

# School Board Formation Program



This guide comprises the leader's outline for 10 short sessions to begin meetings in a prayerful and reflective way. These sessions are designed to provide a formative praxis developed around the nine capacities for Christian community identified in the BCE Spiritual Formation Framework. As such, each session has prepared readings and these are included in the accompanying 'Collection of Readings.' The final session uses the reflection time to review the year and its gifts and insights. Each session has a prayer format so that the reflection and sharing occur within this structure.

The following outlines the focus for each session:

- Session 1: Presence
- Session 2: Prayer
- Session 3: Principle
- Session 4: Welcome
- Session 5: Ritual
- Session 6: Journey
- Session 7: Purpose
- Session 8: Commitment
- Session 9: Fidelity
- Session 10: Review of Year

All members undertake to read prepared reading for each session. Each set of readings is accompanied by some brief instructions for reflection:

- Underline or circle those words or phrases that stand out for you
- Reflect on where you have seen this modelled in the various spheres of your own life – work; home; wider community; parish; other groups or social and professional settings....
- Jot down an insight that occurs to you
- Jot down one issue – perhaps a question or a challenge or an affirmation - it raises for you about Catholic education

For each session, a different member of council volunteers to lead. It would be suggested that the Chair leads the initial session. A prayer-card accompanies the resource.

The process is designed to run for about 20 minutes. The wisdom principle is that we deepen our understanding through a head, heart and hands engagement with the tradition, the scholars, each other and our own reflection and experience.

# SESSION 1: Presence

**Leader:** *(Welcomes all to the meeting and to this time of reflection together.)*

Our focus for this meeting is the call to be people of Prayer.

As we gather,

we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land.

We recognise that as a community, we are called to follow the dream of Jesus ... to affirm the reign of God.

To begin, let us pause in God's presence and be open to the possibilities present here in our midst. .... *(pause)*

Always, we remember the promise of Jesus

that where two or three are gathered in His name, Jesus is there with us.

With this in mind, O Gracious God, we pray:

*(Gesture all to join in ...)*

**All:** As we gather here in Your name,  
Open our minds to know Your voice.  
Open our hands to do Your work.  
And open our hearts to hold Your Spirit.

**Leader:** As you know, each of our meetings begins with a short period of shared reflection on a particular element of Christian community. We are invited to reflect on the readings in preparation and to consider how this is reflected in our own witness and in the responsibility of the work before us. So I welcome you into this process of personal discernment and shared reflection.

Our focus for this meeting is the capacity of 'Presence'.

**Reader 1:** We are called to be people of presence who reflect an incarnational understanding of God in the world.

**Reader 2:** Grant me to recognise in other men and women, my God, the radiance of your own face. *(Teilhard de Chardin)*

**Reader 3:** To grow the capacity of Presence is to nurture a deep sense that God is present and part of our lives and the life of the world. It is to believe that every encounter, every moment is rich with sacred possibility. It is to look into the eyes of each other and see reflected there God's own being. Christians believe that in Jesus Christ, God has entered the world, 'one like us.'

For the early disciples, Jesus was 'The Way' – the way to the heart of God, and the way to fully live. Our central Christian belief remains that in Jesus, the fully human and fully divine are one. This is the theology of incarnation and it changes not only the way we look at each other, but the way we see and live and have our being in the world.

**Leader:** I invite you now to come to the readings for this evening:

1. 'The Concept of the Incarnation' - Extract from *Seeking Spirituality* by Ron Rolheiser
2. *Suddenly, We Become Aware* by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel –

- a) *Leader asks each member to simply name **one word or phrase** that stood out for them in each of the readings....*
- b) *Leader then invites another council member to share **an insight** from either the poem or the extract (pre-arrange this invitation). Invite an open response from others that is connected to the insight shared. In other words, responses ought not be focussed on each individual's own list of insights, but follow thoughts in response to the insight that has been shared. Allow 5 minutes for this sharing process.*
- c) *Finally, Leader invites another Council member to share an issue that they had identified in the readings - perhaps **a question or a challenge or an affirmation - for Catholic education**. Invite responses to this from others. Allow 5 minutes for this.*

**Leader:** *(Thank the group for their reflections and invite them to keep these in mind during the time together this evening.)*

As we continue, I invite you to share any special prayers you have at this time for your family, community, or our work.

To finish your prayer, just conclude with the words - "We pray as one".

We will then all respond with these same words.

*Leader may like to model this by leading with own prayer: 'I would like to offer our prayers for ..... we pray as one'*

*Allow time for sharing of prayers and/or prayerful silence.*

**Leader:** These and all the prayers of our hearts we place before God (*pause*). We pray as one.

**All:** We pray as one.

**Leader:** God of our being,  
May Your love be deeply held in our hearts.  
May we remain steadfast in living the gospel of Jesus.

