

Northern District Conference Thoughts  
October 4-6

Executive Board Meeting: Opening Thought

\_\_\_\_\_ How nice to see everyone again! I so look forward to our time together because we always come together with friendship and respect. As I was looking for a way to start this meeting, I found what I feel is the perfect poem to express how I feel about you. It is entitled "Cherished Friends" and was written by Barbara Burrow.

God must have known there would be times  
We'd need a word of cheer,  
Someone to praise a triumph  
Or brush away a tear,  
He must have known we'd need to share  
The joy of "little things"  
In order to appreciate  
The happiness life brings,  
I think He knew our troubled hearts  
Would sometimes throb with pain  
At trials and misfortunes  
Or some goal we can't attain.  
He knew we'd need the comfort  
Of an understanding heart  
To give us strength and courage  
To make a fresh, new start.  
He knew we'd need companionship  
Unselfish...lasting...true,  
And so God answered our hearts' great need  
With cherished friends...like you.

Northern District Conference: Opening Thought

\_\_\_\_\_ Good morning! It seems impossible that it was a year ago that I stood before you, ready to inspire you with my very first ever opening thought as State Chaplain. I was a bit nervous, but you were so warm and welcoming that I soon felt like one of the group. And here I am, back to inspire you again.

Because of my office, I'm always on the lookout for inspirational messages. Fortunately, for the last several weeks, I have been doing GATE testing at various

schools, and I have discovered that there is no shortage of inspiration in our district. At every school I visited, principals started each day with inspiring thoughts on the PA system, and the walls of the classrooms were plastered with even more.

Now, we're all teachers. We know that even though we try our best, our good advice, both verbal and in poster form, may or may not always be noticed by the students. And I thought, what a shame that all that inspiration is being ignored. So I decided to honor the efforts of these hard-working educators by sharing their words of wisdom with people who will actually listen and appreciate them. You.

Here are just a few of the inspirational thoughts I saw or heard:

In a world where you can be anything, be kind.

Your attitude determines your altitude.

Integrity is doing the right thing when no one is watching.

Think positively and positive things will come your way.

Do what's right. It will gratify some people and astonish the rest.

A few kind words can help a person more than you think.

To have a friend, you must be a friend.

With great privilege comes great responsibility.

And perhaps my favorite,

Put your name on your paper.

I hope these thoughts have given you the necessary inspiration to start your day the right way.

### Meal Thought (Optional)

\_\_\_\_\_As we get ready to enjoy this yummy meal, let's take a moment to be thankful. As Noella Aanulds wrote, "Practicing gratitude is a very powerful tool that shifts your attitude from the things you don't have to the things you do have. This alone will make you feel better."

Oprah Winfrey states, "Be thankful for what you have and you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough."

And as H. U. Westermeyer pointed out, few Americans have ever been more impoverished than the Pilgrims (they made seven times more graves than huts, for goodness sake!), yet even they set aside a day of Thanksgiving.

Thank you, chapters of the Northern District Council, for this lovely meal, venue, and the day ahead of us. We are truly thankful for your efforts.

### Northern District Conference: Closing Thought

Recently, my family and I were lucky enough to spend three days at the happiest place on earth: Disneyland. We drove down from the Fresno area the night before and stayed at a nearby hotel so that we could start our days bright and early.

I've been to Disneyland several times in my life, so this was not a new experience for me. But in spite of this, I still got that wonderful feeling of excitement and child-like glee as I walked through the turnstile and saw the wall of flowers topped by the train station. I actually gasped in anticipation and got a bit teary-eyed. I was at Disneyland!

As we walked into the park, I saw smiling people who were just as thrilled as I was. Everyone seemed to be having a good time and didn't let things bother them as much. (Accidentally bump into someone? No problem! Here, let me help you with that stroller.) Even the employees were pleasant and helpful. (Your grandson dropped his popcorn? Have another one, free!) And no matter that we stayed until closing and I was exhausted and my feet were killing me, I left with a wonderful feeling of wanting more and looking forward to my next visit.

