

Prayers by Ed Christman, 1970-2003

© Ed Christman

Early 1970s, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Grant us, O Lord, an economy of words and an abundance of wisdom. Amen.”

November 10, 1970, University Chapel, Wake Forest University

“We acknowledge violence in Vietnam, prisoners, soldiers, wounded, the bereaved; we thank Thee for the moral indignation against this war. May our leaders grow in courage and bring this war to an end. We confess the tragic nourishment of poverty by affluence; force us, Oh Lord, to deal with the brokenness beyond our academic compound for the walls of partition must be broken down. We confess to remaining part of the cancerous racism for whom the treatment seems worse than the disease. Deliver us from the demon cynicism which destroys hope. We confess how easy we forget the aged, for they remember. Help us accept the obligation to care for others. We are all particles of moon dust and coal dust into whom Thou has breathed the breath of life; help us accept Thy acceptance of us that we might hope for a future, run, not be weary, in the name of the one who is a vision, an authentic distance runner, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

August 29, 1974, Opening Convocation, Wake Forest University

“Lord of the eternal pilgrimage whose drum beats beckon us, Yahweh of wandering peoples whose covenants are rainbow true, creator of both change and permanence whose ebb and flow sustain us, God of mysteries whose darkness excites, whose light humbles – God of amnesty, whose grace holds and heals us, guide us, we pray to be just, not punitive; strong, not tough; humorous not frivolous. May Thy grace free us to say what we mean and mean what we say. God of extravagant love, break through false pride and false humility. Breathe faith, hope, and love into our sojourn, for we would joyfully be dedicated to disciplined learning, not learning a discipline, for we would feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those in prison, care for the sick, and bury the dead; living and learning in the spirit of Him whose unique pilgrimage we would follow, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

May 1975, Funeral for Barbara Hills, Winston-Salem, NC

“Our father, let us not be afraid of death, even if we do not understand the grievous loss of a loved one, a friend. We confess our dismay at cancer’s power, yet we are thankful for death when suffering has consumed life’s hope. We are grateful, O Lord, to have known good days in order to live through bad ones. We are mindful of thy promises to be present in darkness, at dawn, and at noonday of Thy creation We pray for family and friends who need and can help one another; may we be comforted in our sadness. We believe nothing can separate us from Thy reconciling love through Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray, saying, ‘Our father who art in heaven, ...’ Amen.”

Mid-1970s, Ordination of Helen Lee Turner

“God of wisdom, grace this celebration with Thy presence and power. Guide us, we pray, to ponder what brings us here. We dare expect that Providence will lead Helen Lee Turner to serve Thee in Thy way with the gifts Thou has given her through Him who is Thy final gift, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

February 2, 1976, Founders Day, Wake Forest University

“Holy God, we are thankful to be free to worship thee
and that others are free to deny thy existence.

To thee we give thanks

For bricks and brains collected here

For heroes and legends alive in this place

For hearts and minds together in a community of teachers and learners.

We dedicate ourselves to the disciplined study

Of what is and what ought to be, thankful for thy gift

Of imagination that we can dream dreams and have visions.

We dedicate ourselves to the relentless search for truth

And for the courage to put it on a lamp stand for all to see;

By its light, O God, may we continue to discover the roots

Of who we are and who we may become.

We dedicate ourselves to being open with one another,

Credible in thy sight, growing in wisdom and in stature,

Na din favor with thee and one another. Amen.

February 15, 1977, Founders Day, Wake Forest University

“Maker of heaven and earth, we are thankful for the past, for we have been blessed at Wake Forest. In hope we thank Thee for whatever future there may be. We are grateful that we do not control the final destiny of the world, for our failures often outweigh successes. Alienation is greater than reconciliation, and darkness more extensive than light. Yet Thou has offered us a unique relationship in Jesus Christ that we might be agents of reconciliation, ambassadors for peace, persons who grow in wisdom and in stature... We pray for President Carter and President Scales, for members of Congress and members of this faculty, for all citizens and especially the students of this community, for they are worthy of our best efforts in seeking truth. We are thankful that our roots are in Thee; may we remember that in success and in failure Thou will hear us when we say, oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth. Amen.”