**All:** We pray that your grace, mercy and peace,  
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,  
Now and forever. Amen.

**Leader:** St Mary of the Cross....

**All:** Pray for us.

## SESSION 2: **Prayer**

**Leader:** *(Welcomes all to the meeting and to this time of reflection together.)*  
Our focus for this meeting is the call to be people of Prayer.

As we gather,  
we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land.  
We recognise that as a community, we are called to follow the dream of  
Jesus ... to affirm the reign of God.

To begin, let us pause in God's presence and be open to the possibilities  
present here in our midst. .... *(pause)*

Always, we remember the promise of Jesus  
that where two or three are gathered in His name, Jesus is there with us.

With this in mind, God of our Deepest Being, we pray:

*(Gesture all to join in ...)*

**All:** As we gather here in Your name,  
Open our minds to know Your voice.  
Open our hands to do Your work.  
And open our hearts to hold Your Spirit.

**Leader:** Our focus for reflection and sharing this evening is on the call to be People of Prayer. As we reflect on what it means to be People of Prayer and the related readings, we are invited to consider how this focus is reflected in our own witness and in the responsibility of the work before us this evening.

**Reader 1:** We are called to be people of prayer who have developed personal prayer-styles and are nurtured and sustained by faithfulness to this practice.

**Reader 2:** Be Still and Know that I am God. *(Psalm 46)*

**Reader 3:** The simplest description of prayer is one that comes from St Augustine: *Prayer is communication with God.* And the way we each do this is as unique as we are.

To grow the capacity of Prayer is to nurture a personal relationship with Jesus, through the Spirit and held in the Godhead – God the Father. It requires seeking out and regular practice in, a personal prayer style that is connective and real.

The place of prayer in Jesus' life was non-negotiable, even in the midst of demanding crowds. His deep and nurtured connection to God was his centre, his heart. We too are called into relationship to discover the deep peace and wordless reality of God's ever-present love.

There are many forms of prayer and ways to pray. Here, we are giving focus to the personal rather than public forms, and the best place to go to seek a way to pray for yourself are the prayer traditions within our rich Church history. These include lectio divina, Christian meditation and the contemplative traditions.

**Leader:** I invite you now to come to the readings for this evening:

1. Chapter extract: *Personal Prayer* by Bishop James Cuskelly
  2. *Mystic or Unbeliever* by Ron Rolheiser
- d) *Leader asks each member to simply name **one word or phrase** that stood out for them in each of the readings....*
- e) *Leader then invites another council member to share **an insight** from either the poem or the extract (pre-arrange this invitation). Invite an open response from others that is connected to the insight shared. In other words, responses ought not be focussed on each individual's own list of insights, but follow thoughts in response to the insight that has been shared. Allow 5 minutes for this sharing process.*
- f) *Finally, Leader invites another Council member to share an issue that they had identified in the readings - perhaps **a question or a challenge or an affirmation - for Catholic education**. Invite responses to this from others. Allow 5 minutes for this.*

**Leader:** *(Thank the group for their reflections and invite them to keep these in mind during the time together this evening.)*

As we continue, I invite you to share any special prayers you have at this time for your family, community, or our work.

To finish your prayer, just conclude with the words - "We pray as one".

We will then all respond with these same words.

Leader may like to model this by leading with own prayer: *'I would like to offer our prayers for ..... we pray as one'*  
Allow time for sharing of prayers and/or prayerful silence.

**Leader:** These and all the prayers of our hearts we place before God (*pause*). We pray as one.

**All:** We pray as one.

**Leader:** God of our being,  
May Your love be deeply held in our hearts.  
May we remain steadfast in living the gospel of Jesus.

**All:** We pray that your grace, mercy and peace,  
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,  
Now and forever. Amen.

**Leader:** St Mary of the Cross....

**All:** Pray for us.

## SESSION 3: Principle

**Leader:** *(Welcomes all to the meeting and to this time of reflection together.)*  
Our focus for this meeting is the call to be people of Principle.

As we gather,  
we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land.  
We recognise that as a community, we are called to follow the dream of  
Jesus ... to affirm the reign of God.

To begin, let us pause in God's presence and be open to the possibilities  
present here in our midst. .... *(pause)*

Always, we remember the promise of Jesus  
that where two or three are gathered in His name, Jesus is there with us.

With this in mind, God of Every Day, we pray:

*(Gesture all to join in ...)*

**All:** As we gather here in Your name,  
Open our minds to know Your voice.  
Open our hands to do Your work.  
And open our hearts to hold Your Spirit.

**Leader:** Our focus for reflection and sharing this evening is on the call to be People of Principle. As we reflect on what it means to be People of Principle and the related readings, we are invited to consider how this focus is reflected in our own witness and in the responsibility of the work before us this evening.

