

Blessing for a New School Year and Prayer during the Wildfires of 2020
August 23, 2020
Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento

Blessing for a New School Year

So many of the people we know and love are starting a new school year. For anybody connected with education, this year of school is beginning like none other, filled with stress and uncertainty. It is a time of challenge for so many among us. That is why I will lead us in a blessing in a few moments.

First, we ask you to post in the chat box your own wish or prayer on the start of this new school year. Post a hope or an intention you would like to make known. It could be a wish for your own experience or a way you want to be present in this school year, or a wish for others. Just post who and what you are holding in your heart, so everyone can see it and send our good wishes. We will do this for the next minute. If you don't have something to post but you would like to read it, all you need to do is click on the chat icon, and then all our postings will be visible to you.

We also ask you to get one of the devices that you are using for school this year—it could be the device by which you are participating in this service. But if you use a Chromebook, smart phone, laptop or other device for school, bring it near to you now. Maybe you are so grateful to be able to rely on a paper notebook and pencil, a pocket folder, or a protractor for geometry. Whatever it might be, just have it nearby.

When I recite each part of this blessing, I will conclude by saying...

To you: we send our blessings and our love. When I say *to you*, please join me with the words *we send our blessings and our love*.

In this time of pandemic, because of the need for distance learning, many people this year are learning, teaching and working with the help of electronic devices much of the time. We use them for school now in addition to using the other tools and school supplies we know and love.

So now let us give thanks for electronic devices which help us teach, learn, connect, and communicate when school can't happen in person.

Let us give thanks, also, for the reliable tools of pen and paper, crayons and markers, rulers, three-ring binders, and books.

Yet we know these are merely tools. They cannot replace the experience of having people around us in a classroom, the cafeteria or the school bus.

In these times, we long for one another's presence. We miss our friends, new and old ones. To all who are grieving these losses, *to you: we send our blessings and our love*.

To our children in Kindergarten and elementary school, our youth in middle school and high school, and our students in college, we want you to be safe and happy, to relax, learn and have fun as much as possible. We want you to know we are cheering you on! *To you: we send our blessings and our love*.

If you are the parents or the family of one or more students this year, we know that much is being demanded of you. We bless you with courage and patience, so that you can take it one day at a time, one moment at a time, and one breath at a time. *To you: we send our blessings and our love*.

To our teachers, classroom aides, therapists and support staff members, we know that much is being demanded of you as well. We bless you with endurance and with an assurance that you are making a difference. *To you: we send our blessings and our love*.

These are times of stress and uncertainty for everyone. May the tension of these times be broken by laughter as well as by tears. May the tedium of each day be broken by moments of grace, discovery, and new connections. May we remember, in these days, to reach out. May we remember, in these days, that we are not alone.

So, in concluding prayer of blessing, to everyone, we say: *To you: we send our blessings and our love.* Amen.

Prayer during the Wildfires of 2020

Please remain with me a few moments more in the spirit of prayer, as we try to stretch our hearts a lot more to consider the wildfires in California.

Will you pray with me? Spirit of Life, help us widen our embrace of compassion as we bear witness to the disasters now taking place in this region. So many dangerous fires are causing the loss of forest habitats and creatures, the loss of property and livelihoods. Many Californians are grieving the losses of homes and businesses, the ruin of beloved state parks and vacation spots, the desolation and scarring of the hillsides. It is heartbreaking, and it is frightening. Many people have evacuated their homes and others await instructions. We pray for their safety. Among us are those providing a place in their homes for uprooted people in this time of crisis. We extend our thanks for their kind hospitality. Some people have been through dangerous fires before and thus are having a recurrence of anxiety, and some people have health problems which are made worse by the polluted; let us extend our prayers for safety and healing for them all. Firefighters now face an overwhelming task; let us extend our thanks for their courage, and let us pray for their safety and their success.

Spirit of Life, when it seems almost too much to bear, renew us with courage. Recommit us to love—extending love and kindness, and reaching out for help when we need it. Remind us that we are not alone. Lead us into the days ahead, remembering to take it one day at a time, one moment at a time and one breath at a time. So may it be, Amen.