**BEGINNING OF YEAR PRAYER 2018**

**INTRODUCTION: Leader**We gather in prayer and reflect on what it means to put service of others at the centre of our work. This is not always easy, and our culture does not always encourage this kind of way of working. Yet, we know that being in service to others creates possibilities not only for a successful working life, but also for successful people. And so we gather in prayer and open ourselves to the wisdom of God's word.

**OPENING PRAYER**

Let us pray…

Loving God, we ask you to deepen our understanding of what it means to serve with compassion. Guide our feet to walk in the ways of Jesus. Help our hands to create a welcoming and inclusive world. May Your love inspire us and Your light sustain us, as we strive to serve in the Love of Christ.

We ask this through this same Jesus Christ, Your Son.

**All:** Amen.

Leader: You were a teacher, Jesus. Your disciples gathered around to hear your wisdom and good words. May we, too, gather as disciples, excited to learn, for our own good and for the good of others. May we too, listen, participate and engage in the wisdom. Let us listen to this story and its challenge.

**READING**: Colossians 3: 12-17

The Word of the Lord

**All:** Thanks be to God.

**REFLECTION ON OUR SERVICE OF OTHERS**

Leader: In front of you is a box/bag with various symbols that represent qualities of the kind of person Jesus wanted working in His name – which is what we all do, working for Catholic Education. I invite you to take a box/bag and open it and take out each symbol as it is spoken of.

**Flower/leaf**

For me, this flower/leaf is a symbol of one of the great Christian virtues: hope. Flowers/leaves brighten life. They appear in impossible places like cracks in cement and on fire-ridden trees. To see a tree full of flowers lifts our spirits and reaffirms to goodness of life.

Think for a moment what this flower/leaf might say about your work in the year to come. (pause)

Hold your flower/leaf as we pray:

God our friend, we ask that you will fill us with your spirit in the year to come, so we

will be people of hope to all we work with.

**All:** Please hear and answer us, God our friend.

**Shoelace/string.**

For me, the shoelace is a symbol of how essential each person in a team’s work is to a group. Without a lace, your shoe or slips and slides, trips you up, loses its effectiveness, becomes a problem and really restricts what you want to do. You are the shoelaces of your class, committee, team or portfolio. But the shoelace is not the shoe: lace and shoe walk together to provide effective direction.

String holds things together, or prevents them from falling, or keeps things in place: it helps us avoid chaos and is always useful for lots of things. You as a leader can be like the string and use your gifts to support, to hold people and things together, not let them break down.

Think for a moment what might this shoelace/string might say about your work in the year to come.

Hold your shoelace/string as we pray:

God, always faithful and always our friend, help us to walk supportively with all in our community this year, even the unpopular, the different, the loners and the losers.

**All:**Please hear and answer us, God our friend.

**Stone**

Take out the stone. Feel it. For me, the stone is a symbol of the hard things we may need to do in our work: supporting CEWA values and decisions that are not popular; making decisions about which some or all may be unhappy; making choices which impact on our own time and freedom.

Think what the stone may speak to you about your work ahead of you…

Hold the stone as we pray:

God, my friend, when I must take the lonely and hard decisions, help me to know you

will always be with me.

**All:** Please hear and answer us, God our friend.

**Playdough**

Find the piece of playdough. Hold it, squeeze it. For me, the clay symbolises the people whom we will influence in the year to come. The power of positive influence is enormous. The whole tone and mood of our community is affected by the way people act, consult, and live out its values. Your attitude to your work will affect the whole atmosphere of the team this year.

Think what might it be saying to you about your work in the year to come.

Hold your piece of clay as we pray.

God, present to us in Jesus, may the example we set always be positive and build up the community we share, especially those in our schools who look to us for support.

**All:** Please hear and answer us, God our friend

**CEWA logo**

Take out the CEWA logo…

As a member of our team, you are expected to be loyal to the organisation, to its Christian values, care for all who are in the system and its educational goals. Reflect on what it speaks to you about your work this year…

Hold onto your logo as we pray.

Faithful God, Jesus taught us you remain loyal to us even when we forget you. May we, be loyal to Catholic Education and the values it represents by the way we live and act both at work and outside it.