**Reader 1:** We are called to be people of principle who live the gospel values of Jesus' vision.

**Reader 2:** Happy are those who love God... they are light in the darkness for the upright; they are generous, merciful and just... People such as this will be honoured.  
*(Psalm 112)*

**Reader 3:** Jesus' vision of a discipleship of equals, of the reign of God breaking in on the world, was founded on core values. We now call these gospel values, and we believe that they lead us to fullness of life. These gospel values are compassion and justice, love and forgiveness, peace and hope.

To truly live by these values is challenging, as it was when Jesus first spoke of this new Kingdom of God. But Jesus modelled the power of living these values and people witnessed the transforming impact this had. It is no less powerful today when people witness to those same gospel values, and we believe that we are called to do that in our classrooms, our staffrooms, our offices and playgrounds.

**Leader:** I invite you now to come to the readings for this evening:

1. *Spirit-led Leadership* by Mary Bechtle
  2. *Living the truths of the Spirit* by Edith Hamilton
- a) *Leader asks each member to simply name **one word or phrase** that stood out for them in each of the readings....*
  - b) *Leader then invites another council member to share **an insight** from either the poem or the extract (pre-arrange this invitation). Invite an open response from others that is connected to the insight shared. In other words, responses ought not be focussed on each individual's own list of insights, but follow thoughts in response to the insight that has been shared. Allow 5 minutes for this sharing process.*
  - c) *Finally, Leader invites another Council member to share an issue that they had identified in the readings - perhaps **a question or a challenge or an affirmation - for Catholic education**. Invite responses to this from others. Allow 5 minutes for this.*

**Leader:** *(Thank the group for their reflections and invite them to keep these in mind during the time together this evening.)*

As we continue, I invite you to share any special prayers you have at this time for your family, community, or our work.

To finish your prayer, just conclude with the words - "We pray as one". We will then all respond with these same words.

Leader may like to model this by leading with own prayer: *'I would like to offer our prayers for ..... we pray as one'*  
Allow time for sharing of prayers and/or prayerful silence.

**Leader:** These and all the prayers of our hearts we place before God (*pause*). We pray as one.

**All:** We pray as one.

**Leader:** God of our being,  
May Your love be deeply held in our hearts.  
May we remain steadfast in living the gospel of Jesus.

**All:** We pray that your grace, mercy and peace,  
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,  
Now and forever. Amen.

**Leader:** St Mary of the Cross....

**All:** Pray for us.

## SESSION 4: **Welcome**

**Leader:** *(Welcomes all to the meeting and to this time of reflection together.)*

Our focus for this meeting is the call to be people of Welcome.

As we gather,  
we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land.  
We recognise that as a community, we are called to follow the dream of  
Jesus ... to affirm the reign of God.

To begin, let us pause in God's presence and be open to the possibilities  
present here in our midst. .... *(pause)*

Always, we remember the promise of Jesus  
that where two or three are gathered in His name, Jesus is there with us.

With this in mind, Welcoming God, we pray:

*(Gesture all to join in ...)*

**All:** As we gather here in Your name,  
Open our minds to know Your voice.  
Open our hands to do Your work.  
And open our hearts to hold Your Spirit.

**Leader:** Our focus for reflection and sharing this evening is on the call to be People of Welcome. As we reflect on what it means to be People of Welcome and the related readings, we are invited to consider how this focus is reflected in our own witness and in the responsibility of the work before us this evening.

**Reader 1:** We are called to be people of welcome who understand and build an ethos of Christian hospitality in every circumstance.

**Reader 2:** Hospitality is the way we turn a prejudiced world around one heart at a time.  
*(Sr Joan Chittester)*

**Reader 3:** One of the most compelling features of the early Christian communities was their sense of mutuality and genuine welcome to all. Hospitality and generosity go hand in hand, and certainly these early communities had a long and deep tradition of welcome in the Jewish scriptures. 'Welcoming the stranger' was rewarded beyond measure in the great stories of the Hebrew scriptures such as Abraham and Sarai. In the gospels, Jesus' open welcome to all, including society's strangers – the tax collectors and sinners, women and the sick – challenged the very structure of society.

It is noteworthy that the great spiritual documents in Western civilization all give priority to this most fundamental of things – welcome. It is acknowledgement that the practice of respectful attentiveness in these small moments of human encounter develops a habit of gratitude and grace that is a hallmark of the Holy, and the pathway to God.

Today, the practice of welcome is still very challenging for us, because still it is the call to be attentive to the daily encounters we have with other staff, with parents and with children, and at the same time in the wider world to reach out to the marginalized, the sick, the outcast and the hurting.