May 15, 1977, Baccalaureate, Wake Forest University

“Creator of all time and space, may we discover Thee in uncluttered space and unencumbered time. Gratefully we remember the places of our nourishment and the timely help from family and friends. May the boundaries of time and space enable us to discover that all of life has meaning or none of it. O Lord, this is a time of desperate nations and despairing people, yet a time of easy satisfaction. Call us to the uneasy satisfaction of hospitality toward the sick, the bereaved, the imprisoned, the elderly, the handicapped. Privileged beyond our virtues, O Lord, give us directions to service, but deliver us from blundering into another’s space without knocking. Link us together in

the hope that there is time and space to create and tell our individual story as Thou didst tell Thy store in the One who is alpha and omega, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

February 1970s (undated), Founders Day, Wake Forest University

“Almighty God, whose design for life confounds yet calls us, we give Thee thanks for sustaining our lives, whatever their shape and duration. Holy covenant-maker and covenant-keeper, may we maintain our relationship with thee as did our founders. O eternal mystery and maker of light, may mystery and light mingle that we be neither bored nor bedazzled by our lives; Lord of playing fields and laboratories, may we live by honor and diligence in our labor and in our leisure, for we would follow thy voice amidst the Babel of voices.

“God for all seasons, we need thee to share in this occasion as we need air to breathe, to be reminded that our beginnings were not meager for they were founded in thy vision in followers who followed leaders by trusting their words and deeds to express thy words and deeds.

“Forgive us, Oh God, for we have done those things we ought not and have failed to do those things we ought; we know alienation estranges and fear imprisons, but we also know reconciliation heals and hope gives life. Therefore O God, aware of our shortcomings, love us whatever our achievements,, call us to springs of living water, to thy bounteous table. May they grace free us from believing we earn salvation and lasting praise; may the past call us to a praiseworthy future and deliver us from half-hearted and half-minded us of the opportunity to be teacher and student. Unstop our ears to hear thy rhythms; uncover our eyes to see the beauty in people; open us, Oh Lord, to live piously and intellectually, singular in our discipleship, for these are the best of times and the worst of times, and this is the time given. This is the banquet to which thou hast invited us; this is the place and these are the people who hunger and thirst for righteousness; nourish us, we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”

Fall 1977, Newcomers’ Dinner, Wake Forest University

“Gracious divine Host, we thank Thee for giving us more than we deserve. Enable us, we pray, to be hospitable toward old friends and new acquaintances. We thank Thee for this food, for those who have prepared it, and for the newcomers we honor, in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

February 9, 1978 Invocation at Founders Day, Wake Forest University

“Forgive us, O Lord, for our failure to hearken unto thy voice.

“We call upon thee because we need something ultimate in our lives, and we remember thy promise to love us steadfastly, no matter what.

“Lord God, are we truly accountable for our talents?

Must we be profoundly curious about thy creation?

Should we share our hopes and fears with thee?

Being rich, O Lord, how can we feel for the poor?

Being sheltered, how can we care for the unsheltered?

Can we discover thy truth apart from suffering?

“Lord God, we are mindful of those who are sick within our community and pray for them and their families; we thank thee for the health which enables us to gather in this

anniversary convocation, to celebrate achievement and commit ourselves anew to the purpose of Wake Forest – to foster both academic excellence and mature faith in thee, and we offer this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.”

April 18, 1978 Invocation at the Annual Awards Ceremony, Department of Military Science, Wake Forest University

“My apology to the Corps and its special guests – following this prayer of invocation, ... reality of the need for military is essentially for the same reason we need religious awareness. We celebrate...[duty?] and achievement of men and women ... learning and the life science of military ... remain in touch with one another. Amen.”

December 1978, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“O Lord, enable us, we pray to be open to Thy dependability; may we resist the temptation to predict Thy presence; let us look and listen expectantly for the coming of Jesus Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.”

May 1979, Memorial Service for Professor Roland Gay, Winston-Salem, NC

“Lord of life and death, we call upon Thee this day because we need Thy comfort. We are comforted that death has come without pain or illness, and we all prefer death in this form. But Lord, it is still death and we would have preferred that Roland Gay did not die and, therefore, we must grieve this day. Yet the life of such a good man is never finished. May our recollections of Roland Gay comfort us. May the steady and loyal life he led comfort family and friends in this unsteady world. We are thankful that we can claim this promise that Roland Gay surveys a new landscape, Thy Kingdom, and flies ever higher than before. May the peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be given unto you as it is to Roland Gay this day. Amen.” (Roland Gay was emeritus professor of math who learned how to fly air planes after he retired. He died last Sunday May 13, 1979, on his way to the refrigerator.)

