should be used carefully, to avoid any appearance of promoting one's own religion.

Absolute neutrality may be impossible. Every name for the Deity — even those we consider perfectly generic — resonate more strongly with one tradition or another. The word, "God," tends to exclude traditions in which the Deity is deemed plural. References to "Him" or to the "Father" often arise in the Judeo-Christian tradition, not those in which the Deity is considered feminine or gender-neutral. One may associate the word "Allah" with Islam, but the Arabic word "Allah" is also a generic word equivalent to "God" in English. It is used by some Christians and Jews in Arabic-speaking nations. Americans often assume no one could be offended by such matters. In the Middle East, people fight and die over them.

I believe we need to pay close attention to whether an invocation, *as heard by the listener*, rings of subtle pressure or propaganda. The listener hears not just the literal statement, but also the context of the invocation. The context includes the tone, the setting, and the religious background of the listener, as well as that of the speaker, and the source of the phrase or quoted text.

When we use prayers from our own religions, we should take extra care to be inclusive. We can borrow from the religious traditions of others with less risk. Quoting the scripture of another religion implies appreciation, rather than pressure to conform.

A thoughtful invocation speaks to the universal values which sustain us despite our differences in language and background. We can focus upon those common values, rather than differences in how we express them. Those values serve the goals and purposes of Rotary.

The thoughtful article, *Promoting Understanding Among Peoples of All Faiths: Guidelines for Public Prayer* (<http://www.cres.org/ref/ref0009.htm>) was of great help in preparing this Handbook.

– David J. Margrave, NCSRC, June, 2003



Rotary International Policy

The following policy statement is taken from *The ABC's of Rotary*:

Invocations at Club Meetings:

In many Rotary Clubs, particularly in Judeo-Christian nations, it is customary to open weekly meetings with an appropriate invocation or blessing. Usually such invocations are offered without reference to specific religious denominations or faiths.

Rotary policy recognizes that throughout the world, Rotarians represent many religious beliefs, ideas and creeds. The religious beliefs of each member are fully respected, and nothing in Rotary is intended to prevent each individual from being faithful to such convictions.

At international assemblies and conventions, it is traditional for a silent invocation to be given. In respect for all religious beliefs and in the spirit of tolerance for a wide variety of personal faiths, all persons are invited to seek divine guidance and peace "each in his own way." It is an inspiring experience to join with thousands of Rotarians in an international "silent prayer" or act of personal devotion. Usually, all Rotary International board and committee meetings begin with a few moments of silent meditation. In this period of silence, Rotary demonstrates respect for the beliefs of all members, who represent the religions of the world.

Since each Rotary Club is autonomous, the practice of presenting a prayer or invocation at Club meetings is left entirely to the traditions and customs of the individual Club, with the understanding that these meeting rituals always be conducted in a manner which will respect the religious convictions and faiths of all members.



General Recommendations

Suggestions for Preparing an Invocation

- Use your own style, in a manner consistent with your convictions.
- Express hopes and aspirations common to all.
- Make a statement of gratitude.
- Acknowledge the activity or occasion, such as the meal, the opportunity to meet with friends, or to serve the goal of the group.
- Model respect for all traditions, to invoke the largest spiritual context.
- Petition the Deity only for things that every person in the group would endorse without hesitation.
- It may be appropriate to request the speedy recovery of an ill member, or the success of the group or a sponsored or affiliated group.
- Never advocate special political or religious beliefs.
- Close with “Amen,” or “Peace,” “Thank you,” “Namaste,” or a similar phrase, to create closure to the invocation.

Most occasions call for a short invocation. Some situations may allow for an inspirational reading or poem, provided that it is reverent. This Handbook contains many brief quotations which one might choose to incorporate into an invocation. For example, one might quote an inspirational thought, and express the way in which it fits the goals of Rotary, or the assembled group.

Terms of Address

The Infinite can be named many ways, in different situations. References to the Deity should generally be as broad as possible, and inclusive of all major traditions. Some examples include:

God
Creator of All Things
Divine Spirit
Eternal Presence
Infinite Spirit
Spirit of Love

Almighty Creator
Divine Creator
Lord
Heavenly Father
Source of All Creation



Invocations for Any Occasion

A Moment of Silence

Let us take a moment of silence in order to: *[select one or more of the following or add any appropriate additional statement of purpose:]*