**Leader:** I invite you now to come to the readings for this evening:

1. Facing Ourselves Together by Gloria Durka
  2. The Real Expression of our Faith by Joan Chittester
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- a) *Leader asks each member to simply name **one word or phrase** that stood out for them in each of the readings....*
  - b) *Leader then invites another council member to share **an insight** from either the poem or the extract (pre-arrange this invitation). Invite an open response from others that is connected to the insight shared. In other words, responses ought not be focussed on each individual's own list of insights, but follow thoughts in response to the insight that has been shared. Allow 5 minutes for this sharing process.*
  - c) *Finally, Leader invites another Council member to share an issue that they had identified in the readings - perhaps **a question or a challenge or an affirmation - for Catholic education**. Invite responses to this from others. Allow 5 minutes for this.*

**Leader:** *(Thank the group for their reflections and invite them to keep these in mind during the time together this evening.)*

As we continue, I invite you to share any special prayers you have at this time for your family, community, or our work.

To finish your prayer, just conclude with the words - *"We pray as one"*. We will then all respond with these same words.

*Leader may like to model this by leading with own prayer: 'I would like to offer our prayers for ..... we pray as one'*

*Allow time for sharing of prayers and/or prayerful silence.*

**Leader:** These and all the prayers of our hearts we place before God *(pause)*. We pray as one.

**All:** We pray as one.

**Leader:** God of our being,  
May Your love be deeply held in our hearts.  
May we remain steadfast in living the gospel of Jesus.

**All:** We pray that your grace, mercy and peace,  
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,  
Now and forever. Amen.

**Leader:** St Mary of the Cross....

**All:** Pray for us.

## SESSION 5: Ritual

**Leader:** *(Welcomes all to the meeting and to this time of reflection together.)*

Our focus for this meeting is the call to be people of Ritual.

As we gather,  
we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land.  
We recognise that as a community, we are called to follow the dream of  
Jesus ... to affirm the reign of God.

To begin, let us pause in God's presence and be open to the possibilities  
present here in our midst. .... *(pause)*

Always, we remember the promise of Jesus  
that where two or three are gathered in His name, Jesus is there with us.

With this in mind, O God of Mystery, we pray:

*(Gesture all to join in ...)*

**All:** As we gather here in Your name,  
Open our minds to know Your voice.  
Open our hands to do Your work.  
And open our hearts to hold Your Spirit.

**Leader:** Our focus for reflection and sharing this evening is on the call to be People of Ritual. As we reflect on what it means to be People of Principle and the related readings, we are invited to consider how this focus is reflected in our own witness and in the responsibility of the work before us this evening.

**Reader 1:** We are called to be people of ritual who understand sacramentality and apply the Christian value of reverence in all relationships.

**Reader 2:** Day after day takes up the story. Night after night makes known the message. *(Psalm 19)*

**Reader 3:** Ritual is fundamental to the meaning-making of human beings and, because of this, is common to both 'secular' and 'sacred' worlds. Words, actions and symbols are used in a way that requires little or no explanation to those participating because they speak so clearly to a

shared 'knowing'. In the Catholic tradition, liturgy – the formal prayer of the Church – developed out of the rituals of the early Christian communities who gathered together to remember, to break bread and to celebrate the living reality of Jesus.

There is a ritual pattern common to most gatherings whether they be secular (e.g. birthday parties, sporting events) or sacred (liturgies of the Church, prayer rituals and devotions). The elements of this pattern are: we gather; we listen; we respond; we go forth. All the official liturgies of the church – including the Eucharist, the other sacraments and the Liturgy of the Hours – have a gathering rite, proclamation of scripture, response in either spoken word, song or ritual action, and a concluding rite that sends us forth. Prayer rituals and other celebrations which allow for more flexibility in structure and style also follow this pattern.

All Catholic ritual is founded on an incarnational understanding of God and the belief in the sacramentality of all things. That God is revealed in the world and in a particular and powerful way through Jesus Christ means that God is revealed and encountered in the real and tangible moment of everyday life. The seven sacraments name and celebrate moments that are key points of this divine encounter.

The power of ritual in our Catholic Christian tradition invites us into a deeper reality that engages all our senses – head, heart and hands – in a way that turns the ordinary into the extraordinary. When we understand this, we cannot help but see the world and each other with eyes of reverence.

**Leader:** I invite you now to come to the readings for this evening:

1. *The Christian Year – What does it mean to Celebrate it?*
  2. *Deep Listening* by John Fox
  3. Light a Candle
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- a) *Leader asks each member to simply name **one word or phrase** that stood out for them in each of the readings....*
  - b) *Leader then invites another council member to share **an insight** from either the poem or the extract (pre-arrange this invitation). Invite an open response from others that is connected to the insight shared. In other words, responses ought not be focussed on each individual's*

*own list of insights, but follow thoughts in response to the insight that has been shared. Allow 5 minutes for this sharing process.*

- c) *Finally, Leader invites another Council member to share an issue that they had identified in the readings - perhaps **a question or a challenge or an affirmation - for Catholic education**. Invite responses to this from others. Allow 5 minutes for this.*

**Leader:** *(Thank the group for their reflections and invite them to keep these in mind during the time together this evening.)*

As we continue, I invite you to share any special prayers you have at this time for your family, community, or our work.

