Thank you Gilda and thank you Garden club members for inviting me to give the invocation this evening:

Some of you folks know me as an erstwhile poet of sorts, so if I may I’d like to preface our blessing with two short poems and a few words. A 19th century poet wrote “a poem should strike the reader as a wording of his **own** highest thoughts, and appear almost as a remembrance”. And so this first poem, I hope, will remind you of our dear friend Marian Moreland. When Marian died I would like to have had the time and proper venue to have read it. But since this dinner is about the love of gardening, and gardening and poetry do go well together – I thought this might be the time and place to read what I’ve called The Gentle Gardener or An Ode to Marian. (Poem read at this point)

In my study there is a photo I took years ago of one of Elaine’s gardens. I say Elaine because she is the gardener I’m the poet, the joyful observer. It was a very peaceful garden. In it stood a very lovely old Willow tree. At a bench near its base I would often sit at this time of year to meditate. Nearby were our bird baths and feeders offering cool fresh water and food for the variety of birds living in and around our home. Winding through the fragrant flowering plants of Elaine’s garden was a short walking path beyond which lay a patch of woods with a brook running through it.

I mention this garden because its photo has been kept with a favorite poem of mine from the Roman poet Horace who lived in the first century before Christ. Horace wrote the following free verse:

“This was my prayer: A plot of land, not too large, but which should contain a garden, and near the house a spring of ever-flowing water, and a bit of forest to complete it”

With prayer and hard work Horace’s supplication was realized and his garden, like Elaine’s, and yours helped frame our homes.

Except for the gardeners, the name Claybreakers might be a bit esoteric. Elaine tells me it is due to the nature of our soil. And so the name points to the need to amend the soil which each of you did to help make your gardens and homes a more pleasant place to live and thereby help beautify your little part of this world. Why you even planted a little Garden off Rosaryville Road as well as gardens at nearby Concordia Lutheran Church for the benefit of children in its school. Well done!

And with those words let us now seek the Lord’s blessing upon our meal:

Lord, we know how it was your custom to pray often in a beautiful Garden at Gethsemane. You love and enjoy the beauty of your creation. We thank you for these ladies who as your co-workers have for the past 4 decades worked to make our community more pleasing to the eye. May you continue to bless this important work. We thank you now for the gift of this meal and for those who prepared it for us, that as your beautiful plants in this world we may be nourished.

We ask this blessing in the name of your son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Charlie Arnold, Ph.D.

7 June 2017

Mount Airy Clay Breakers Garden Club

40th year anniversary