

Blessings around the New School Year

Ideas for Worship and Celebration

Each fall children, youth, young adults, and education leaders return to classrooms or other learning environments. And this year, in particular, will be different for many as they return to in-person learning after more than a year of on-line or hybrid school experiences. Faith communities and congregations can mark this "*back to school*" milestone in a variety of ways including but not limited to the "blessing of the backpacks". Marking milestones is important in our life of faith. We know God created us to learn and explore and create. We also follow Jesus, the great teacher.

Recognizing the Milestone

Include a blessing or prayer in your worship service

- Plan a time to recognize all those who are returning to school whether student, educator, or staff.
- [Here](#) are specific liturgy ideas.
- Ask people to bring backpacks, briefcases, or bags and then ask them stand for a blessing.
- Consider blessing the people and speaking of the instruments and tools which assist in the learning and growing.
- Acknowledge the challenges some have with learning and disparities of access.
- You can also have a drive thru where a blessing is offered to each person in the car.

Invite your community to worship for the Back to School Blessing

- If you have a preschool, invite teachers and families.
- If you have a partner elementary school or outreach program or education mission partner invite those students and education leaders to be present. You could include a Minute for Mission highlighting the partnership.
- Invite the neighborhood.

Remember to include education leaders and young adults

- Think of it as a return not only to school but for all those for whom the education field is a vocation. (Professors, librarians, food service staff, childcare workers, tutors, etc)
- Recognize those going off to college. (The first Sunday in August is usually PCUSA College and Young Adult Sunday. [Here](#) are most current liturgy resources from UKIRK.)

Plan for a reminder gift to give everyone

- Design baggage tags or key chains for backpacks which have a scripture passage, encouraging words, or ministry logo.
- Design stickers for devices and water bottles. (Even removeable stickers for school devices.)
- Distribute the gift to those present for the blessing in worship but also include education leaders and students in outreach programs or church preschools.
- Create electronic wallpapers or screensavers with encouraging messages or Bible verses to share for students and teachers to use on their devices.
- Give hand sanitizer or USB jump drives as other options.

Celebrate the Milestone beyond Worship

- Celebrate with a sno-cone or ice cream truck after worship for everyone.
- Write hopes and fears for the new school year in sidewalk chalk on the parking lot or include a prayer wall outside your building.
- Blessings for the new year could be paired with Christian Formation Week and KickOff/Rally Day depending on your calendar. Some suggestions can be found [here](#).
- Share some "At Home" ideas for a new year. [Here](#) are some ideas for families.

Include an outreach or mission component

- Fill backpacks or collect school supplies for a neighborhood school with a need or local non-profit. Then have the children or youth roll them in during the offering in worship in a wagon.
- Provide backpacks or school uniforms to children in foster care.
- Combine your after-church celebration with a blood drive or immunization clinic.
- Partner with a local shoe store and provide new shoes to students in need.
- Volunteer to help your preschool/day school or neighborhood school's teachers decorate their rooms or provide breakfast for the teachers.

Resources

- [Christian Formation Week Liturgy Resources](#) -
- Backpack tags - [Illustrated Ministries](#)
- [Blessing of the Backpacks](#) – Illustrated Ministries
- [Backpack Blessings, Tags, Stickers](#) – Vibrant Church Communicators
- [Back to School Blessings and Prayers](#) – Building Faith
- [Blessing Prayer](#) - Wendy Claire Barrie
- [Back-to-School \(or Virtual School\) Blessing](#) - APCE
- Hymn [God of All Learning](#) - Carolyn Winfrey Gillette
- [Back to School Prayer Station](#) - Building Faith
- [Backpack Blessing Prayer](#) - SALT
- [College and Young Adult Sunday Resources](#) - UKIRK