To finish your prayer, just conclude with the words - "We pray as one".

We will then all respond with these same words.

*Leader may like to model this by leading with own prayer: 'I would like to offer our prayers for ..... we pray as one'*

*Allow time for sharing of prayers and/or prayerful silence.*

**Leader:** These and all the prayers of our hearts we place before God (*pause*). We pray as one.

**All:** We pray as one.

**Leader:** God of our being,  
May Your love be deeply held in our hearts.  
May we remain steadfast in living the gospel of Jesus.

**All:** We pray that your grace, mercy and peace,  
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,  
Now and forever. Amen.

**Leader:** St Mary of the Cross....

**All:** Pray for us.

# SESSION 6: Journey

**Leader:** *(Welcomes all to the meeting and to this time of reflection together.)*  
Our focus for this meeting is the call to be people of Journey.

As we gather,  
we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land.  
We recognise that as a community, we are called to follow the dream of  
Jesus ... to affirm the reign of God.

To begin, let us pause in God's presence and be open to the possibilities  
present here in our midst. .... *(pause)*

Always, we remember the promise of Jesus  
that where two or three are gathered in His name, Jesus is there with us.

With this in mind, O God of our Journey, we pray:

*(Gesture all to join in ...)*

**All:** As we gather here in Your name,  
Open our minds to know Your voice.  
Open our hands to do Your work.  
And open our hearts to hold Your Spirit.

**Leader:** Our focus for reflection and sharing this evening is on the call to be People of Journey. As we reflect on what it means to be People of Journey and the related readings, we are invited to consider how this focus is reflected in our own witness and in the responsibility of the work before us this evening.

**Reader 1:** We are called to be people of journey who understand the 'people of God' narrative and have found a place in the wider Church.

**Reader 2:** 'Were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke to us on the road?'  
*(Luke 24:32)*

**Reader 3:** Our understanding of followers or believers being called the ‘people of God’ has its roots in the Old Testament – itself the story or narrative of the journey of a believing people – the Israelites – in their relationship with God. It has three key elements: Faith, kinship and call.

Behind the events and stories in the Old Testament, there is the movement in faith of individuals and a people. It is a narrative of growing in faith. The New Testament follows as the breaking open in faith of the reality of God’s love in the being and action of Jesus Christ. There is a sense of the growing maturity of understanding that culminated in the explosive reality of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

In this journey of faith, the understanding that we only make this journey in community – in kinship with each other – is central to the Catholic tradition. We do not go the journey alone; in fact, we need each other to know our own deepest truth in God.

The call to return to God is woven through all the scriptures. It was Jesus’ call to us too, and it remains our call today. It is no less difficult, no less compelling than it ever was. In answering that call we remember that we are part of a larger company of travellers that stretches back in time and into the future encompassing the great communion of saints and faithful.

We are the people of God, called to find our place in the wider Church as we journey in community, in faith.

**Leader:** I invite you now to come to the readings for this evening:

1. *Change Challenges a Faith Review* by Eric Hodgens
  2. ‘Who are our Heroes and Heroines’ in *What’s Great about Being Catholic?* by Richard Rohr
- a) *Leader asks each member to simply name **one word or phrase** that stood out for them in each of the readings....*
  - b) *Leader then invites another council member to share **an insight** from either the poem or the extract (pre-arrange this invitation). Invite an open response from others that is connected to the insight shared. In other words, responses ought not be focussed on each individual’s own list of insights, but follow thoughts in response to the insight that has been shared. Allow 5 minutes for this sharing process.*
  - c) *Finally, Leader invites another Council member to share an issue that they had identified in the readings - perhaps **a question or a***

*challenge or an affirmation - for Catholic education. Invite responses to this from others. Allow 5 minutes for this.*

**Leader:** *(Thank the group for their reflections and invite them to keep these in mind during the time together this evening.)*

As we continue, I invite you to share any special prayers you have at this time for your family, community, or our work.

To finish your prayer, just conclude with the words - *“We pray as one”*.

We will then all respond with these same words.

*Leader may like to model this by leading with own prayer: ‘I would like to offer our prayers for ..... we pray as one’*

*Allow time for sharing of prayers and/or prayerful silence.*

**Leader:** These and all the prayers of our hearts we place before God (*pause*). We pray as one.

**All:** We pray as one.

**Leader:** God of our being,  
May Your love be deeply held in our hearts.  
May we remain steadfast in living the gospel of Jesus.

