

POLICY: **Public Prayer**  
EFFECTIVE DATE: **10/10/21**  
PAGE: **1 of 2**

#818

## POLICY

Faith leaders and others may be called upon to present prayer at civic occasions including meetings, rallies, dinners, and community forums. Prayer in such secular settings can and should bind a group together in a common concern. However, prayer can become unintentionally divisive when forms or language exclude persons from faith traditions different than that of the speaker.

Therefore the purpose of this Policy is to:

- Ensure prayers on behalf of the District should be easily shared by listeners from different faiths and traditions.
- Ensure public prayers are inclusive, non-sectarian, general, and carefully planned to avoid embarrassments and misunderstandings.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the **President, Fire Chief, District Manager**, and anyone leading a meeting to ensure individuals invited to lead an audience in prayer have the responsibility to be clear about the public nature of the occasion and respectful of the composition of the audience.

It is the responsibility of the Chaplain to follow the spirit of this Policy.

## PRACTICES

### Invitation

When inviting a person to offer a prayer on a civic occasion, it is important to clearly explain the need for general and inclusive prayer. Some persons are reluctant to offer inclusive public prayer. This position should be respected, and the individual should be given the option of gracefully declining the invitation.

### Guidelines

Sensitivity to the public's diversity and a commitment to inclusiveness should apply to the content of prayers, meditations, or addresses on civic occasions, and to the selection and performance of music. Individuals who lead the general community in prayer have the responsibility to be clear about the public nature of the occasion and respectful of the composition of the audience.

The following are guidelines to inclusive public prayer:

- Seek the highest common denominator without compromise of conscience.
- Call upon God on behalf of the particular people gathered; avoid petitions by individuals during the prayer.
- Use form and vocabulary that allow persons of different faiths to give assent to what is said.
- Use universal, inclusive terms for deity rather than particular proper names for divine manifestations, examples:
  - Opening invocations such as "Almighty God," "Our Maker," "Source of all Being," "Creator God" or "Creator and Sustainer."
  - Closings such as "Hear Our Prayer," "May Goodness Flourish," or, simply, "Amen."
- Use the language most widely understood by the audience, unless one purpose of the event is to express ethnic/cultural diversity, in which case multiple languages may be effective.
- Sometimes consider other creative alternatives, such as a moment of silence.
- Remain faithful to the purposes of acknowledging divine presence, giving thanks and seeking blessing—not as an opportunity to preach, argue or testify.

#### RELATED POLICIES

Employee Conduct 524  
Employee Responsibilities 530

#### REVISION HISTORY

Revision Date	Author	Revision Details
October 10, 2021	Monte Olsen	Initial version