**All:** Please hear and answer us, God our friend

**Broken stick**

Find the broken stick. Carefully straighten it out. Did any break? In a community the size of our Kimberley Catholic Education community, it is amazing how many broken lives we can encounter. As we work, we are not asked to mend all these broken lives: there are experts who can help do this, but we are asked to remember and take into account that the people with whom we work and on whom we put expectations and demands, may have times of brokenness in their lives. We must always ensure our work is balanced with compassion, gentleness and awareness of the needs of others: and in that way our very actions can bring healing to injured lives. Think about what this stick tells you about your work in the year to come.

Hold your stick as we pray:

Gentle God, teach us compassion for the lonely, the strange, the different, the rejected. May we be their friend even when others will not, just as you are for us.

**All:** Please hear and answer us, God our friend

**Biscuit**

Take out the biscuit. Food is an integral part of the rituals of every culture and religion: it draws people

together, makes them feel at home, breaks down barriers: it creates companions: sharers of bread. Many of us, in our travels, share a meal with each other or with other members of our Catholic Education community. What might this biscuit, this food, say to you about your work?

Hold your biscuit as we pray:

God of the Covenant, your people have used food throughout the ages as a sign of their unity, a symbol of their being a special family. As we share this food now, may it symbolise our determination to work together and support each other in the year to come.

**All:** Please hear and answer us, God our friend

(Share your biscuit)

**Lollipop**

Take out the lollipop. Lollipops are symbols of carefree natures, silliness, and wackiness.We need to be joy filled people, just as Pope Francis asks us to be. We mustn't forget how and when to laugh and celebrate and let our hair down. Being a Broome CEWA team member doesn't always mean being serious and refined and dignified. What can a lollipop say to us about our work this year?

Hold, but don't eat your lollipop as we pray:

Thank you, God, for the good things in life. For the joys, the times we can be proud; feel good; see results for our work in the year to come.

**All:** Please hear and answer us, God our friend

**Scroll**

Take out the scroll and read the words of St Paul from our reading today about love....... Look at his letter to the Colossians: over all these things, put on love. So take that sheet and stick it over the top, back and bottom of the box with the contact in your box. This will help remind you that with everything you do this year, let it be done in love.

**Piece of card**

Take out the coloured card and reflect for a moment on the blank space on the card – just like the blank space promised by the year ahead. On the card, spend a few moments writing your own prayer for what you’d like from this year – personally or professionally. Once you’ve prayed it, place your prayer into your box.

I would like you to keep this container. In the year to come, I'd invite you to revisit the box and reflect on its contents to remind you of the task given to you.

**COMMISSIONING OF CEWA BROOME STAFF**

In Catholic Education we are called to promote the vision and values of Catholic Education based on the values of the Gospel.

**All:** We commit to diligently fulfilling this role by witnessing to the teachings of the Gospel.

In Catholic Education we are called to develop our own faith through both our work and our personal lives.

**All:** We will commit to strive for a deeper, personal relationship with Jesus through prayer and seeking the face of God in all those we meet.

In Catholic Education we are called to embrace and live out a life following in the teachings and modelling of Christ in every action we do and every word we speak.

**All:** We will commit to live a life infused by Gospel values by embracing the *Code of Ethical Conduct* and ensuring that we always act in a professional manner.

In Catholic Education in Broome we are called to advocate for our students, communities and school staff, with particular focus on the issues that affect education in remote Aboriginal communities.

**All:** We will commit to serving the needs of the communities we serve.

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

Father,

Allow me to serve others with a joyful heart;

Never keeping score;

Always giving;

Never expecting to receive.

Allow me to give of myself,

To give of my talents and of my goods,

To give of my time and of my energy,

To give of my heart and of my soul.

Help me understand the needs of others,

Always Loving,

Always forgiving,

Always restoring;

Allow me to serve others as You serve,

With gentleness, compassion, and tenderness.

I ask all of this through Christ, my model.

[Amen](http://mcgeeandme.net/books/the-search-for-reality-renewing-your-mind).

**Grant us:**

**A passion for LEARNING:**

**so we may help create environments that educate the whole person**

**A heart for ENGAGEMENT:**

**so that respectful relationships and loving communities may be formed, where all may reach their God-given potential.**

**The wisdom of ACCOUNTABILITY:**

**to use gifts and resources generously and responsibly according to the model of divine stewardship.**

**A commitment to Christian DISCIPLESHIP:**

**that we may grow in building the kingdom and inspire others to live as Jesus lived.**