**All:** We pray that your grace, mercy and peace,  
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,  
Now and forever. Amen.

**Leader:** St Mary of the Cross....

**All:** Pray for us.

## SESSION 7: Purpose

**Leader:** *(Welcomes all to the meeting and to this time of reflection together.)*  
Our focus for this meeting is the call to be people of Purpose.

As we gather,  
we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land.  
We recognise that as a community, we are called to follow the dream of  
Jesus ... to affirm the reign of God.

To begin, let us pause in God's presence and be open to the possibilities  
present here in our midst. .... *(pause)*

Always, we remember the promise of Jesus  
that where two or three are gathered in His name, Jesus is there with us.

With this in mind, O God of Wisdom, we pray:

*(Gesture all to join in ...)*

**All:** As we gather here in Your name,  
Open our minds to know Your voice.  
Open our hands to do Your work.  
And open our hearts to hold Your Spirit.

**Leader:** Our focus for reflection and sharing this evening is on the call to be People of Purpose. As we reflect on what it means to be People of Purpose and the related readings, we are invited to consider how this focus is reflected in our own witness and in the responsibility of the work before us this evening.

**Reader 1:** We are called to be people of purpose with a strong sense of personal and professional vocation.

**Reader 2:** Never doubt that a small group can change the world – indeed it is the only thing that ever has. *(Margaret Mead)*

**Reader 3:** The early Christian communities were bound together by a strong sense of what they were about. They were known as 'people of the Way', and they certainly had a strong sense of their call to live in the way that Jesus had shown them. A way they knew was life giving in every sense of the word.

We too are called to have this sense of purpose about who we are and what we do. For baptised Christians, that call is as it was for the early Christians – to follow Jesus in seeking to bring about the reign or kingdom of God in the everyday circumstances of life and work. This is what it means to be disciple.

As people involved in Catholic education, it means that we need to understand the bigger picture of our tasks and roles – that we are part of a Church whose vision is of a transformed world. It means we realise that our work is not an end in itself, but a witness to the vision of Jesus and the enduring love of God.

Fundamentally, being a people of purpose means we have a clear sense that who we are and what we do and how we do it have an impact that echoes in eternity.

**Leader:** I invite you now to come to the readings for this evening:

1. *The Mission has a Church* by Stephen Bevens
2. *A Blessing* by John O'Donoghue

- a) *Leader asks each member to simply name **one word or phrase** that stood out for them in each of the readings....*
- b) *Leader then invites another council member to share **an insight** from either the poem or the extract (pre-arrange this invitation). Invite an open response from others that is connected to the insight shared. In other words, responses ought not be focussed on each individual's own list of insights, but follow thoughts in response to the insight that has been shared. Allow 5 minutes for this sharing process.*
- c) *Finally, Leader invites another Council member to share an issue that they had identified in the readings - perhaps **a question or a challenge or an affirmation - for Catholic education**. Invite responses to this from others. Allow 5 minutes for this.*

**Leader:** *(Thank the group for their reflections and invite them to keep these in mind during the time together this evening.)*

As we continue, I invite you to share any special prayers you have at this time for your family, community, or our work.

To finish your prayer, just conclude with the words - *“We pray as one”*.

We will then all respond with these same words.

*Leader may like to model this by leading with own prayer: ‘I would like to offer our prayers for ..... we pray as one’*

*Allow time for sharing of prayers and/or prayerful silence.*

**Leader:** These and all the prayers of our hearts we place before God (*pause*). We pray as one.

**All:** We pray as one.

**Leader:** God of our being,  
May Your love be deeply held in our hearts.  
May we remain steadfast in living the gospel of Jesus.

**All:** We pray that your grace, mercy and peace,  
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,  
Now and forever. Amen.

**Leader:** St Mary of the Cross....

**All:** Pray for us.

# SESSION 8: Commitment

**Leader:** *(Welcomes all to the meeting and to this time of reflection together.)*  
Our focus for this meeting is the call to be people of Commitment.

As we gather,  
we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land.  
We recognise that as a community, we are called to follow the dream of  
Jesus ... to affirm the reign of God.

To begin, let us pause in God's presence and be open to the possibilities  
present here in our midst. .... *(pause)*

Always, we remember the promise of Jesus  
that where two or three are gathered in His name, Jesus is there with us.

With this in mind, God of Steadfast Commitment, we pray:

*(Gesture all to join in ...)*

**All:** As we gather here in Your name,  
Open our minds to know Your voice.  
Open our hands to do Your work.  
And open our hearts to hold Your Spirit.

