

Opening Reflection Policy – Steilacoom Kiwanis

Purpose

This policy addresses the conduct of our Opening Reflection, a tradition at the start of each meeting. No such observance is required by Kiwanis International or our own by-laws, but we embrace it as a meaningful way to center ourselves before turning to the work of serving our communities.

What Is an Opening Reflection?

An Opening Reflection is a brief moment¹ — typically: a prayer, a reading, a quote, or a few words of inspiration — offered by a volunteer to prepare the hearts and minds of the group for the meeting and day ahead. It may be drawn from faith, from literature, from personal experience, or from any source the speaker finds meaningful and uplifting. The only requirement is that it be sincere, non-denominational, unified in spirit, and apolitical.

Our Founding Vision

When Kiwanians first drafted their Permanent Objectives in 1924, they were guided by a recognition that genuine service to others flows from sincere moral and spiritual conviction. They also understood that Kiwanis clubs draw members from across the full spectrum of faith/non-faith traditions and life philosophies — and that the club's mission to serve the community depends on staying united in purpose.

For that reason, both politics and religion received careful attention in the founding documents — not to diminish them, but to protect them. The founders understood that no tradition should be made to feel unwelcome, and that no member should feel another's beliefs are being imposed upon them.

The very first Objective reflects this spirit:

To give primacy to the human and spiritual, rather than to the material values of life.

The committee that wrote this Objective was deliberate in their choice of the word "spiritual." They explained: *"Our thought on spiritual has nothing to do with theology. Instead, it refers to the qualities of character like courage, imagination, integrity, and hope."* These are qualities that people of all faiths — and of none — recognize as central to a life well lived and a community well served.

¹ About 1-minute, but always less than 2-minutes.

The Golden Rule as Common Ground

The second Objective calls us:

To encourage the daily living of the Golden Rule in all human relationships.

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Many of our members first learned this principle through their own faith or upbringing. It is no coincidence that this same principle echoes across many of the world's great traditions and philosophies. That shared wisdom is precisely why it serves as a foundation of our club's character — and it is the spirit in which we ask every Opening Reflection be offered.

Guidelines for the Opening Reflection

Because our membership represents many faith/non-faith backgrounds and life perspectives, we want our Opening Reflections offered in a spirit that can unite rather than divide.

For those offering a prayer: We ask that you set aside references to a specific deity by name, so that every member can participate wholeheartedly. We recognize this may feel like a sacrifice for members whose faith is deeply personal. We do not ask it because any tradition is less worthy — we ask it out of the same spirit of consideration for others that faith itself teaches us. Many of the following terms will feel natural and familiar, appearing throughout Scripture and the writings of many traditions:

- **Almighty** – A powerful acknowledgment of divine strength.
- **Creator** – Recognizes the source of all life.
- **Most High** – A title of deep reverence found across faith traditions.
- **Eternal One** – Honors the timeless nature of the divine.
- **Lord** – A title of sovereignty with broad resonance across monotheistic faiths.
- **Giver of Grace** – Calls on the merciful aspect of the divine.
- **Author of Peace** – Reflects a prayer for harmony and safety.
- **Sovereign of Nations** – Places our service in a larger, cosmic perspective.

For those offering a secular reflection: A meaningful quote, a brief poem, a personal story of service, or words of encouragement are all welcome. The goal is the same — to inspire the group and focus our shared purpose before the meeting begins.

Our Shared Purpose

However, offered, the Opening Reflection exists to remind us why we are here: to serve the children and communities of Steilacoom, DuPont, Anderson Island, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord. We are grateful to every member who brings their whole self to that work — and to this moment at the start of each meeting.