



August 27, 2017 – 12th Sunday after Pentecost (A): Backpack Blessings

As the summer winds down and the school year begins, Episcopal congregations are blessing backpacks, gathering school supplies, and enjoying other activities that bring us back together.

At the Church of the Heavenly Rest in New York, Diocese of New York, the congregation has partnered with Harlem Grown, an innovative urban farming organization, to enhance the lives of young people through hands-on food education and mentorship. Parishioners have regularly worked with the staff and children of the organization on a variety of projects, leading to strong relationships and the promise of nourishment in body, mind, and soul. Heavenly Rest has committed to raising funds for 45 brand new backpacks filled with school supplies for students; in an innovative twist, this project will be accomplished online through an Amazon wish list and bulk purchases. Anne-Marie Witchger, the parish's Outreach Program Coordinator, notes that the congregation is grateful to partner with such an inspiring and impactful organization, and to be able to offer concrete support to young people in the city.



*Christ Episcopal Church, East Norwalk,
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St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Austin, Diocese of Texas, will be hosting a series of events over a Sunday morning to bring the congregation together to build up their community and support their students. The church invited not only their parishioners, but also educators and families from their day school, to come to a joint service that incorporates both their family-centered and more traditional worship. During the service, which has been simultaneously described as both chaotic and amazing, children will come forward to have their backpacks blessed for the school year ahead. At the announcements, the parish's family and children's minister, youth minister, and children's choir minister, along with the head of the day school, will address the congregation, telling them about the year's upcoming events and inviting them to become more fully connected with the community. Following the service, there will be a reception on the playground to help people meet and get to know each other. St. Matthew's hopes that the events of this day will serve to build up their communities, harnessing the day's energy to support the school and parish members in these and other events in their common life.

This year, the Episcopal Church is compiling resources from and for backpack blessings and school partnerships. Visit <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/backpack-blessings> to access these resources, which include blog posts, blessings, customizable images, and much more. While you're there, don't forget to share your photos and story with the wider Church here: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/form/photo-submissions>.

Collect for Schools and Colleges

O Eternal God, bless all schools, colleges, and universities [and especially _____], that they may be lively centers for sound learning, new discovery, and the pursuit of wisdom; and grant that those who teach and those who learn may find you to be the source of all truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.