May 20, 1979, Invocation at the Ceremony for the Hooding of the Juris Doctor Degree Candidates, Wake Forest University School of Law

“Divine covenant-maker and keeper, we invoke Thy presence at this celebration honoring those who have kept the covenant of disciplined study. Give to them or strengthen within them the desire to use their gifts in the light of Judeo-Christian covenants. May these women and men derive pleasure and satisfaction from material gain and from being ministers who heal people and are advocates for justice in the name of the unique advocate, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

May 17, 1981 Invocation at the Ceremony for the Hooding of the Juris Doctor Degree Candidates, Wake Forest University School of Law

“O Lord, covenant-maker and covenant-keeper, we acknowledge the joys and sorrows which are a part of our lives. Remind us, we pray, of the people and experiences which have given us ethical shape. Lengthen the moral cords and strengthen the equitable stakes of each individual here this day.

“May time stand still during this celebration of achievements printed and unprinted (in the program). As we remember Professor James A. Webster, may we

covenant together to ‘fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run.’ We offer our prayer in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”

May 18, 1981 Commencement Luncheon Prayer, Wake Forest University

“Lord, with a measure of fatigue and a sigh of relief, we give thee thanks. Help us to remember from whence we have come and by thy grace where we may go. May this food help us along the way. Amen.”

May 1982 Commencement Prayer, Wake Forest University

“Creator and redeemer of all life, we thank thee for times of honor and achievement, we acknowledge thy presence on this joyful occasion and remember those persons and events who have worked together for good, weaving the fabric of graduation 1982.

“We pray, oh Lord, that these graduates will hear thy silent and audible voices and be obedient servants, not slaves to status and things, using their many languages as gates not as walls. Release us from our clinched fists to open hands, for we would resist the temptation to outscore one another. Eternal God, may we see ethical connections between getting and giving, between labor and leisure, between being individuals and participants in community. May the fruit of our labor speak to the hungers of others and our own need to experience worthwhile satisfactions. Lord, never mind the why and wherefore, through thy love, level all ranks, blow wind into our sails, call us from safe ports through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

June 23, 1983, Trustee Luncheon, following the election of Thomas K. Hearn Jr. as Wake Forest University President

“God of ordinary and extraordinary time, we thank thee for this special moment in the life of Wake Forest. Forgive us, for we are tempted to think more highly of ourselves than we ought, yet by thy grace, let us celebrate the memories and hopes which have and will shape Wake Forest. We thank thee for those who have and will lead us and for the efforts made to bring us to this occasion. May we be nourished by the food we eat and the conversations we share. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”

November 4, 1983, Luncheon before the Inauguration of Thomas K. Hearn Jr. as the President of Wake Forest University

“Almighty God, shepherd of us all, who gives and sustains life in each of us, grace us, we pray, by the presence as thou hast nourished Wake Forest people for the past sesquicentennial of excellence. We seek thy blessing for this meal and on those who lead us and on those who have led us in the past.

“To confess our failures on a day celebrating significant achievement is to acknowledge thy grace, for we do not achieve by our efforts alone but by being in touch with thy purposes.

“May this food symbolize our shared needs, these tables our togetherness, and this time of inauguration a season of unique opportunity, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Amen.”

May 20, 1984, Baccalaureate, Wake Forest University

“Almighty God, we gather professing our love for the heroes and heroines of Wake Forest and for its excellence and honor which call these graduates to say what they mean and mean what they say. We profess our love for Wake Forest as an expression of our love for Thee.

“We give thanks for the families, teachers, and friends who have helped shape the members of the class of 1984; and, as we look back upon these years, do we not see Thy image in us? May that image stir curiosity about what we do not understand about Thee and ourselves; may that image compel us to ask who and what lasts – may that image be as soil in which seeds sown here will be harvested beyond graduation.