- Appreciate the gift of this meal and the fellowship of good friends in Rotary.
- Allow everyone to take inspiration from their own personal traditions of conscience.
- Pray to the Creator in whatever manner is consistent with our own creeds and convictions.
- Summon to mind those principles from which we find guidance.
- Acknowledge in our hearts the love we have been given, and seek the strength to share that love with others.
- Refresh our spirits by invoking the Divine, however we may conceive of It within the sanctity of our own minds.
- Draw inspiration from the Source of all creation, each in his or her own way.
- Meditate in peace and fellowship before going about the business portion of this meeting.
- Seek guidance from Providence, and express gratitude for the bounty of meal and opportunity to serve mankind through Rotary.
- Reconnect in faith with the Source of Life, and take joy in the opportunity to be with good friends with a common purpose.
- Give thanks for the fellowship of good friends, and the opportunity to hear from [our speaker today] after enjoying this meal.
- Allow all of us, in the sanctuary of our own hearts and minds, to reconnect with the guiding principles which inspire our lives.

Themes of Service

Only a life lived for others is worth living.

(Albert Einstein)

Everyone can be great because everyone can serve.

(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Give like the rose gives its perfume -- effortlessly, unconditionally because it is its own nature.

(Vivekananda)

The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.

(Albert Schweitzer)



The fruit of silence is prayer.
The fruit of prayer is faith.
The fruit of faith is love.
The fruit of love is service.
The fruit of service is peace.
(Mother Theresa)

I slept and dreamt that life was joy;
I awoke and saw that life was service;
I acted and behold, service was joy!
(Rabindranath Tagore)

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.
Where there is sadness, joy.
Grant that I may not so much seek to *be consoled*, as to *console*;
To *be understood*, as to *understand*; and
To *be loved*, as to *love*.
For it is in *pardoning* that we are pardoned.
And it is in dying to the self that we are born to eternal life. Amen.
(Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi)

Heavenly Father,
Teach us that even if we can't do great things, we can at least do small things in a great way. May we always be sincere in our efforts to help others in need. Now bless this food to our use and us to Your service.
Amen. (*Invocations for Kiwanis Occasions, Kiwanis International, Indianapolis, IN 2001.*)

Meals

Father in heaven,
Sustain our bodies with this food, our hearts with true friendship; and fellowship and our souls with Your truth.
Amen.

For the food that nourishes our bodies . . .
for the fellowship here that feeds our souls . . .
for all things good and beautiful with which our lives are filled . . .
we render thanks to You -- giver of every good and perfect gift. Amen.



Lord, bless our meal,
and as You satisfy the needs of each of us, make us mindful of the needs of others.
Amen.

(Mt. St. Mary's Abbey, MA)

Accept, O Father,
our humble thanks for this our daily food, and as it adds strength to our bodies, may it
give us the power to render better service to Thee. Amen.

May God bless our meal and grant us a compassionate and understanding heart toward
one another. Amen.

(Mt. St. Mary's Abbey, MA)

For food to nourish
the body and conversation to enrich the mind, may the Lord make us truly thankful.
Amen.

Blessed are you,
Lord, God of Creation.

You feed the whole world with Your goodness, Your grace, Your kindness and Your
mercy. You nourish and sustain us and do good to all. Bless this food to our use and us
to Your service. Amen.

(Dr. William Dougherty, Rotary Club of Elmira Heights)

Rotary

Bless, O Lord,
this food to our use, and us in Your service. Keep in our hearts and minds the message
of "service above self" and bless our gathering together. Amen.

Lord,
Refresh us with this food. and nourish our hearts and minds with the constant values
that make us Rotarians. Open before us the way of peace and service. Amen.

Let's take a few moments to bow our heads in gratitude. We give thanks for the
companionship of our colleagues in Rotary, for the strength we draw from this meal, and
for the opportunity to put these to the service of our brothers and sisters around the
world. Amen.

(David Margrave, NCSRC)

May light and love surround us and guide us to right action.
May love, joy and peace be Yours in abundance.
May our Club be made holy, O God, by Your Light.



Divine and Eternal Presence,

We thank You once again for this fine meal, and for our good friends in Rotary. Keep us ever mindful that we are related, as individuals and as nations, and that the struggles of our brothers and sisters across the globe belong to us all. Inspire us, as we renew our commitment to service above self. Thanks be to You.

(David Margrave, NCSRC)

O God, our Father,

Who gives food for the body, and truth for the mind -- so nourish and enlighten us that we may grow wise to do Your will, and ever mindful of the ideas and values of Rotary. Amen.

Heavenly Father,

we thank You for this food and for all Your goodness to us. Give us grace to do Your will and serve above self.

For family and friends . . .

for health and strength . . .

for love and joy, we thank You

and pray that we may so use these gifts as to increase the happiness of all those around us. Amen.