Now you may be thinking, that's a really nice story, but what does it have to do with Alpha Delta Kappa? Well, think about it. What if every Alpha Delta Kappa member entered their chapter meetings with the same joy and anticipation that I felt entering Disneyland? What if they knew that they were in for an entertaining time where they felt special and valued? And what if everyone left each meeting already looking forward to the next one?

I'm not suggesting you make every meeting a visit to an amusement park, but I do think we can replicate the feelings one has there to some extent. We can have interesting speakers, visit fascinating places, foster a feeling of camaraderie and sisterhood. We can be pleasant and make every meeting so enticing, no one will want to miss it.

I understand that it is inevitable that people will bump into each other's feelings or drop their bucket of enthusiastic popcorn. But instead of complaining or holding

grudges, we can do what the Disney employees do and find a way to make things better.

Is this easy? It can be. Greeting everyone with a warm smile can be one way to help each sister feel a part of the group. Get to know your sisters, even the ones you might not normally seek out. Remember that the people who need the most love will often ask for it in the most unloving of ways, so don't be put off if they resist your friendly overtures at first or seem grouchy and unapproachable.

I think we can all agree that there is already more than enough negativity and sadness in the world today, so I challenge you to turn that around. Make Alpha Delta Kappa the safe, welcoming organization it should be, and go back to your chapter and make every meeting you have the happiest place on earth for your sisters.

### Executive Board: Reconvening Thought

A few weeks ago, I had lunch with the mom of one of my former students. Her son was in my 4th grade class and is now in graduate school at UC Berkeley, on his way to becoming a nuclear physicist. He and his family have always been quite special to me, and I have enjoyed keeping up with them as the years have passed.

As the mom and I ate our salads, she kept going on and on about what a wonderful teacher I was and how I had made such a positive impact on so many children. While gratifying, it was also a bit unnerving since I know that I am in no way the paragon she was making me out to be. All I kept thinking was how much I wished I could be worthy of all her praise.

Imagine my surprise when, looking for inspirational poems, I found one that captures my thoughts exactly, except I would add the word "students" with "friends". It is entitled, "Worthy of My Friends" and was written by Helen Lowrie Marshall.

If I could have but just one plea,  
I think that that one prayer would be,  
With all that such a prayer portends--  
"Lord, make me worthy of my friends.

Help me to be the kind of human  
That loyal friends believe I am.  
Help me to be as true and fine  
As they believe--these friends of mine.

Give me the courage under stress

That they expect me to possess;  
And when they smile and look at me,  
Oh, let me be, Lord, what they see!

Help me to all pretense forego,  
And simply, without pomp or show,  
Repay with true sincerity  
The loyal faith they have in me.

And if, sometimes, I may have erred,  
In any thought or deed or word,  
Then help me, Lord, to make amends--  
Lord, make me worthy of my friends."

### Executive Board-Closing Thought

My theme this time has been friendship because I truly do value all of you as my friends. We are all unique, but I believe that our personalities have come together in a special way that I am not sure all Executive Boards have. We have bonded and become friends as well as colleagues.

This poem shares some insights that echo my thoughts. It is entitled, "The Making of Friends" and was written by Edgar A. Guest.

Life is sweet because of the friends we have made  
And the things which in common we share;  
We want to live on, not just for ourselves,  
But because of the people who care;  
The giving and doing for somebody else..  
On that all life's splendor depends,  
And the joy in this world, when you've summed it all up,  
Is found in the making of friends.

But it's not enough just to make a friend. The tough part is learning how to be a friend. Karen Raven writes:

Some people know the way to make  
Each day seem more worthwhile,  
They seem to take the sunshine  
And wear it in their smile,

They're kind and understanding,  
Loving and sincere,  
Ready with a compliment  
Or friendly word of cheer.  
They give with generosity  
That never seems to end--  
They know the lovely secret  
Of how to be a friend.

Each of you have learned that secret, and I am so thankful that I get to bask in your friendship.