

Closing Benediction

Students, teachers, school staff and parents: Go forth into this school year with confidence, curiosity, and courage. Christ goes before you, Christ follows behind you, Christ goes with you. And the blessing of God Almighty – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – rest upon you and remain with you always.

Amen & Amen!

SERMON QUESTIONS

- What is ‘Self’ and what is ‘Truth? How are they different? How are they the same?
- What does “*If anyone would come after me, they must deny themselves, take up your cross and follow me,*” mean to you? To the world?
- What is a ‘post-Christian,’ ‘post-modern world?’
- Define “Absolute Truth.” And what happens without one?
- How do you speak the truth, even when it is unpopular?

Blessing of the Backpacks – VW 1st UMC

Call to Worship (Responsively)

A new school year is beginning, and God goes with us into every classroom, every hallway, every challenge, and every joy.

We gather to remember that God’s Spirit leads us in learning and growing.

Today we bless students, teachers, staff, and the backpacks they carry.

With grateful hearts, we offer ourselves to God’s work in the world.

Let us worship the God who makes all things new.

We will be led by the Holy Spirit, restful hearts, and renewed minds. Amen!

Opening Prayer (Unison)

Holy God, You are the source of wisdom, curiosity, and discovery. As a new school year begins, pour out your blessing on students of every age, teachers of every subject, and staff who support learning in countless ways. Calm anxious hearts, strengthen tired ones, and fill each backpack with your love and protection. Guide us so that our learning becomes service, our growth becomes compassion, and our days become opportunities to shine with Christ’s light. Amen.

Scripture

- Proverbs 3:5–6
- Colossians 3:12–17

Litany for the Blessing of the Backpacks (Responsively)

Students, will you bring your backpacks forward or lift them where you are.

God goes with you!

These backpacks carry books, pencils, tablets, assignments, hopes, and worries.

May God bless what they carry and the hearts that carry them.

For students beginning something new – new schools, new grades, new teachers—

God is with you.

For students returning to familiar places and familiar faces—

God is with you.

For teachers, aides, administrators, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians, and all who serve in education—

God is with you.

For families who support, encourage, and guide—

God is with you.

For moments of joy and moments of challenge, for friendships and frustrations, for learning that stretches the mind and shapes the heart—

God is with you. Amen!

Congregational Commitment (Responsively)

Leader: Church, will you surround these students and educators with love, prayer, and support throughout the year?

People: We will. With God's help, we will encourage, pray for, and walk alongside them.

Pastoral Blessing of the Backpacks

(Students are invited to hold their backpacks upwards.)

Gracious God, Bless these backpacks and the students who carry them. Make them strong for the journey ahead— not just physically, but spiritually. When they feel overwhelmed, steady them. When they feel anxious, calm them. When they feel joyful, celebrate with them. When they feel lonely, remind them they are never alone. Bless every teacher, staff member, and school worker with patience, wisdom, and compassion. Let this year be filled with learning, growth, kindness, and courage. And may each student carry your love into every classroom, so that their lives shine with the light of Christ. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**