We come to this hour knowing that it is but an hour. Yet out of all the hours in the week this is one that is set apart: an hour that is saved, an hour that is savored. It is a time for to recognize what gives life meaning. It is a time to honor what we value. It is a time to celebrate our lives. Let us then celebrate, honor, and recognize that we might fully savor this hour we have saved.

(Louise Robeck)

O God, our Father,

Who gives us food for the body and truth for the mind so enlighten and nourish us that we may grow wise and strong and do Thy will. Help us to continue in our efforts as Rotarians.

We ask these blessings in Thy holy name. Amen.

Almighty God,

Bless this food which we are about to receive

Bless us this during this time that we share

and we may be ever mindful of Thy will and our duty towards our goal of Service above Self. Amen.

May those assembled here today enjoy the many offerings of Rotary. May we abide by the rules we have established, those of trust, fellowship and ethics, and may we place service above self, in our daily endeavors. And may we always test ourselves and our efforts to be sure they are the truth, good for all concerned, of benefit to mankind, and provide peace and understanding. Amen.



It is good to recognize how different we are in our talents, our dreams, our backgrounds, our occupations. In our differences we can move together toward a common goal. Bless us as we meet together. Thank You for our individuality and also for our common bond. Amen.

(Phil Morris, Rotary Club of Furnitureland, High Point, NC)

Today we pray

that we may receive Your special blessing because we are committed to be a real service organization to help humankind. May each of us in our daily routine come to know the joy of caring and sharing with others not as fortunate as we are. May our motto that includes serving, caring and sharing be for us life service as well as lip service.

For friends,

food, fun and fellowship, especially the fellowship of Rotary we give our sincere thanks. May these tokens of Your bounty nourish our physical bodies in preparation for the challenges that are ours in Rotary. Keep us always mindful of the needs of others and keep us always attuned to our calling in Rotary. We ask these things in the name of Your eternal truth. Amen.

(Rev. Kenneth D. Benner, Rotary Club of Strathcona Sunrise Comox Valley, BC, Canada)

Bless, O Lord,

this food to our use, and us to Thy service in Rotary. We look to Thee, O Lord, for food to nourish our bodies; for grace to strengthen our spirits; for love to enrich our lives; and for the will to serve as Rotarians. Amen.

Creator of All things,

We thank You for the opportunity to enjoy this excellent meal; to be with good friends; to learn from this fine speaker; and to serve mankind through this fine organization.

Lord of the Universe,

We use that name for you to remind us that no matter their denomination, all good people are guided by your spirit. We remember, Creator, that our own Rotary International was chartered early in the 20th century, shortly before the war called, "The Great War to End All Wars" began. Sadly, it was not to end all wars after all . . . there have been too many wars since that time.

But now we look ahead. We stay focused on the objectives we have for the world: Peace and Understanding. A true brotherhood of man. Freedom from hunger, from oppression, from sickness. The freedom to choose our own destinies. We reaffirm our commitment to our simple Rotary "Four Way Test" for all we do and support: Is is the truth? Is is fair to all concerned? Will it build good will and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? In a time when being non-judgmental is "politically correct", we will be judgmental, evaluating our actions and those of others by this simple extension of the Golden Rule.



We reaffirm our commitment to high ethics in all we do. And we give thanks for all the blessings, opportunities and responsibilities that befall us as Rotarians, North Americans, and individuals. We continue with optimism, renewed energy and a commitment to service to you and our fellow man. Please, Lord of the Universe, help us to serve. Amen.

Those in Need

Heavenly Father:

Let us pray for the sick, the lonely, and the hungry, and let us make someone's day happier by doing an unexpected kindness. May we always willingly share our blessings with those in need. Amen.

We pray to God to eradicate all the misery in the world:
that understanding triumph over ignorance,
that generosity triumph over indifference,
that trust triumph over contempt, and
that truth triumph over falsehood.
(Zoroastrian prayer)

Peace and Blessings

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity.
Be fair in judgment, and guarded in thy speech,
Be a lamp unto those who walk in darkness, and a home to the stranger.
Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.
Be a breath of life to the body of humankind, a dew to the soil of the human heart, and a fruit upon the tree of humility.
(Bah'ai Prayer for Peace)

May the blessing of God rest upon you,
May His peace abide with you,
May His presence illuminate your heart,
Now and forevermore. Amen.
(Sufi blessing)

Grandfather Great Spirit

All over the world the faces of living ones are alike. With tenderness they have come up out of the ground. Look upon Your children that they may face the winds and walk the good road to the Day of Quiet. Grandfather Great Spirit, fill us with the Light. Give us the strength to understand and the eyes to see. Teach us to walk the soft Earth as relatives to all that live.

