

Elkhart Rotary Invocation Guidelines

God goes by many names....
- - James Michener

In joining the Rotary Club, you have entered an international, multicultural, nondenominational organization that values inclusiveness and respect. In fact, many Rotary International programs focus on helping individual Rotarians come to experience and understand the vastly different ideas, values, and beliefs held by their fellow Rotarians around the world.

On a smaller scale, our Elkhart Rotary Club membership encompasses a variety of feelings and beliefs about religion and religious practices. Many members are Christian, but we also have Jewish and Hindu members, for example, as well as followers of Islam. Some members are agnostic; some are atheist. And even within Christianity there is quite a bit of diversity.

So as you prepare your invocation, consider the creative challenge you face. Your comments need to follow the Four-Way Test: building goodwill, being fair and beneficial to all concerned.

In composing your invocation, please avoid the extremes:

- One extreme would be to be so hypersensitive about offending absolutely anyone (an impossible task with our club anyway) that you end up saying nothing.
- The other extreme would be to speak with indifference to the beliefs of others in ways that cause offense or hurt.

Use language that meets the Four-Way Test:

MEETS THE FOUR-WAY TEST:

“Thank you, God, for life and fellowship.” (Even nonbelievers do not complain at this kind of mention of God in this context.)

“In your name we pray. Amen.” (Again, this is inclusive rather than exclusive.)

DOES NOT MEET THE FOUR-WAY TEST:

“Thank you, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, for life and fellowship.” (The exclusively Christian focus violates the Four-Way Test, since it leaves out a number of members, and offends some members as well.)

“We pray in the name of Jesus Christ [or Mohammed, or the Buddha], who offers us the only true way to salvation. Amen.” (Again, the exclusive focus will come across as alienating or offensive to some members.)

One last request:

Keep it reasonably short. Avoid turning your prayer into a “sermon in the dark.” A well-composed prayer can say a lot in a very short time.

Remember, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, Four-Way Test.

Thank you again for agreeing to participate by offering an invocation at a club meeting. Your contribution is appreciated.