“Hear our confession, O God. We have squandered opportunities, both as students and teachers; we have often been preoccupied with trivial and cosmetic concerns; we have broken codes and have abused ourselves and others. Almighty God, we confess that we have followed lesser gods from whom there is no forgiveness; we offer our confession unto Thee because we have heard Thy word: ‘pick up your life and walk;’ ‘go and sin no more;’ ‘feed my sheep.’

“Lord, can we beat swords into ploughshares or are we controlled by violence? Lord, can we feed the hungry or are we overwhelmed by economic systems? Lord, can we live ordinary lives in extraordinary ways or are we bound by pre-determined ruts?

“Almighty God, we seek water which quenches our deepest thirst, bread that nourishes beyond our strength, light which penetrates darkness. Call us, we pray, beyond the joy and sorrow of this occasion, beyond the fear of living or dying, beyond the love of family and friends, beyond our love of race or nation; call us to Thy surprising banquet table, to Thy Kingdom not made with hands. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.”

September 11, 1984, Opening Convocation, Wake Forest University

“Oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth; we give thanks to Thee as the beginning, creator of life in its majesty and beauty, its uniqueness and order. Thou hast given us dominion and power, and, therefore, we see Thee as a lamp unto our feet, an ever present help along the pathway of our stewardship. We gather in celebration of Wake Forest’s pathway of faith and work and pray Thy continued blessing upon this school. Thou art our refuge and strength as we renew our covenant with the legacy of 150 years of visions which have become realities.

“God of this day and this time, this is the day Thou hast made, and we are the present stewards of heritage. This is the time of threatened extinction of all heritage, a time of fading dreams and unclear ideals; yet, O Lord, this is the time of clearer purposes and steadfastness to the intersection of faith and reason; this is the day to renew our individual and corporate pledge of allegiance to our code of honor in classroom laboratory and in personal relationships; this is the time to discern Thy voice and Thy call to excellence, and, therefore, follow a unique pathway; this is the time to be joined together as one university, one community of teachers and learners, seeking to be more conservative of what values matter and more liberal in sharing those values with the world in which we live.

“Forgive us to being timid if our true purpose makes us appear traditional or radical as we address the need for priorities; let us know be blown about by every contemporary cause or any external interest which would determine our direction; forgive

us if we relax in our acknowledged success as a school; remind us to those to whom much has been given of them, much is expected; deliver us from being the appearance of good, and call us even now to that which is good, to what requires of us disciplined labor and unrelenting vision for what ought to be.

“God of beginnings of this present moment, we would be open to the changes and conversions Wake Forest should occasion in the lives of students and faculty, a difference we can make in this world; as we envision what may be, let us be salt and light, for Thou art the God of whatever future there is; Thou art the God of the End as well as the Beginning; let us not be afraid, but let us be guided by hope that in keeping Thy commandments we remain worthy stewards, being transformed, being renewed, being free to walk, to run and not be weary, to keep our course stayed on Thee, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.”

May 1986, Notes for Graduation Services? Wake Forest University

“By thy grace and as a consequence of these works, these graduates have achieved singular distinction. O God, we give thanks for all who share in the achievements celebrated; guide and sustain them, we pray, in their labor and their leisure, in their laughter and their tears, now and forever, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.”

“We thank thee, O God, for the sustaining will power of these professionally-trained students who have paid the price of discipline; we thank thee for those whose encouragement helped them succeed, and we pray all will recall this occasion and be inspired by its meaning, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.”

February? 1987

“Almighty God, we gather as trustees of learning opportunities, shaping choices within and beyond the classroom – Lord ... may our stewardship improve the quality of life and the abiding search for what is and what ought to be, in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.”

September 11, 1989, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“In the rigor of renewing our academic rituals, we seek thy assurance that we and our tasks of worthy of one another, in the whirlwind of commencement for newcomers we seek assurance that we can cope: Lord god, we seek thy abiding presence in labor and leisure, in that spirit we pray, Amen.”

February 12, 1990, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Almighty God, we grieve that hatred, fear dominate relationships between races and religions; forgive us, O Lord, for whatever part we play in the systematic abuse of others – we rejoice O Lord whenever respect and reconciliation are the ... force between peoples and nations. May these begin and grow in the spirit of Thee. Amen.”

