

## Liturgy for the Beginning of the School Year

UWorship, Volume 2

August, 2024

### Call to Worship

Here we are

#### **Bursting at the seams**

Our calendars our full of assignments, meetings, papers, and due dates

#### **Our moments are full of friends and family and everything in between**

In this space, let us take a moment, amidst the buzz of the world

#### **Let us pause, breathe, and be here.**

Let us be in this space, open, ready, to breathe in your grace

**Come, Let us worship God.**

### Call to Confession

Paver of the way, You call us to trust in Your Word, in Your way, and in Your path yet many times we stray from Your call and think we know the way better. Let us come together now and confess the ways in which we wander from Your path.

### Prayer of Confession

God of the rough waters,

#### **You call us to lift up one another yet all too often we end up tearing others down**

You lift us up through our mistakes and missteps

#### **Yet we tend to focus on where we fail and define ourselves from our shortcomings**

You Love us not despite but regardless

#### **Help us see each other and ourselves as people instead of only accomplishments. That there is grace enough for all of us.**

We strive to live as You teach us, leading with love, grace, forgiveness, and acceptance.

**In Your name we pray, Amen.**

### Assurance of Grace/Passing the Peace

What a gift to know that a loving God will always love us, no matter what. With this news, may we take a deep breath, remember we are forgiven and remember we have work to do.

Inspired by that work, may we pass the peace to one another.

### Scripture/Sermon ideas

- Jeremiah 32:36-41 (Trusting God in the unknown.) *Jeremiah knows that the people are being scattered and suffering under the Babylonian occupation, however he reminds the people that God will gather them back. God is not abandoning them. Similarly, even*

*when the semester feels overwhelming, like they are in a foreign land, God is beside them, and will continue to journey with them in all things.*

- *Philippians 4:4-6 (Peace in times of anxiety and stress.) What we know about God is that God is bigger than our stressful overwhelming thoughts. The school year is infused with overwhelming anxiety, but this scripture reminds us that God's peace surpasses understanding.*

### **Prayers of the People**

God of endless compassion, we don't understand how You could love people who make so many mistakes. We don't understand why You believe in the good of humans when we see so much evil. We don't understand, but You don't ask us to understand. You ask us to love our neighbor, you ask us to share a meal, you ask us to stand with the excluded. Holy God we ask for Your help as we take small steps toward Your image. We ask for forgiveness when we make mistakes, and we stand in gratitude for Your patience and love.

God, our parent, your children are hurting. Around the world, we see conflict that is quantified by death, we echo the voices that have been silenced by those in power, and we feel the gravity of decisions being made in our government right now. Please be with all those hurting, and help us be a healing presence for the world.

God of wondrous faith, we are in awe of the ways you move in the world and the faith you have in us. When we feel lost and far from home, You meet us in the darkness with accepting love. Show us how to express this love to ourselves and to others feeling lost around us. May we follow this love that was expressed by your son, Jesus who also taught us to pray saying...  
*(Use the version of the Lord's Prayer that fits your community.)*

### **Litany for the New Semester**      *Psalm 23*

As we start a new semester  
Full of uncertainties, unknowns, and already infused with stress

**God our good shepherd**

**We have everything we need**

As we walk through quads, get lost looking for class  
Oversleep and run late

**You lead us to rest in grassy meadows and restful waters**

We declare majors, take on minors, balance class credits  
Internships, jobs, bills, things we feel prepared for  
And things we have no idea how to handle

**You guide us, and accompany us in all things**

When things fall apart, when we encounter sickness, a failed exam, unexpected news,  
overwhelming assignments

When things are beyond words or understanding

**When we walk through the valley, when things feel lost  
We are not afraid because you are with us.**

You never leave us alone, and there is no amount of stress that can separate us from you  
**You lead us and guide us  
You make us feel secure**

We give thanks for the community that we have found  
The friends we bring with us and the ones we are currently building  
The safe places to land, and the encouraging words that come unexpectedly but lift us up  
**You revive our spirits  
Our cups brim with blessings**

This new beginning, this new semester is full of possibility  
There is life to be lived and love to be found  
We give thanks for the privilege to be here, the gift to learn  
And the challenge to ask questions and grow  
**Your beauty and love chase after me  
Every day of my life**

We are not alone, we have everything we need to start this new semester  
We are beloved, made in your image  
Children of God  
**We are at home in the house of God forever. Amen.**

### **Blessing of the Backpacks**

One way to begin the school year is to offer a blessing of their backpacks, the thing they carry with them to class every day. You can have these printed on cards and laminated or have actual keychains made.

*May your backpack always be light.  
May your lunch always be your favorite.  
May it never rain when you are walking to class.  
And may God bless you as you learn*

### **Sending**      College Student Beatitudes

Blessed are the college students  
In brick buildings and behind computer screens  
Those with a trust funds and those on financial aid  
Those in their first year, those finishing a fifth, and all the spaces in-between,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the sports superfans and those who don't know the difference between a football and a baseball,  
For they will both find a place here.

Blessed are the procrastinators and the planners,  
For God willing the work will get done.

Blessed are the loud and boisterous and the calm and contemplative,  
For they will all be heard.

Blessed are those who feel pressure to define a major before they're ready, and those who see their calling clearly,  
For they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who are overworked, overscheduled, and overwhelmed,  
For they will find rest.

Blessed are those who feel lonely and isolated,  
For they will be comforted by the living body of Christ.

Blessed are the survivors,  
For their stories will be heard and believed.

Blessed are those who find affirmation in the Church and those who have been harmed by it,  
For they will find peace.

Blessed are those whose truest identity is unwelcome in their family of origin  
For they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those living with mental illness or instability  
For they will see God, and a plan for moving forward.

Blessed are those in the age of imposter syndrome, feeling crushed by filters, feedback, and followers,  
For they are created in the image of God.

Blessed are those who invite one another into this family of faith  
And those who are brave enough to show up.

Blessed are the hopeful,  
the hopeless,  
the forgotten,  
the found,  
the closeted,  
the open,

the meek,  
the proud,  
the courageous,  
And the coping.

Blessed are those working to make the world a better place, and those who aren't sure where to start.

Blessed are *you* in all times, in all places, exactly as you are  
For yours is the kingdom of heaven

\*[UWorship Volume 2](#) is a resource provided to campus leaders throughout the UKirk Network by the [Presbyterian Mission Agency Office of Christian Formation](#). The liturgy was written by Rev. Rachel Penmore, John Golden, Rev. Allison Wehrung, and Rev. Nathan Wheeler.