



# 6 DAYS OF PRAYER

*A devotional series  
with stories and  
reflections from  
visits to EduDeo's  
partners in Belize  
and the Dominican  
Republic.*

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# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH EVERYDAY ROUTINES

*“Each of us should please our neighbours for their good, to build them up.” Romans 15:2 (NIV)*



Nearly two years after joining the EduDeo team, I finally got to visit our partners in Belize (Presbyterian Church Schools in Belize) and the Dominican Republic (Sinergia) alongside four of my colleagues. Our first school visit took place at Unity Christian School soon after we landed in Belize City. Unity is located in a materially poor neighbourhood and stands as a symbol of hope for its 255 students and 10 staff members.

As we settled into the staff room to enjoy a typical Belizean meal of rice and chicken, I sat across from a Grade 4 teacher named Stephanie. I was immediately struck by the way she spoke about her students (whom she called her “babies”) and her focus on their relationship with God and her relationship with them. My favourite classroom practice she shared with me was beginning the day by asking each student to share something they’re thankful for. Other routines like greeting students with a hug or high-five as they enter the classroom and texting encouraging notes and photos to parents via WhatsApp reinforce that both the students and their parents are deeply loved.

Building these relationships is especially important since most of Unity’s students are not from Christian homes and school is the

sole Christian influence in their life. This made isolation due to COVID even more difficult. In order to connect with students while schools were closed, teachers prepared packages to those who didn’t have access to the internet beyond their parents’ cell phone data. Parents and students regularly show their appreciation for this by sending Stephanie encouraging texts and handwritten notes, some of which she had just received that day and was proud to share with me.

Although I could tell the pandemic had taken a toll on her, she reminded me that we get through difficult times by finding ways to connect with each other. It’s how God designed us to live – in community. Sometimes this takes extra time, energy, and creativity, but the impacts last a lifetime.

## PRAYER REQUESTS:

- **Pray that God would continue to use Unity Christian School to positively impact their community.**
- **Ask God to reveal specific ways you can build relationships with your students.**
- **Ask God to show you new ways you can build community in your classroom and school.**





# OVERFLOWING WITH LOVE AND HOSPITALITY

*“Welcome one another as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God.” Romans 15:7 (ESV)*

Two hours north of Unity Christian School in Belize City is a smaller elementary school called Presbyterian Day School (PDS) in Cristo Rey. Upon arrival, we were led directly into a small chapel they use when the whole school gathers together. This space had not been used since the beginning of the pandemic due to COVID restrictions. As we entered, the room was buzzing. Students from preschool to Grade 8 sat eagerly waiting for us to arrive. They smiled and waved for the camera as I panned the crowd.

After singing a few worship songs together, my colleagues and I were unexpectedly called to the front. A student got up from their seat and approached Talya to give her a handmade, personalized card. Then another student came and gave me a card. Then another gave a card to Justine, and another gave one to Ryan. The procession continued until every single student had taken their turn and we each had a stack of cards filled with messages of thanks, greetings, and praise to God. Some students shyly handed us their card and quickly retreated to their seat; others lingered with a hug or a short conversation about their artwork.

With each card, I felt increasingly overwhelmed by this warm welcome. Did we deserve this radical display of kindness? We were basically strangers and yet the

outpouring of love and generosity was what I would expect from friends we'd known for years. Perhaps my feeling of unworthiness was a side-effect of being convicted of my own gaps in hospitality.

Later I was reminded of Romans 15:7 which says, “Welcome one another as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God.” We don't need to know someone well to welcome them wholeheartedly. When we recognize the immense blessing it is to be welcomed into God's family, our hearts overflow with love to others. Especially as brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to show warm hospitality to each other.

## PRAYER REQUESTS:

- **Pray for Presbyterian Day School as they seek to increase their capacity to provide a Christ-centred education for more children in the coming year.**
- **Ask God to reveal ways you can show more love and hospitality in your classroom.**
- **Plead to God for students who may feel lonely or unloved at home – and pray that they would find it at school.**



# A SEASON FOR EVERY ACTIVITY

*“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.”  
Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NIV)*

Since August 2021, I've had the pleasure of facilitating a growing relationship between Presbyterian Day School (PDS) and Community Christian School (CCS) in Drayton, Ontario. So I was really looking forward to visiting PDS to finally meet the staff and students in person!

When CCS staff learned that we were going to Belize, they decided to send along a classic Canadian icon: maple syrup. In a heartfelt letter to their “precious colleagues in Belize”, they described how this gift was a demonstration of their care and appreciation and a symbol of the renewal we experience during spring and the Easter season. “The sap is what brings a maple tree back to life after a dormant winter. The sap flows from the roots to the branches to support the new life in the leaves. The tree goes from looking dead to an abundance of life found in the leaves. This reminds us of the new life we experience because of the resurrection of our Saviour. Spring brings hope and renewal. The resurrection brings us hope and renewal.”

After years of cancelled plans, restricted travel, and postponed programs, visiting our partners brought renewed energy into our work at EduDeo. Spending time with them, hearing their stories, and seeing the impact

their work is having on their communities was so exciting. We are eager to take what we've learned and pour this into a new season of hope.

