



BACK TO SCHOOL BLESSING 2022

Why:

Offering a moment of blessing, support, encouragement, and awareness for the beginning of the 2022-23 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?

While fall may be more "normal," there may still be some uncertainty. Starting school in fall can be a time of excitement and anxiety, new possibilities and sometimes fear. Acknowledging and honoring the start of school is a milestone for children, youth, young adults, and adults who are learners, parents/caregivers, or teachers/staff and important ritual for the individuals and families in your church. You can also use this as a time to pray for and celebrate your faith formation leaders.

What Do We Call It?

Know your why. Is this for the families in your church or are you reaching into the community? Will the blessing be during worship, at another time, or both?

Remember those who homeschool, too!

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 if necessary):

- **In-person options**

- Invite children/teachers to bring their backpack for a special blessing. Consider an outdoor service, share the blessing outside following the service, or do a stand-alone event (see additional ideas)

- **Outdoor options**

- Curbside pick-up: Families can pick up bags filled with goodies (see ideas below)
- Backpacks Parade: congregation members can line up 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
- Park or Playground: Host a time for blessing at a local park or playground. You may have giveaways or treats!

- **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 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 & Worship Liturgy – [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
- Blessing of the Backpacks Toolkit 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

Connect with your local schools - ask what your school needs, don't assume. Or partner with community organizations to benefit schools and families in your community. Ideas: food programs, school supplies, specific donations, winter gear, goodies for teachers/staff, etc. Consider sending gift cards to school staff to purchase supplies for their classrooms.

- 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, 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?
 - Consider child hunger and food insecurity - does your school already have a program they participate in? Are there other ways you can provide food? Often snacks are not included in free breakfast/lunch programs. Could you provide healthy snack options for classrooms?



Curated by Rev. Kathy Pittenger
kpittenger@michiganumc.org