(Sioux Prayer, quoted in *Earth Prayers from Around the World*, edited By Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.)



Mother, Father, Good, Universal Power

Remind us daily of the sanctity of all life. Touch our hearts with the glorious oneness of all creation as we strive to respect all the living beings on this planet. Penetrate our souls with the beauty of this earth as we attune ourselves to the rhythm and flow of the seasons. Awaken our minds with the knowledge to achieve a world in perfect harmony and grant us the wisdom to realize that we can have heaven on earth.

(Jo Poore, quoted in Earth Prayers from Around the World, edited By Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.)

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, that we may walk the paths of the Most High. And we shall beat our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation - neither shall they learn war any more. And none shall be afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.

(Jewish prayer)

Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.

(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Tolerance and Compassion

Let us take a moment to remember all the religions represented in the worldwide Rotary family. Let us recall that when we were invited to join this Rotary club, we were not asked if we were a Protestant, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Jew, a Catholic, or a Buddhist. We were not asked because all religions are welcome in the Rotary family. Please join me in a moment of reflection and thanks with these words: With our friends beside us, and no person beneath us. With the bonds of Rotary between us, and our worries behind us. With our goals before us, and no task beyond us. With a thirst for knowledge, and a dream for a polio-free world. We are thankful for our Rotary friends and the meal we are about to share. Thank you.

(Chris Offer, 5040 District Governor)

Holy God, let us be faithful witnesses to the power of your love. Let our lives mirror hope in the midst of despair, let our deeds be filled with compassion in a world of bruising indifference, let our words be truthful when misinformation holds center stage, let our forgiveness build new bridges of reconciliation. Let your Spirit fill us with courage and hope. Amen.

(Max and Bruce Calkins, NCSRC)

Oh Great Spirit of our Ancestors,

I raise my pipe to you.

To your messengers the four winds,

and to Mother Earth who provides

for your children.

Give us the wisdom to teach our children



to love, to respect, and to be kind
to each other so that they may grow
with peace of mind.

Let us learn to share all good things that
you provide for us on this Earth.

(Native American prayer quoted in Earth Prayers from Around the World, edited By Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.)

Invocations for Special Occasions

Special Guests

Lord,

Thank You for the blessing of a visit from *[d.g.] District Governor [name]*, and the experience and perspective she brings to us, for the guidance of our club, in the service of Rotary. Amen.

Veterans Day

Lord,

Thank You for the courage and dedication of all the men and women who have served their nation in uniform. Remind us that the freedom we so often take for granted today was purchased at enormous cost; that our own lives were ransomed by men and women who laid down their own lives, limbs, health, and fortunes, upon the altar of freedom; that many of these guardians still endure wounds to the soul which we cannot comprehend; and that we enjoy today the company of people who risked all, so that we and our loved ones might live in peace and safety. Help us to remember their service, and learn from their example. Amen.

(NCSRC)

Heavenly Father:

Teach us to use *our* freedom to help to preserve and strengthen the freedom of *all*;

By respecting and upholding its laws;

By supporting our law enforcement agencies;

By informing ourselves on current issues;

By voting regularly and wisely; and

By honoring the rights of other people;

And now bless this food to our use and us to Your service. Amen.

(Invocations for Kiwanis Occasions, Kiwanis International, Indianapolis, IN 2001.)

Lord,

as we enjoy our fellowship, help us to remember how fortunate we are to be able to serve our brothers and sisters around the world through Rotary and our amazing Foundation. That we are prosperous, help us to give of our material wealth. That we are free, enable us to work together on projects. That we are generous, help us to work



together to accomplish amazing successes. And that we are dedicated, bring us together as an individual club to continue our efforts to serve our community.

Guide us in our service. Keep us well so we can serve. And bless those peoples around the world touched by our works, so that they, too, can have the joy of a fulfilling life, full of good health and companionship, in surroundings that are beneficial to all. Amen.

(Joseph D. Coons, Bellingham WA)

Lord,

Help us to forever remember those guardians who stood in harm's way to protect our loved ones and us. Bless and keep those guardians of liberty and their loved ones, just as they blessed us and ours with their service in the name of freedom.

(NCSRC)

O God of time and eternity, help us look to the past with gratitude and to the future with hope. We remember this day those who have gone before us here, who labored not for themselves alone but with a vision of building for the future a world better than they had known. Inspire in us also a like vision, that we too may labor for things beyond ourselves, that our lives may be dedicated to high purposes and grand horizons. Make us unafraid of hopes and dreams; release us from cynicism and despair. Teach us to be realistic about our limitations but never to lose hope in our potential to transcend them.

Amen.

(Earl Holt)