

**Back to School Blessings
September 2020
First Congregational Church, UCC
Wolfeboro, NH
The Rev. Gina M. Finocchiaro**

Blessings for Students

O Holy God, it is such a strange and new time. Usually, we are blessing backpacks— zippers and lunchboxes, buses and playgrounds. This year we open the school year in many different ways. Some of us will go back to physical classrooms and desks— some days of the weeks. Some of us will open the year from familiar kitchen tables and home study spaces.

Thank you, God, for new opportunities to learn and grow whether it be in an actual classroom, a virtual classroom, or from our homes.

Help us to open our hearts and minds to new ideas, new friends and leaders, and new ways of learning.
Show us how to seek joy in all things.

When things don't go as planned, help us rejoice in the newness. When we have technical difficulties, help us rejoice in simple things like books and crayons. When we feel lonely or isolated, remind us that you are by our side

As we begin to explore the unknown of this school year, let us rejoice with new friends, in new ways of learning, in knowing that you are with us through it all.

God of joy and light, pour out your blessing upon these students. Bless their backpacks, Chromebooks and

computers, virtual classrooms, school buildings, and all preparations that help build a strong and safe year for everyone.

Bless the masks that we wear— physical or emotional— they help to protect us. May they never be lost, may their straps never break, may we wear them as blessing— for the care you teach us to have for one another, and for ourselves.

Help us to remember to wash our hands well, continue carrying the excitement that we have to see our friends and to learn new things.

Keep us healthy and strong!

Blessings for Parents

This school year opens asking a lot of you— whether to be parent and home-school maven, working from home, or balancing care options so you can be essential and employed somewhere else. You must be nimble and trusting, brave and vigilant— as if parenting wasn't hard enough already!!

Know that you have a community at the ready to help however we can. To bless you with endurance and patience, to hold you in prayer and blessing, to catch your anxious words and short-tempered moments, to be creative and help dream up solutions in impossible times.

When you are worried and wary, may God help you to be gentle with yourselves. To take a moment for the peace that passes all understanding.

Blessings for Teachers

O Holy God, we are a mix of excited and anxious. Some of us eagerly awaiting seeing students in the flesh again. Some of us fearful and so worried about what is being asked, required and expected of us. To re-learn how to teach in new frontiers, to provide our expertise of kindness, wisdom, humor and instruction from behind masks and face-shields, computer cameras, and at a distant. It feels like too much.

Especially when many of us are both teachers and parents, navigating worries and planning from multiple sides— cautious about how one misstep might affect the other.

Dwell richly and deeply in us— helping us to find grounding and peace in you. Helping us to remember and tap into the joy that carried us into this work from the start. Propelled by the eagerness of growing minds, and sweet, tender hearts.

Holy God, be with our teachers and administrators as they guide us into the new school year. Give them the tools and energy to create engaging ways for all of us to learn and grow. Help them to do impossible things— attending to safety and wellbeing, while also doing what is best for our families and students.

Blessings for the Rest of Us

Sometimes, we think if we are not students or teachers then we are not in need of blessings! Not so, or not so this year. We all have to be in this together!

We have to be strong in thoughtfulness and care, in buoying up our students, families, teachers and administrators.

We need to pray for them, care for them, be part of the solution to keep us healthy, calm and

May each of you be a blessing and light in your new year! Go and light up the world!

Amen.