March 12, 1990, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Lord, hear our prayer, whatever our language, whatever our feelings; hear our prayer in good times and bad; Lord, hear our prayer in church, mangers, synagogues, wherever, whenever, Oh Lord, hear our prayer, we prayer in thy holy name. Amen.”

May 14, 1990, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Creation, re-creation, sustain and renew us heretics ... – success and failures as teachers; ... / joy in relationships; obedience / disobedience in relation to thee – for thy steadfast love of each of us, unending, forever. Amen.”

September 10, 1990, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Most holy God, we who return offer thanks for the renewed opportunity to be worthy stewards; most holy God, we who are newcomers give thanks for having chosen and been chosen to join this faculty. May we all be bonded together in a singular covenant of teaching and learning. And whatever, Oh Lord, is favorable, whatever is commendable, whatever is worthy of praise, let us think of these things. Grant that thy powers, oh Lord, be with us, one and all, Amen.”

October 8, 1990, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Almighty Lord, we acknowledge that we are weary and confess that some of our weariness is based on fear that we do not measure up to our goals or those established for us – may the approaching break invite a respite from weariness that we might seek out solitude that our spirits might be renewed – may thy spirit breathe new life into each of us.

“Not to be refreshed that we would continue to measure life by our works but be changed that we would live not by works but by faith in thy spirit, pray, Amen.”

November 12, 1990, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Most merciful and Almighty God, we pray for peace in the mist of war, for fullness in the fears of multiple hungers, for hope which overcomes despair, we pray to thy presence, O God, for the healing of our souls. Amen.”

February 7, 1991, Founders Day Convocation, Wake Forest University

“Before we pray, let me say that the Meditation Room in the Benson Center and Davis Chapel have vigil candles with the opportunity to leave prayers. A sampling of those petitions includes prayers for everyone affected by this war. I invite you to pray together in silence, remembering persons of your choosing, and I call to your attention to the six American hostages still held in Lebanon, no less than four and as many as six years: Terry Anderson, Thomas Southerland, Joseph Cicippio, Edward Tracy, Alann Steen, Jesse Turner, and Terry Wait, English. Following the silent prayers, I will offer a pastoral prayer.

“Eternal God, shepherd of every hope and refuge of each broken heart hear our prayers. Be present, we pray in this convocation, in the stillness before sleep, amidst the rigors of our labors. We pray especially for seniors that they discover a vocation worthy of their talents and the countless needs around us; guide us all in the choices we make and renew with us our connectedness as we honor today those who embody the nobility of Wake Forest’s past.

“Lord, have mercy upon us, for without thee, our dominion over the earth becomes destructive, but with Thee, we embrace the beauty of Thy creation.

“Lord, have mercy upon us, for without Thee, our grief becomes despair, but with thee, our sorrow becomes hope.

“Lord, have mercy upon us, for without Thee, our sins alienate, but with Thee, Thy image within us is renewed so that we can run and not be weary, we can walk and not faint.

“Lord, have mercy upon us. Amen.”

March 18, 1999, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Most holy God, unto whom all hearts are open, from whom no secrets are hid, we hide not our sins but confess them, boldly asking forgiveness. In this season of Ramadan, Passover, and Lent, we acknowledge our ultimate dependence on tThee, most sovereign God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.”

April 15, 1991, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Most holy God, Source of Wisdom, guide us for we seek to be prudent decision-makers as a faculty charting policies for Wake forest. Enlighten us, we pray, as we examine and grade those we teach; free us of what is false that we will be bound by what is true and just, in the spirit of thy wisdom. Amen.”

November 9, 1992, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Dear Lord, what brings us together and what keeps us apart? What makes for common purpose and what rejects shared commitment? Lord God, are we not made for covenanting together as people and as colleagues? Guide us, we pray, to discern what is community, what builds trust and understanding, for you are a covenant-maker and covenant-keeper. You are steadfast, loving us, hoping for us, reconciling us in this place with one another; hear our prayer for you are our strength and our redeemer. Amen.”

December 14, 1992, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Almighty God, in this season of Advent – Hanukah, we thank you for light in the midst of so much darkness. May mercy’s light invite our gratitude. May visions and dreams renew our strength. Amen.”