**Leader:** Our focus for reflection and sharing this evening is on the call to be People of Commitment. As we reflect on what it means to be People of Commitment and the related readings, we are invited to consider how this focus is reflected in our own witness and in the responsibility of the work before us this evening.

**Reader 1:** We are called to be a people of commitment with a passion for making a difference in the world through our vocation and witness.

**Reader 2:** Give and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back. *(Luke 6:36-38)*

**Reader 3:** It is one thing to know what we are about. It is another to be committed to that with passion and conviction. Commitment gives life to the purpose we have. It is the lived out witness to the vision we carry, and the tangible expression of the deep faith we have.

The way we express our commitment is as unique as we are. But it will be nurtured in us all by a personal prayer life, and characterised by engagement with the world that is respectful, empowering and hopeful.

**Leader:** I invite you now to come to the readings for this evening:

1. *The Australian Religious Landscape through Catholic Eyes, on the Eve of World Youth Day 2008* by Fr. Frank Brennan
2. *Callings* by John O'Donoghue

- a) *Leader asks each member to simply name **one word or phrase** that stood out for them in each of the readings....*
- b) *Leader then invites another council member to share **an insight** from either the poem or the extract (pre-arrange this invitation). Invite an open response from others that is connected to the insight shared. In other words, responses ought not be focussed on each individual's own list of insights, but follow thoughts in response to the insight that has been shared. Allow 5 minutes for this sharing process.*
- c) *Finally, Leader invites another Council member to share an issue that they had identified in the readings - perhaps **a question or a challenge or an affirmation - for Catholic education**. Invite responses to this from others. Allow 5 minutes for this.*

**Leader:** *(Thank the group for their reflections and invite them to keep these in mind during the time together this evening.)*

As we continue, I invite you to share any special prayers you have at this time for your family, community, or our work.

To finish your prayer, just conclude with the words - "We pray as one". We will then all respond with these same words.

*Leader may like to model this by leading with own prayer: 'I would like to offer our prayers for ..... we pray as one'*  
Allow time for sharing of prayers and/or prayerful silence.

**Leader:** These and all the prayers of our hearts we place before God (*pause*). We pray as one.

**All:** We pray as one.

**Leader:** God of our being,  
May Your love be deeply held in our hearts.  
May we remain steadfast in living the gospel of Jesus.

**All:** We pray that your grace, mercy and peace,  
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,  
Now and forever. Amen.

**Leader:** St Mary of the Cross....

**All:** Pray for us.

## SESSION 9: Fidelity

**Leader:** *(Welcomes all to the meeting and to this time of reflection together.)*  
Our focus for this meeting is the call to be people of Fidelity.

As we gather,  
we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land.  
We recognise that as a community, we are called to follow the dream of  
Jesus ... to affirm the reign of God.

To begin, let us pause in God's presence and be open to the possibilities  
present here in our midst. .... *(pause)*

Always, we remember the promise of Jesus  
that where two or three are gathered in His name, Jesus is there with us.

With this in mind, O God of Faithful Witness, we pray:

*(Gesture all to join in ...)*

**All:** As we gather here in Your name,  
Open our minds to know Your voice.  
Open our hands to do Your work.  
And open our hearts to hold Your Spirit.

**Leader:** Our focus for reflection and sharing this evening is on the call to be People of Fidelity. As we reflect on what it means to be People of Fidelity and the related readings, we are invited to consider how this focus is reflected in our own witness and in the responsibility of the work before us this evening.

**Reader 1:** We are called to be a people of fidelity who live out, through their ministry, the best of the Catholic Christian educational tradition, and identify with all those who work in the name of Catholic schooling.

**Reader 2:** 'See how they love one another!'  
*(These are the words Tertullian noted (Apology [39.6]) in the Third Century, as spoken by some of the Pagans of the time regarding Christian communities.)*

**Reader 3:** As people involved in the ministry of Catholic education, we carry out our work of discipleship and witness in a particular way. This ministry of Catholic education is a vital ministry of the Church. It promotes a dynamic vision of God's faithful love, manifest in the life and mission of Jesus Christ, and these fundamental realities underpin our curriculum, our pedagogy and our professional learning.

Catholic educators have a strong sense of community among their peers and in the unique and valuable nature of the work they do. It is sacred work, because it is precious lives we nurture. In this we are called to honour the ministry of each other and all those in the past and still to come who will have given their head, heart and hands to work as part of the company of travellers we call Catholic educators.

