

BACKPACK BLESSINGS

This blessing was shared at Calvary Lutheran Church, Grand Forks, as a way of celebrating and blessing the beginning of a new school year. At the close of the service, apples were given to all the Sunday School staff in the narthex and a "chex-mix" snack was given to all the children. It was a wonderful way to mark the beginning of the school year.

Blessing of the Backpacks

During the summer of 2002, Diane R, our shared ministry coordinator, brought an article from The Lutheran to our attention. This article dealt with ritual in everyday life and the front page picture was of a pastor blessing backpacks. A backpack blessing seemed like a wonderful way to bless part of our everyday lives, to connect Sunday and the rest of the week, and to lift up gifts and vocation. We decided to have a "blessing of the backpacks" on the Sunday before school started. This was also to be a blessing of the many students, teachers, school administrators, and other school workers in our congregation.

The backpack blessing was lifted up in the announcements for several weeks beforehand so that all the kids would be ready with their backpacks on that Sunday. On the blessing Sunday LOTS of kids showed up with their backpacks, full of excitement. During the children's time in worship the kids were invited to come up front with their backpacks. The kids' time message dealt with vocation (please see attached). We then divided the kids into three groups and each pastor gathered with one of the little groups and laid hands on each backpack and its owner, offering a prayer (also attached). We then commissioned school professionals and all worshipers to support and encourage our children.

It was a Sunday of excitement, joy, and blessings!

BACKPACK BLESSINGS

Sunday, August 25th

August is here! For many families that means school is just around the corner! Shopping for school supplies, books, and fall clothes becomes a part of everyone's schedule. Here at Calvary, on Sunday, August 25, we want to celebrate and bless the beginning of another school year.

Students, preschool through adult, bring your backpacks or lunch boxes to worship services at 9:00 or 10:30. The services will lift up children and students of all ages, dedicating them to God's glory as we begin a new school year.

Teachers, aides, principals, administrators, secretaries, cooks, librarians, janitors, and bus drivers...come to church to be blessed, affirmed in your vocation, and encouraged as you serve children and families in your daily work!

Join us for this Celebration Sunday! Everyone is encouraged to bring school supplies to church also. School kits will be assembled for Lutheran World Relief and shipped around the globe to children in October.

Blessing of Backpacks

Kids' Time

When does school start? How many of you are excited? Are any of you a little scared? Why do you have to go to school?

God gives all of us jobs; things to do that help us to serve God in the world. This is called our vocation. You have a vocation, and one of your vocations right now is to go to school. You can serve God by going to school and learning about God's world, by being with other people, by being loving toward others. And you learn things you need to know for whatever vocation you might have later in life. And you learn things you need to know for whatever vocation you might have later in life. And you're not just learners. You are teachers; kids have lots of stuff to teach grown-ups about God. You can teach us about faith and love. We need you in school, and we need you here with us at church. So now we want to say a special prayer for you, asking God's blessings as you get ready to start your vocation of being in school. Listen to this story from Matthew's book in the Bible, "Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."

God, bless this bag and the child who will use it. Let him/her not be scared, be with him/her as he/she learns and grows this year. Show him/her how to serve you and help him/her to teach us all about your love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Have all school workers stand:

Read Romans 12:4-8. The school system that teaches children and helps them to live out their vocation requires a body of people with different gifts. We bless you now as you begin your vocation of helping children. Let us pray, "Lord God, we ask your blessings on these women and men who serve you in so many different ways. We pray that you would give them patience, wisdom, and a sense of humor. Use them to show children your love and to guide children as they grow in the body of Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Have everyone stand:

We all are called to support, encourage, and pray for the children who are members of the fellowship we all share with Christ Jesus. We are all called to be teachers and learners with children; we are to teach them about God's love, and also to learn from what children have to teach us. We bless you now as you support these children. Let

us pray. "Lord God, bless all the people you have gathered here today. Especially bless them as they support, protect, and encourage the children among us. May they, with the children, be both teachers and learners. In Christ's name we pray. Amen."