**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**ARLETTE BARROW**

**FINAL**

Family, friends, teachers, classmates, General Administrator Pastor Jacob Underwood, Pastor Shane G. Hilliard, Stephanie Smith, Assistant Administrator, Principal Sir Demario Liverpool, Assistant Principal Marcelle, Alexander, I know I speak for all of my fellow graduates when I say that we are all really happy that you are here to share this very important day. We made it!!! After **EIGHT** years of being here... for most of us... those, like me, who began attending in Pre-K, we will finally move on to high school.... for many of my classmates, this is the only school we have known. We’ve been here most of our lives and now it’s time to move on....And while we are all excited to see what the future holds for us, we understand that things change as we grow up, and the experiences we have had up to now are really important... all of the lessons we have learned, the friendships we have made, the activities we’ve done, will all help to show us the way. In many ways, we are giving up our “home away from home.” We’ve spent our time coming to this school, walking these halls, working in these classrooms, being familiar with the sights and sounds of New Grace Christian School, and now it’s time to leave.

We’re so grateful for all of the help and guidance we received from our teachers. We did well and excelled because we were taught by caring people... and I know we all appreciate the lessons we’ve learned ... I would like to thank some of them now...

* Ms. Alexander, Thank you for your endurance and for making your class so enjoyable!
* Mr. Liverpool, your strong religious footing and guidance inspired us and showed us the way
* Ms. Clyde, the amount of ELA we learned from you will carry me through.... **ALL** **THROUGH**... high school!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).
* Ms. Marshall, thanks to you, (**Do you want to say**) I can finally understand more than “Yo quiero Taco Bell!! (**And wait for the laugh**).
* Ms. Greene, it basically started with you... Thank you so much for caring about us and giving us a strong foundation in Kindergarten 101! You can see that the we remember you for all of the good lessons you taught us.... **EIGHT** years later!!

There are some **VERY** important people who deserve very special thanks... and of course, that is our parents. My classmates will thank their parents, but while I am here, I want to let two people in particular know how much they mean to **ME**... To Dad, you have always been there to do the “fine tuning”... of projects, assignments, constructions... (**this wasn’t completed on instructions. Please make sure it’s correct**). You’re my greatest helper and my “secret weapon.” I appreciate all you’ve done to help me, and I love the way we work together and hope that continues in high school.... even though I’m sure the projects will get harder.... Are you **UP FOR IT,** Dad??? (**Wait for the laugh**). To my precious Mom, your motivation has been **OUTSTANDING**. I will never forget the late nights... how you kept me company, encouraged me, and made sure I was always taken care of. If I needed **ANYTHING**, especially in the area of education, it was there, and even before the words came out of my mouth, I had what I needed. You are one of the main reasons I am standing here as class valedictorian. Thank you.... (**If you want to make a joke, you can say**)... and although I plan on being a little more independent in high school... please try not to go **too** far away!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). I know I will still need your encouragement and guiding eye.... probably more than ever!!

When I look back on my time at New Grace Christian School, I ask my self, “What did I learn here?” The easy answer is, **EVERYTHING**... this is the only place I’ve attended. I know that I really have learned a lot... I’m proud to remember that I made First Honors **EVERY YEAR**... and every year I learned more about myself, the people around me, and what it means to be a part of a class, a team, a group, a **COMMUNITY**. I learned to respect people... **EVERYONE**... I learned that people have feelings... in all sorts of situations, sometimes for reasons that I didn’t understand, but the most important thing I learned is very easy... **don’t hurt people’s feelings**.

Over the years I’ve been told that I have some important traits... I’ve been told I’m a hard worker, I have determination, and even when things seem almost too hard to handle, I find **MORE** perseverance. I know these are really important qualities to have.... in fact Thomas Alva Edison said, “When you have exhausted all possibilities, remember this: **you haven’t**.” I **WILL** remember that... that saying tells me **NOTHING** is impossible... My fellow graduates and I can do anything we set our mind to... we just have to **TRY**.... and **KEEP** on trying... Edison also said that people used to call him a failure when his inventions didn’t work... but he said that he didn’t fail, he just found 10,000 other ways to do something!! I believe that statement is true... I know it is as I participate in Girl Scouts, practice my dancing, play baseball... and all of the other activities that take...**PRACTICE**. One of the most important lessons I’ve learned is “Be yourself, try your best,” and that’s what I do.

My parents have always encouraged me to work hard. They’ve told me that it will all be worth it. A few months ago, I was asked to enter the Miss New Grace pageant. Some people (**was it mother? Not in my notes... please adjust**) tried to discourage me from entering... was it too much? Would it affect my other activities? It doesn’t matter now because I **DID** enter, and learned all about Maya Angelou... you might remember that for the talent portion, I recited, “Still I Rise.” I learned so much from being in that pageant, and I made a new “friend” in the work of Ms. Angelou. She said, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them **feel**.” As we move on to high school, we will be in new situations, with new people and new lessons, but I promise to do my best as I make new friends, to let them know how important they are. I will do my best to work hard and I will remember, **IT WILL ALL BE WORTH IT**. I will use my dance to inspire freedom of thought and action. I will be respectful and friendly to everyone I meet, and even though I will miss this school and all of you, I look forward to my new school, knowing that I always have a home here and just maybe I will come back and see how all of the “new kids are doing.”

It’s time to leave now, work hard, concentrate on getting good grades and learning more lessons that will last us a lifetime. My fellow graduates and I know that without all of you, we would not be the same, and we thank you for the encouragement, support, guidance, and faith you made sure we have. You’ve given us strong foundations. I know we are ready to go now, and we say... Thank you!!!