

Visit www.nccjtriad.org for examples of inclusive invocations and benedictions.

About NCCJ

NCCJ promotes understanding and respect among all races, religions and cultures through advocacy, education and dialogue. The NCCJ mission is to promote understanding and respect among all cultures, races, and religions through advocacy, education, and dialogue. NCCJ of the Piedmont Triad, Inc. was founded in 1937 as the Greensboro Chapter of a national organization. It became an independent 501(c)3 organization in 2005.



**NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR
COMMUNITY AND JUSTICE
OF THE PIEDMONT TRIAD**

713 North Greene Street
Greensboro, NC 27401

Phone: 336.272.0359
Fax: 336.272.1814
www.nccjtriad.org

Guidelines for Special Occasions and Public Events

National Conference for Community and Justice

www.nccjtriad.org



Living The Golden Rule.



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General Public Prayer

Spoken prayer is common on many civic occasions such as club meetings, legislative sessions, graduations, political rallies, testimonial dinners, and community forums. Prayer in settings which are interfaith should bind a group together in a common concern. However, it can become divisive, even if not intended, when forms or language exclude some people.

Individuals who lead the general community in prayer have a responsibility to be clear about the purpose as well as the nature of the occasion. Prayer on behalf of the general community should be general prayer. General prayer is inclusive, non-sectarian and carefully planned to avoid embarrassments and misunderstandings. Those who are reluctant to offer general prayer should be given the option of declining an invitation.

General public prayer on civic occasions is authentic prayer that also enables people to recognize the pluralism of our society.

Prayer of any kind may be inappropriate on some civic occasions. Decisions should show respect both for public diversity and for the serious nature of prayer.

Guidelines for Interfaith Gatherings

- Seeks the highest common denominator without compromise of conscience.
- Calls upon God on behalf of the particular public gathered; avoids individual petitions.
- Uses forms and vocabulary that allow person of different faiths to give assent to what is said.
- Uses universal, inclusive terms for deity, rather than particular proper names for divine manifestations.
- Some opening ascriptions are "Mighty God," "Our Maker," "Source of all Being," or "Creator and Sustainer."
- Possible closing words are "Hear Our Prayer," "In Thy Name," "May Goodness Flourish," or simply, "Amen."
- Uses the language most widely understood in the audience unless one purpose of the event is to express ethnic/cultural diversity, in which case multiple languages can be effective.
- Remains faithful to the purpose of acknowledging divine presence and seeking blessing, not as an opportunity to preach, argue, or testify.

Guidelines for Public and Civic Gatherings

- At public and civic events, great attention should be given to include all participants. An invocation and/or benediction without religious content is the best way to include all.
- Using the word God may exclude Buddhists, non-believers, and others. Some consider terms like Lord patriarchal and too culture-bound to evoke a broad understanding of the sacred.
- Some may situations may allow for an inspirational reading or moment of silence instead of public prayer.
- A statement of gratitude is always appropriate.
- Leading an offering of thanks or prayer in a pluralistic society is both a privilege and a responsibility.

These guidelines for inclusiveness and sensitivity on prayer should also apply to the content of meditations or addresses on civic occasions, and to the selection and performance of music.