



BACK TO SCHOOL BLESSINGS & PRAYERS

Blessings and prayers are practices that help ground and guide us. Prayer reminds us that our community extends beyond what we see in front of us, connecting us to something bigger than ourselves. Blessing reminds us of God's love in our lives. During times of transition and change, establishing a pattern of prayer and blessing can offer space to express worries and joys, hopes and dreams, and a time to both accept God's love and peace, and extend it to someone else. With these prayers and blessings, you are invited to create a practice of sitting in God's presence, allowing yourself to be filled with God's hope.

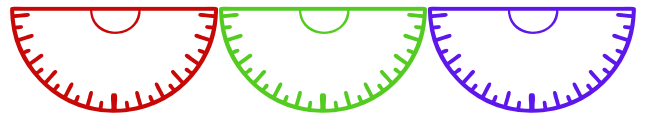
READ

Ecclesiastes 3.1-15 "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace."

SACRED SPACE

Before entering into these prayers for the new school year, spend some time creating your prayer space. This may be done as a whole household, or a student may choose to set up their own space. You may sit at a table, on the floor, or in a place you plan to study. You may want to include some things that will be important to you this year: notebooks, pens or pencils, a computer or tablet. If you have special objects which bring you comfort (a stuffed animal or cozy blanket), or something that makes you feel most *you* (your musical instrument or equipment from a favorite sport), you may want to bring them to this space. You may choose to light a candle or incense. As you pray, try opening your hands into the *orans* position, with arms extended out to the sides, palms open and up. This ancient prayer posture opens us to the presence of the Divine. Or consider holding hands, if praying with others. After the school year is underway, allow the items you've gathered, the warmth of a candle, the *orans* posture, or the scent of incense, to remind you that you and your work are wrapped in prayer.

PRAY



A Prayer for the New School Year

God of all wisdom, we praise you for gifting us with curiosity and learning. Give to all students, teachers, and caregivers a clear sense of your love. May they feel your presence throughout this school year. Guide their choices, their quest for knowledge, and their relationships. Use their successes and failures as opportunities to grow in understanding of who you would have them to be. Continue to shape them, that they may walk in the way of Christ, grow strong in Spirit's love for all people, and know the complete joy of life in you. In the name of Christ our Great Teacher, we pray. Amen.

Linda Witte Henke, adapted, "From the Vine," in Marking Time: Christian Rituals for All Our Days, Moorehouse Publishing 2001, p. 63.

A Prayer for Students

Eternal God, your wisdom is greater than our minds can attain, and your truth enlightens our learning. To those who study, give curiosity, imagination, and patience to wait and work for insight. Fill their learning with joy. Help them to doubt with courage. And hold all their days in the love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Book of Common Worship, adapted, Westminster John Knox Press, 2018, p. 911.

A Prayer for Parents

Loving God, We confess some days the worries of parenthood are as abundant as the joys. Guide us through the valleys, so we may be present for our children in their valleys, until we are all brought again to the the mountaintop. We ask you to bless our children with hearts of compassion and courage, and keep them safe from harm. Fill them with the knowledge that they are loved and beloved. And may we always remember to pray: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

Meg Bucher, adapted, www.sunnyand80.org; Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Serenity Prayer".

A Prayer for Teachers and Educators

God of all learning, grant our teachers an abundance of your wisdom. Prepare their hearts to welcome and love. Give them grace in their encounters, courage to face challenges, and strength when they feel weak. When they feel unseen, remind them we are overwhelmed with gratitude for the gifts they share with our children. May they see how their dedication forever impacts generations. Amen.

The Rev. Kaitlyn Bouchillon, adapted, www.crosswalk.com.