March 15, 1993, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Merciful God, come into our presence with signs of hope and healing. Come into our presence with the elements of community, for we seek to a community of teachers and learners. Come into our presence with forgiveness for our sins. Come into our presence with the renewal of our minds and hearts. Come into our presence with your visions and dreams – come into our presence that we will obey your commands for you are our strength and our redeemer. Amen.”

April 12, 1993, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“God of Wisdom, guide us as we address this agenda. God of compassion, be present for each of us as we address our own personal agendas. God of healing, minister to those of our colleagues who need thee. God of wisdom, God of Compassion, God of Healing, we give thanks for your presence, for you are our strength and our redeemer. Amen.”

April 15, 1993 Benediction, Holocaust Remembrance Service, Davis Chapel, Wake Forest University.

“Depart from this place in full remembrance of death and life. Depart with God’s mark of Holocaust on each of you and me. May Almighty God continue to love and bless us, survivors of our own sin. May God forgive but never forget any of God’s children until the Messiah comes. Shalom, my friends, Shalom.”

May 10, 1993, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“We seek respite from our labors. We pay for one another and for those we teach – may none of us be judged by grades but by your grace – Guide us, O God, in your wisdom as we address this agenda for you are our strength and redeemer. Amen.”

March 14, 1994

“To pray first for yourselves, for your colleagues, for Wake Forest University, those beyond ourselves. Hear our prayers, oh Lord, for you are our Rock and our redemption. Amen.”

May 15, 1994, Baccalaureate Service, Wake Forest University

“Almighty God, let the sun stand still at this moment. Let us savor endings and beginnings, remembering and hoping, hoping your grace will continue to abide, blessing us far beyond our virtues. Let the sun stand still, whether we passed with honors or barely passed; for each of us is fashioned in your image, and you are as near as the breath we breathe.

“Lord, what would you have us, who are so richly blessed, be? How do we manifest our gratitude? How do we give thanks to those who have tested and challenged us, inspired and comforted us? Have we not known you when we failed? Have we not been forgiven when we sinned?

“Lord, let the sun stand still that others may rejoice in their share of the sacred journey; let the sun stand still that we may rejoice in what we have given those we love. Lord, let the sun stand still that we would see Wake Forest’s family tree bearing fruit in all seasons.

“Yet in this season of unique joy, hear our confessions, for we have turned our backs on neighbors and strangers, people of different languages and races and have pretended that they are not our concern. Sharpen our vision of who we ought to be as your ambassadors of reconciliation between all of us and you. Let the sun stand still that the spirit of Jesus Christ will be manifest in all of us, for it is not known yet what we may be. Amen.”

February 14, 1995, Founder’s Day Convocation, Wake Forest University

“Most merciful God, write again your hope on our hearts, for many hearts are burdened. Write again the command to be just, to love mercy, to walk in humility. Write on our hearts what is true that we may overcome what is trivial and what is false. Write again the majesty and wonder of your creation that we will know you are the measure of all things; set our feet on lofty places to see what the founders and sustainers of Wake

Forest achieved. May we here promise to deepen their vision for generations unborn to love and labor here.

“Hear our confession: we feel not your presence but your distance for we ebb and flow like the sea; yet you are in our midst. Lift us when we fall, forgive us when we sin, call us beyond reason to revelation, from rest to risk in your name. Forgive us when we deny the existence of evil and turn our backs on it. Forgive us when we dishonor our promise to be honest in work and in our relationships with one another. Write again on our hearts your relentless mercy that forgives and renews us.

“Write on our hearts those we honor this Founders Day, that we will remember them tomorrow; write again our obligation to be light to one another; write again the expectation that we will be transformed by the power of your spirit for you are our own source and strength.

“Oh Lord, write again your hope on our hearts that we may live abundantly now and always. Amen.”

February 12, 1996, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Lord, the Psalmist declares that a thousand years in your sight are like an evening gone, that we should count our days, seeking a wise heart – hear our prayer for each of us; hear our prayer for Horace O. Kelly’s colleagues and family and for [the?] father of a student. Amen.”

March 1999, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“In the midst of unrelenting time, Oh Lord deliver us for You made us to pray and play, to be still... Enable us to ask who we are that you have made us a little less than equals. In the midst of unrelenting time, oh Lord, grant us the solace of solitude for you came to us in the sounds of silence offering us internal strength and everlasting life. Amen.”