Experiencing the change of seasons teaches us lessons about the ebbs and flows of life. There are times when things look dead and cold. There are periods of disappointment, grief, and frustration. But then the snow melts and the buds emerge. There is celebration, renewal, and healing. When we have difficulty finding meaning in the messiness of life, we can take comfort in knowing “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

## PRAYER REQUESTS:

- **If you are in a period of disappointment, grief, or frustration, bring your petitions to God.**
- **If you are in a period of renewal or healing, bring your celebrations to God.**
- **Ask God to reveal new ways you can incorporate the ebbs and flows of life into your classroom.**





# ONE BODY, MANY PARTS

*“But in fact God has placed the parts in the body,  
every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.”  
1 Corinthians 12:18 (NIV)*

In the fall of 2020, two elementary school classes – one from Trinity Christian School in Burlington and the other from La Esperanza in Santo Domingo – collaborated to write a book. This was the most recent edition in a series of books that are part of EduDeo’s Write2Hope program. Inspired by 1 Corinthians 12:12-30, students wrote paragraphs describing how each part of our body has a unique purpose and that they can be used to bless others, just as we all have a unique role in the body of Christ and a responsibility to use our gifts for the good of others. No body part is more important than another and no one’s gifts are better than anyone else’s.

Fast forward a year and a half to spring 2022, and we were finally able to deliver copies of the book to the students who co-wrote them at La Esperanza. Since each of them grew in the last 18 months, it was a fun challenge to match them to their photos in the book! As they paged through it, both the students and their teachers couldn’t help but smile with pride at the work they’d accomplished. I know both schools put a lot of effort into the project and it was very satisfying to watch them enjoy the fruit of their labour.

1 Corinthians 12:18 says that God created diversity within the body of Christ with great intentionality. As educators, it’s important to remind our students that no matter what their gifts are or what their role is in God’s story, they are valued and important. This is a life-changing truth that is foundational to their Christ-centred education.

## PRAYER REQUESTS:

- **Ask God to reveal to you those students who may be in the background or whose roles in the body may not be easily apparent. Pray that God would reveal their gifts and importance to you.**
- **Pray that God would continue to remind you of your role and gifts in the community at your school, home, and beyond. Celebrate the gifts he gives you!**
- **Pray for each one of your students by name and celebrate the role they play in God’s big story.**



# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEAUTIFUL SPACES

*“And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel.” 1 Kings 6:13 (NIV)*

Are beautiful spaces necessary in schools? Does painting the walls a cheerful colour or decorating the hallway with a mural or landscaping a play area matter? Mario, director of Sinergia and Maria-Laura, principal of Espacio de Gracia School in the Dominican Republic think so.

Espacio de Gracia has lived up to its name of “a space of grace” by being a place where all students feel welcome, especially those who often have no other place to go. Here specialized programs and resources are provided for students with learning disabilities and behavioural challenges. A school that can be a last resort for some students may conjure up images of dilapidated buildings with crumbling bricks, cracked floors, or rotting playgrounds. But Espacio de Gracia is far from that.

As we walked through the gates and followed the pathway lined with palm trees to a two-story building painted teal and soft yellow, it was clear that this was a school that students, staff and the community took pride in. During lunch, Mario took time to explain that beautiful spaces are important because they honour the communities they serve. Striving for excellence by incorporating beauty in school design demonstrates that all people have inherent God-given dignity and deserve to use and enjoy places like this.

God loves beauty. In fact, the temple Solomon built was designed by God and it was *extravagant*. It was made of expensive materials like cedar timbers, bronze altars, purple curtains and many precious metals and took seven whole years to build. It was built to honour God above all gods. He reminded Solomon of its purpose in 1 Kings 6:11-13 when he said, “...if you keep all my decrees and regulations and obey all my commands... I will live among the Israelites and will never abandon my people Israel.” In the same way, a beautiful school reflects the Creator who has made every human being with value and worth.

## PRAYER REQUESTS:

- **Pray for Espacio de Gracia as they continue to provide educational opportunities for students who are often overlooked.**
- **Give thanks for your school's physical spaces, that they would be a source of pride for students, teachers, families.**
- **Pray for schools around the world whose physical spaces are too small or unsafe for students – pray that God would work mightily and provide resources.**





# ENCOURAGEMENT FOR A LIFETIME

*“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”  
1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)*

Recently I had the pleasure of reading nomination letters for the Teacher Excellence Awards which recognize excellence and giftedness in Canadian educators. As I read through the nominations in the Lifetime Achievement category, I thought of a principal I met in the Dominican Republic named Luisa.

Luisa has been the principal at Filadelfia Christian Reformed School for 20 years. Students used to affectionately call her “Mommy” but as they graduated, the next generation of students started calling her “Abuela”, or grandmother. Both staff and students described her as “strict” but respected her no-nonsense approach. She showed them that providing structure and discipline is an act of love.

She didn’t always want to be a teacher, though. She dreamed of being a police officer. When she was a teenager, a woman named Gladys encouraged Luisa to help in her classroom. Gladys was a North American missionary who started Filadelfia in 1982 with her husband, Raymond. Luisa fell in love with the school and Gladys could see she had skills in the classroom. So Gladys encouraged her to apply for a job and she began teaching at Filadelfia four years later.

Luisa’s story is an example of how an encouraging word can change the course of someone’s life. Sometimes we underestimate the impact our words can have - and not just on the people we tell them to. The encouragement Luisa received helped her recognize her God-given skills and gave her the confidence to use them. Now as an educator she is inspiring generation after generation to live into their unique role in God’s story.

## PRAYER REQUESTS:

- **Thank God for the long-term impact that Luisa and teachers like her have had on their students.**
- **Pray for new ways to incorporate encouragement in your classroom – between you and your students and between the students themselves.**
- **Ask God to raise up your students as leaders for their peers, modelling encouraging attitudes and behaviours in their classrooms and relationships.**