

# Clark County Invocation Guidance

## Foundational Guidance

1. Invocations may be provided as a pre-agenda item preceding regular public meetings of the Board of County Councilors (“Board”). Since the invocation precedes the Board’s agenda it is not considered a part of the public’s business.
2. Clergy recognized by a religious organization may volunteer to provide an invocation upon invitation by the Board. The individual leading the invocation shall herein be referred to as a Cleric.
3. Invocations shall be led by a single Cleric and may not exceed two minutes.
4. Invited Clerics must be scheduled by assigned Board staff. Potential Clerics wishing to provide an invocation are strongly encouraged to contact Clark County staff in the Board’s office by calling 360/397-2232 or go to the Board’s website.
5. A Cleric’s faith shall not preclude their ability to provide an invocation.
6. The Board serves constituents of all faiths, expresses no faith preference, and recognizes no faith as superior or inferior to others. Therefore:
  - a. The Cleric’s invocation shall be for the purpose of seeking wisdom and guidance from a higher authority as the Board engages in critical issues that affect the lives of all Clark County residents.
  - b. Clerics providing invocations shall be sensitive to the wide diversity of faiths that exist in our country such that their invocation reflects courtesy and respect to all.
  - c. Invocations are intended to provide positive, uplifting messages of wisdom and guidance; invocations are absolutely not an opportunity to disparage other people, organizations, or beliefs, or divide communities in Clark County.
  - d. Those providing the invocation will be requested to do so with the same solemnity, veneration, and respect as when they lead prayers or entreaties to a higher authority within their own congregation.
  - e. No invocation shall be used to lobby, proselytize, or advance a particular faith, and no invocation shall be used to request funding or support for a faith or faith-based activity.
7. The Chair of the Board will introduce Clerics by name and title prior to an invocation.
8. It is anticipated that there will be some Board meetings which have not a Cleric scheduled to provide an invocation. In such cases the Chair of the Board, at his or her discretion, may instead ask for a moment of silence as a pre-agenda item in lieu of an invocation.
9. No member of the Board, county government, contractors or vendors, members of the public, or any other person in attendance at a Board meeting shall be required or expected to participate in any invocation that is provided.
10. No remuneration or other compensation shall be given for providing an invocation.

## Process Guidance

1. Staff will compile an invitation list (“List”) of religious organizations serving Clark County residents. The initial List will primarily be developed through governmental data regarding registration of nonprofit religious organizations, but also using telephone directories, internet searches, or other outreach to the extent feasible.
2. Any religious organization not included on the List may request in writing that it be added. Such request shall be sent by United States postal service to the Clerk to the Board, Board of County Councilors, P.O. Box 5000, Vancouver, WA, 98666-5000, and must provide the following information:

- a. Name of the religious organization.
  - b. Street address of the religious organization.
  - c. Name and title of the Cleric representing the religious organization who would be anticipated to provide the invocation.
  - d. Provide answers to the following four questions:
    - 1) "Are Clark County residents members of or adherents to this religious organization?"
    - 2) "Is this organization a current 501(c)3 religious organization in good standing? If yes, provide the current religious nonprofit employer identification number (EIN) issued by the federal government."
    - 3) "Do members or adherents of this religious organization engage in prayer or entreaty to a higher authority as a central feature of their religion?"
    - 4) "Does this religious organization have an established procedure for ordaining (i.e., investing with sacerdotal authority and duties) clergy or related representatives who lead religious services?"
3. Organizations will not be added to the List unless they have Clark County residents who are members or adherents.
  4. Organizations with a current religious nonprofit EIN issued by the federal government may be added to the List.
  5. Organizations without a current religious nonprofit EIN issued by the federal government may be added to the List if they are shown to (1) engage in prayer or entreaty to a higher authority as a central feature of their religion, and (2) have an established procedure for ordaining clergy or related representatives to lead religious services.
  6. The List shall be a public document and published as a page within the Board section of the Clark County website. That web page shall also include the most current version of these Guidelines and contact information for religious organizations seeking to be added to the List.
  7. Prior to the end of each calendar year, Clark County staff shall send a letter of invitation to religious organizations on the List inviting Clerics to provide an invocation. Clerics must provide the Clerk to the Board an affirmative written response to that letter in order to be included on the schedule of invocations in the forthcoming calendar year.
  8. The scheduling of Clerics shall be on a first-come, first-serve or other random basis.
  9. The scheduling of Clerics shall ensure distributed invocation opportunities for the widest feasible variety of faiths. It is intended that staff shall track invocations by religious category to avoid the appearance of religious preference in frequency of scheduling, and with the goal that no religious category would represent more than 40% of the invocations in a calendar year.
  10. It is intended that no Cleric shall provide invocations preceding consecutive Board meetings, and no Cleric shall provide invocations more than twice in a calendar year.
  11. It is intended that no Cleric shall be scheduled to provide an invocation a second time prior to all other Clerics on the List having had an opportunity to provide an invocation at least once in a given calendar year.

updated: January 2, 2015