August 23, 1999, Newcomers’ Dinner, Wake Forest University

“We thank thee, gracious God, for the nourishment of food and fellowship: may those of us who are hosts practice on-going hospitality toward new colleagues and friends; may all of us covenant in heart and mind to be what we have never been before, to see what we have never seen on our sacred journeys, to dream dreams and have visions for Wake Forest, in accordance with your hope for each of us. Amen.”

February 14, 2000, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“This past week I was the minister for a memorial service for Dorothy Welker. We celebrated her 85 years, including her scholarly work in art history at Wake Forest. I visited law professor Richard Schneider (the age of many of you) and I gladly report that Larry West is recovering from bypass surgery.

“Let us pray, Lord God, show us the way to live and die; enable us neither to be afraid of indifferent toward our mortality. We would claim the Promise – no more sorrow, pain or death, all things new in your presence. May we be worthy stewards, taking care of ourselves and praying for one another. Amen.”

August 2000, Freshman Orientation Convocation, Wake Forest University

“God of all seasons, be present to each of us in this season of expectation and uncertainty.

“We give thanks for family and those friends who share our expectations in our new Wake Forest home in the hope that strangers will become friends. We acknowledge the gift of Wake Forest past and pray for the passion and discipline to honor what has been by what we may become.

“Accompany us, oh Lord, in our labor and our leisure. Deepen within us a love of learning and a love for Thee, for you are our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.”

December 11, 2000, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Almighty God, hear our prayers – In the mist of labor, grant us leisure; in the midst of work, grant us wonder; in the midst of memory, grant us dreams.

“We dream of swords into plowshares, but what can we do as wars rage even in the land called holy? We dream of feeding the hungry but cannot.

“Almighty God, we can pray for friends and family who are sick in body and spirit. We can rejoice that your Light will prevail over darkness and that you abide with us, Rock, Redeemer, oh Lord, keep coming to us, keep coming to us. Amen.”

February 12, 2001, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Catholic Priest and former professor at Harvard Divinity School [Henri Nouwen] observed we have a choice – to live with closed fists or open hands. Let us pray: Oh lord, may we live with open hands, open hearts, open minds as we address the tasks before us. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days. Amen.”

August 23, 2001, New Student Convocation, Wake Forest University

“Oh Lord God, keep ever before us whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are beautiful, whatsoever things are holy; knit us together we pray as a community of teachers and learners given the bountiful opportunity to grow up in every way; nourish these entering students and families joining us on a sacred journey, for You have given us Wake Forest, a source of life and hope; breathe into each of us everlasting hope, in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

December 10, 2001, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Almighty God, whose steadfast love endures forever, hear our prayer: Renew our strength to pray for peace in all nations, among all people; renew our steadfast hope for what we do not see – no more sorrow, pain or death; renew our thankfulness for the gifts we share here – teaching and learning. Lord, we teach our students, who teach us, Together we seek to care for one another as You, oh Lord, care without ceasing for us. Amen.”

April 8, 2002, Faculty Meeting, Wake Forest University

“Dear God, we pray for peace when there is no peace, compassion which is in short supply; we kill one another, whole continents are Lord you have commanded us to love one another, to hope ... We do not see – people, nations, and religions living together. Beyond our decision-making time – steal time in our hectic schedules to pray

for people, and nations, religions to be reconciled, oh Lord, we are all a part of your creation. Lord God, we pray for peace. Amen.”

March 24, 2003, Service in response to the U.S. declaration of war on Iraq, Wake Forest University

“Those of us who comprise the Wake Forest community are never, and should never be, all of one mind. We differ, of course, in our political views, we carry with us different social perspectives, and even the spiritual paths that we walk diverge from each other. But despite these differences, tonight we gather together for one of the world’s darkest hours as a true community – a community that is bound together by our common concern for each other and by our shared hope for the safety and well-being of all human-kind.

“We are here tonight to be together, to draw strength from friends, and to console and be consoled by each other. We are here to reflect on the human connection we feel not only to others in this room, but to people we have never met and have never seen, people living in places we will never know.

“And we are here to pray: to pray that our world will be guided by wisdom and compassion in the days ahead; to pray that all those who find themselves in harm’s way will somehow endure and survive the current conflict; to pray for peace and to pray for a world in which nations finally learn to resolve differences without hostilities.

