

Growth and Stewardship Ideas: Back to School Backpacks and Beyond, into Community

How might prayers and helping hands support your neighbourhood schools? As the new school year soon begins, another way of strengthening invitation is accepting God's invitation to go out, build relationships, notice our neighbours, and participate in the life of our communities. Hope begins with our prayers, and might start with a backpack, a breakfast, a book, or one caring person willing to show up. Opportunities can go beyond collecting things. Could members of your community of faith become reading buddies, math mentors, breakfast program volunteers, homework helpers, or encouraging adults who regularly show up for children and families?

Consider reaching out to a local school, family resource centre, food bank, community organization, or other neighbourhood partner and asking them directly: "What would be most helpful right now?" The answer may be school supplies, backpacks, personal hygiene products, breakfast or lunch support, warm clothing for the months ahead, or volunteers willing to share their time. Are after school opportunities a possibility, or a tutoring/mentoring program. If you have a university, college or post-secondary institution, contact them to learn what new students need. It might be a meal, a mentor, a navigator, or a listening ear and a hug that provides a sense of connection and value.

Your local partners will know what is needed and what volunteer opportunities are appropriate. Start small. Make one phone call. Ask one question. Listen carefully. Then choose one practical response that fits the gifts and capacity of your community of faith.

Contact your growth and stewardship animators in UCC-East Sharon Ballantyne sballantyne@united-church.ca and Rob Shearer rshearer@united-church.ca

This Week's Stewardship Second

Let love be genuine! Show hospitality, rejoice and grieve with others, and share generously as part of your call to live in Christian community.