



BACK TO SCHOOL BLESSING 2020

Why:

Offering a moment of blessing, support, encouragement, and awareness for the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year to show children, youth, and adults in your church and community that they are loved and prayed for by your church.

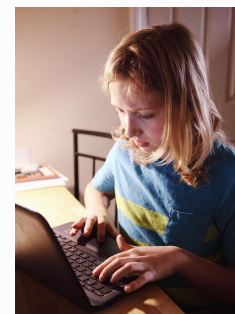
What Is It?

In a normal year, starting school in fall can be a time of excitement and anxiety, new possibilities and sometimes fear. In 2020, the beginning of the school year includes many more emotions, decisions, and unknowns. Acknowledging and honoring the start of school in 2020 as a milestone for children, youth, young adults, and adults who are learners, parents/caregivers, or teachers/staff could be an important ritual for the individuals and families in your church.

What Do We Call It?

Know your context. What are the plans for the schools in your area for the fall? Some are re-opening in person, some are 100% online, and others are offering both. Be cautious about wording if there are people for whom this could be a challenge. Options may include:

- o Back to School Blessing
- o Blessing of the Backpacks and Devices
- o Blessing for our students, parents, and educators
- o Drive-thru Blessing for the start of school
- o Blessing for the Start of School



WHAT CAN WE DO??

The possibilities are as wide as your imagination. Here are a few ideas to get you started (make sure you follow local and state guidelines as well as any guidelines created for your local church):

- **In-person options**

- It's probably best for children not to bring their backpacks to church, but you could offer a blessing over students, parents, and teachers in worship

- **Outdoor options**

- Curbside pick-up: Families can pick up bags filled with goodies (see ideas below)
- Backpacks Parade: congregation members can line up (physically distanced) along a predetermined route with "praying for you signs" that families can drive through and then pick up a goodie bag at the end.
- "Drive-thru" style – families drive up to the curb where they receive a blessing and a goody bag

- **Online options**

- Pray over tags or stickers during worship and then send them to students
- Offer a prayer of blessing during worship
- Pre-record a video with the blessing that can be shown in worship and also posted to social media or shared directly with families
- Record a special message for parents who are making difficult decisions about school with encouragement and prayer
- Record a video collage of kids saying a blessing for teachers/parents
- Record a video of educators/Sunday School teachers saying a blessing

- Backpack Tag/Device Sticker – [Illustrated Ministry](#) has options in both English and Spanish with several design choices:

- Ideas from [Building Faith](#) -

- Blessing of the Devices
- Creating your own backpack tags
- Prayers
- Ideas for stickers

- Back to School Prayer and Family Blessings from [Traci Smith](#)

- Ask adults who don't have young children at home to write notes of prayer and encouragement to children, youth, and parents. These could be included in something that is sent home or goody bags

- Goody Bags ideas

- Backpack tag and/or sticker
- Small bottle of hand sanitizer
- Crayons/Markers/Colored Pencils
- Pencils
- Pencil Sharpener
- Glue sticks
- Notebook/paper
- Folders
- Dry erase board/markers
- Prayer prompts
- Notes from congregation
- Allergy friendly treat or snack
- Fidget busters
- Kid friendly mask (know your context – this may or may not be helpful to include)
- There are lots of other ideas

SUPPORTING YOUR COMMUNITY

Perhaps now more than ever before, the church has an opportunity to support the community. Always ask what your school needs, don't assume. School leaders may feel overwhelmed, are there other community organizations that you can partner with to benefit schools and families in your community?

- Connect with your local school district, especially if you have partnered with them in the past to find out what they need and how you can support them.
 - Offer prayer for your local school(s) during worship
- Provide supplies that are needed (ask them what they need, don't assume)
- Provide support around food programs, if needed.
- If you have a childcare or preschool in your church, if they are open or opening in the fall, ask them how the congregation can support them.
- Going further
 - Are there ways that your church resources (people, building, financial) can support the school and students in your community. Are there other organizations in your community that you can partner with? Can you open your building in some way to kids who need a safe place to go?
 - How can you care for and encourage parents who are providing school at home? Are there former educators who could help with tutoring or read before lunch, so parents can prepare the meal? (keeping in mind protection policy/safe sanctuaries policies)
 - What other "outside the box" ways can you partner with families, schools, and community organizations to support children, youth, and families during this time?
 - Can you use or share your wifi? Do you have a hot spot that extends into the parking lot or yard that students could use? Could you create a space outside that students/families could use for e-learning?

Curated by Rev. Kathy Pittenger
kpittenger@michiganumc.org