**Leader:** I invite you now to come to the readings for this evening:

1. Keynote Address Extract: *Lay Spirituality and Charisms* by Michael Green
  2. Extract from *Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love* by Stephanie Dowrick
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- a) *Leader asks each member to simply name **one word or phrase** that stood out for them in each of the readings....*
  - b) *Leader then invites another council member to share **an insight** from either the poem or the extract (pre-arrange this invitation). Invite an open response from others that is connected to the insight shared. In other words, responses ought not be focussed on each individual's own list of insights, but follow thoughts in response to the insight that has been shared. Allow 5 minutes for this sharing process.*
  - c) *Finally, Leader invites another Council member to share an issue that they had identified in the readings - perhaps **a question or a challenge or an affirmation - for Catholic education**. Invite responses to this from others. Allow 5 minutes for this.*

**Leader:** *(Thank the group for their reflections and invite them to keep these in mind during the time together this evening.)*

As we continue, I invite you to share any special prayers you have at this time for your family, community, or our work.

To finish your prayer, just conclude with the words - *"We pray as one"*. We will then all respond with these same words.

*Leader may like to model this by leading with own prayer: 'I would like to offer our prayers for ..... we pray as one'*

*Allow time for sharing of prayers and/or prayerful silence.*

**Leader:** These and all the prayers of our hearts we place before God *(pause)*. We pray as one.

**All:** We pray as one.

**Leader:** God of our being,  
May Your love be deeply held in our hearts.  
May we remain steadfast in living the gospel of Jesus.

**All:** We pray that your grace, mercy and peace,  
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,  
Now and forever. Amen.

**Leader:** St Mary of the Cross....

**All:** Pray for us.

# SESSION 10: Review of Year

**Leader:** *(Welcomes all to the meeting and to this time of reflection together.)*  
Our focus for this meeting is reflecting on and reviewing our year together.

As we gather,  
we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land.  
We recognise that as a community, we are called to follow the dream of  
Jesus ... to affirm the reign of God.

To begin, let us pause in God's presence and be open to the possibilities  
present here in our midst. .... *(pause)*

Always, we remember the promise of Jesus  
that where two or three are gathered in His name, Jesus is there with us.

With this in mind, God Who Walks With Us, we pray:

*(Gesture all to join in ...)*

**All:** As we gather here in Your name,  
Open our minds to know Your voice.  
Open our hands to do Your work.  
And open our hearts to hold Your Spirit.

**Leader:** Throughout the year, at each of our meetings, we have focused on the nine capacities of Christian community: the call to be People of Presence; People of Prayer; People of Principle; People of Welcome; People of Ritual; People of Journey; People of Purpose; People of Commitment; and People of Fidelity. In this, our final meeting for the year, we pause to recall the way we engaged with each of those nine capacities; the reflections we shared; and the insights we gained. *(pause)*

**Leader:** I invite you now to come to the reading for this evening which is a blessing prayer by the poet and writer John O'Donoghue. Let us read this together by each taking a stanza. I ask David to begin:

### AT THE END OF THE YEAR

The particular mind of the ocean  
Filling the coastline's longing  
With such brief harvest  
Of elegant, vanishing waves  
Is like the mind of time  
Opening the shapes of days.

As this year draws to its end,  
We give thanks for the gifts it brought  
And how they became inlaid within  
Where neither time nor tide can touch them.

The days when the veil lifted  
And the soul could see delight;  
When a quiver caressed the heart  
In the sheer exuberance of being here.

Surprises that came awake  
In forgotten corners of old fields  
Where expectation seemed to have quenched.

The slow, brooding times  
When all was awkward  
And the wave in the mind  
Pierced every sore with salt.

The darkened days that stopped  
The confidence of the dawn.

Days when beloved faces shone brighter  
With light from beyond themselves;  
And from the granite of some secret sorrow  
A stream of buried tears loosened.

We bless this year for all we learned,  
For all we loved and lost  
And for the quiet way it brought us  
Nearer to our invisible destination.

- a) *Leader asks each member to simply name **one word or phrase** that stood out for them in each of the readings....*
- b) *Leader then invites each council member to share **an insight** about the year from from the reflection*
- c) *Finally, Leader invites each Council member to share **an affirmation for each other and for Catholic education.***

**Leader:** *(Thank the group for their reflections and invite them to keep these in mind during the time together this evening.)*

As we continue, I invite you to share any special prayers you have at this time for your family, community, or our work.  
To finish your prayer, just conclude with the words - *“We pray as one”*.  
We will then all respond with these same words.

*Leader may like to model this by leading with own prayer: ‘I would like to offer our prayers for ..... we pray as one’  
Allow time for sharing of prayers and/or prayerful silence.*

**Leader:** These and all the prayers of our hearts we place before God (*pause*). We pray as one.

**All:** We pray as one.

**Leader:** God of our being,  
May Your love be deeply held in our hearts.  
May we remain steadfast in living the gospel of Jesus.

**All:** We pray that your grace, mercy and peace,  
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,  
Now and forever. Amen.

**Leader:** St Mary of the Cross....

**All:** Pray for us.