“Tonight our nation truly is at war, and no matter how just the cause may be, this war, like all others, is ultimately filled with human tragedy. In the face of such tragedy, we gather together this evening to find comfort and to gain understanding in the only ways we know – by turning to our God and by reaching out to embrace each other.”

Undated

“Almighty God, You are our refuge, our strength, an ever-present help in times of sorrow; we lay our burden upon You, seeking the everlasting arms that hold us, heal us, lead us in the ways we should go.

“Lord, we wait for the light in the midst of darkness, for the night gives birth to the day. Lead us in the ways we should go, embarking the promise of everlasting life, we remember the full richness of life lived abundantly. May we live in joy, in hope, caring for each other in gratitude for all we have been given. WE claim the final promise in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

Undated, Founders Day, Wake Forest University

“Almighty God, source and sustainer of all life, we give thee thanks for life at Wake Forest. On this Founders’ Day, we acknowledge those persons named and unnamed whose prayers, labors, and dreams have been knit together in the fabric called university. What a bounteous table thou hast set before us, O Lord, covered with love of learning and love of thee.

“How can we respond to these gifts? How do we celebrate our birthday? Enable us, we pray, to seek excellence in body, mind, and spirit, fulfilling thy command—Love God with all that we are. Let us lay aside our fears of changing beliefs, values, and vocational goals, opening ourselves to the renewal and revival of mind and spirit; let us lay aside an easy conscience or superficial measuring sticks, let us affirm that to be fully

human is to be in relationship with Thee; let us heed that hope we cannot see but beckons us to be a world of peace not war, a world of the nourished not the hungry, a world reconciled to thee not alien from thee, for thou has given us wholeness and we have broken into pieces; therefore we pray that the threads of community will be sown anew for we live amidst tragedy and sorrow, in the shadowy emptiness and death monitors those filled with hope and those filled with despair; we pray for space people and street people, we pray for Wake Forest people that we would be worthy stewards of thy majestic symbols – this time, this place, these resources; let us bear fruit in the name of alpha and omega, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”

Undated

“Almighty God, how do we say thank you for the bounty of food and water which provides for our existence? Lord, how do we say thank you for the friends and loved ones who change existence into life? Oh God, how do we say thank you for thy gift of life itself? Show us, we pray, the pathways of gratitude, the ways of obedience. Lord, we do thank thee who shows us such great goodwill!

“How can we turn from thee in such ill will? Lord we are not conventional in our sin, in our disobedience, in our lack of gratitude; we are rational and finding reasons to dismiss thy call to feed the hungry, to strive for peace, to be thy ambassadors in the name of Jesus Christ; our sin is not so much in visible wrongs but in failure to do the right. We neglect thy gifts to us and to others, omitting to do what we might, striving to excuse ourselves. Lord, this is not the time, the place, this is not the person of the situation. Let me be better prepared to serve thee; our sin is in preparing our agenda, avoiding thine – forgive us, we pray, for our calculating ways for thee, oh Lord, has recalculated the way the prophets’ stories; thou hast calculated the cost of non obedience and pay for our discipleship in full; thou hast released us from bondage to reason’s excuses and called us to the revelation here, now, in Jesus Christ.

“Lord, how are we thankful for the bread and wine which nourishes us? How do we give thanks for the people here, at home, Christians everywhere who pray with us, for us, for thy healing balm in the world? Lord God, how can we be thankful for this season of penitence for we would be free from sin of omission, of silence of being witness to caution. Lord, we can sojourn wandering, wondering yet in touch with thee, we can find pathways of gratitude, we can be healed of our afflictions and our light, hope for thou art here in spirit, in truth, in my promise made plain in cross and resurrection, in Jesus Christ... Amen.”

These prayers were typed from originals found in Ed Christman’s office and home papers. Punctuation and capitalization are repeated from the original. An ellipses (...)marks the (surprisingly few!) cases of illegible handwriting. Some prayers – such as those for faculty meetings – were obviously written at the moment. These were found on the backs of faculty meeting agendas. Ironically, the careful filing of those agendas in the office led to the preservation of the prayers, which are far more valuable. Longer prayers, such as those for Baccalaureate and Convocation, or for memorial services, were generally crafted through several versions and then no doubt changed some upon delivery.