

A Prayerful Reflection of Thanksgiving for the Needham High School Class of 1970

God of community, hope, and healing:

As we reflect this Thanksgiving, we **offer our deepest gratitude** for the opportunity You gave us **to begin our life's journey together** in the **idyllic working middle class Town of Needham** in a community that met five days a week for nine months a year on a hill that is home to Needham High School, one of the top high schools in the state at that time and to this day.

Unbeknownst to us then, **our community – including members of our class, teachers, administrators, and all at NHS – nurtured us** through the challenges of high school life at a time when those challenges were compounded by societal change and upheaval and a most divisive war. Mindful of the recent Veterans' Day Holiday, **we honor all those who have served in our armed forces**, but especially in Vietnam and armed conflicts.

We thank You for the **gift of a faithful, supportive, and thriving community** that **helped instill in us values** that helped us make our way in the world and form us into good citizens – including the values **of solidarity, inclusion, civic responsibility, patriotism, and generosity and service.**

We give thanks for the **memories of our high school years**, which psychologists tell us are among **the most vivid and long lasting of our lives**. As a class of over 400, **our interests and growing passions were diverse** and could fill a Sears or *Whole Earth Catalog*.

Yet we are grateful that we could **still share memorable times of solidarity with one another** – sometimes carrying on traditions – including cheering on our Needham Rockets sports teams, for which we are mindful **on this day, of the occurrence of the oldest public high school rivalry in the nation – the Needham-Wellesley football game.**

We recognize that **our community was not only shaped by the people whom we saw** in the halls of NHS, **but by the culture** in which we lived and we reflect with gratitude to have been with one another during what the ancient Chinese may have called **“interesting times.”**

We give thanks for the historical privilege of being part of **one of the most transitional generations of our lifetime, a generation that saw new possibilities**, symbolized in

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our culture by The Summer of Love, the changing melodies and lyrics of our music, perhaps most notably in The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* album, and Woodstock.

In our reflections, we hold a spirit of Thanksgiving **that in our youth President John F. Kennedy asked us to reach for impossible dreams** which we not only attained — although some took longer than others — but in the process gained an understanding **through one *Earthrise* photo** of what it means to be one human family, making our high school concerns seem not quite so important and **the solidarity of our human family** more so.

We were still being formed as adults when we brutally lost **a holy man who was a modern day prophet and a uniting political leader with a prophetic voice** within 62 days of each other in 1968.

We humbly give thanks for the **historic witness** our generation received from You, with which we were **left to discern the responsibility we would each accept** to bring the truth and love and justice, that these prophetic leaders symbolized to us, into our world for all of our sisters and brothers.

And yet, in spite of the tumult of the era, **we lift our hearts in thanks for the serendipity, thrills, and peace enjoyed in our community: a Volkswagen “Bug”** appearing in the hallowed halls of NHS; **back to back state hockey and soccer championships** led by a future Olympian; and the **reassurance of seeing the “Blue Tree” that united the Needham community** and set our hearts aglow during the Holiday Season.

While we are **mindful of the toll of the years** — which takes us from one another or from ourselves — and the toll of the present time, **may we be strengthened by giving thanks this week and always.**

Bless those who are no longer with us; may their legacy inspire us to cherish one another more deeply. **Bless those among us who struggle,** that they may find strength in Your love and in the bonds we share.

Let us **reflect with gratitude on all we have experienced**, for all the challenges we have overcome, **for the enduring ties that unite us** and the blessings we have today.

May we be attentive to how **thanksgiving anchors** hope in the present. And may that awareness **lead us to a humble understanding that giving thanks — for even the**

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smallest blessings – provides a foundation for us to place our trust in future blessings for ourselves, our families, our community and society.

And may we always remain aware that **Thanksgiving and hope are found in the bonds of community**, which together provide us with **a collective strength beyond our own capacity**.

With **hearts full of thanks for each other – and especially for those who have kept us together over the years** – and for all the blessings in our lives, **may we bring our shared values that unite us**, and the **best of who we are and who we are yet to become**, to our families, one another, and to the communities in which we live **for the benefit of our children, our grandchildren, and future generations**.

Amen.