

*Praying  
with Words*

**As we prepare for decisions  
on school this fall.**

**A Prayer from Youth Ministry Leaders of the NE MN Synod, ELCA...**

We, like you, care deeply about children, youth and families, schools and school staff. We recognize the many different perspectives to what it means to return to school this fall. We come from different situations, with diverse health stories, financial realities and other circumstances that impact our response to COVID-19.

Still – we gather as one in Christ, in prayer to a loving and listening God. We offer this prayer as our communities prepare for and respond to decisions about re-opening schools this fall.

***Gracious God,***

*We pray for **students**...*

- We pray for students who are eager to return and those who are anxious about returning.
- We pray for students who have lost so much already - friendships, activities, academics – and fear of what might be lost this year.
- We pray for students and families with serious and scary health conditions, who fear their classmates won't take that seriously.
- We pray for the more vulnerable youth populations in our schools:
  - Students in transitional housing, foster care, or treatment programs where school is one of the major constants in their life...
  - Students experiencing homelessness or other instability where school provides a safe place to be...
  - Students experiencing food insecurity who greatly value the meals at school...
  - Students experiencing forms of violence or discrimination who seek a safe place at school...
  - Students experiencing mental health conditions, and the impact this pandemic has had on their wellness and care.

*We pray for the **leadership** in charge of making these very difficult decisions...*

- We pray for school administration on all levels – federal, state and local.
- We grieve that there isn't one easy "right" answer that will address all concerns. And we grieve that you need to make a decision anyway.
- We pray for wisdom, guidance, peace, and grace.
- We pray for you in this moment, and we pray for you in the days and weeks to come. We know that so much could still change.

### *We pray for all the **staff** in our schools...*

- We pray for teachers, paraprofessionals, custodial staff, office administrators, food service staff, school nurses and health professionals, counselors, social workers, transportation providers, school police officers, administration, maintenance staff, therapists, school board members, principals, superintendents...
- There are so many different people who care for our young people, and whose jobs have changed because of Covid-19. We can only imagine the stress and worry and burdens you are carrying now.
- Good and gracious God, we pray over and over, again and again, for peace, for wisdom, for strength, for courage. You, Lord, know exactly what each staff person needs right now. Wrap them in your love and care – today, in this moment, and in all the days and weeks and months ahead.

### *We pray for **families**...*

- We pray for parents and caregivers who are afraid to send their children to school this fall. We pray for parents and caregivers who are afraid of what might happen if they don't send their children to school. We pray for parents and caregivers who are afraid of both. I think we are all afraid of both.
- We pray for families who are making their own big decisions about this fall and school year. Families who wrestle and worry with things like:
  - What to do about childcare...
  - What to do about work...
  - Whether to homeschool, switch schools, or hold children back...
  - How to care for children and aging family members at the same time...
- We pray for families wrestling with financial realities and insecurities, who are just barely holding on to a financial edge.
- These are impossible choices in an impossible time. We pray for families who are forced to make these decisions when there is still so much unknown. We pray for families who don't have any other options or enough choices.
- We pray for wisdom and guidance and peace...
  - We pray for peace when spouses, co-parents, and caregivers don't agree on these big decisions...
  - We pray for grandparents and dear loved ones who know that decisions about school and childcare will impact their ability to safely gather again...
  - We pray for compassion when friends and family don't feel comfortable making the same choices as us – and the confusion and frustration and harm that can cause.
- We pray for enduring peace on this rollercoaster.
- We pray for families who really need normalcy, and are frustrated being home all the time.
- We pray for families when tensions run high.
- Teach us to be kind to ourselves, to have compassion and grace for ourselves, not to judge ourselves too harshly.
- Teach us to be kind to each other, to have compassion and grace for each other, and not to judge each other so harshly.

God help us. Comfort us. Guide us. We have so many questions and such limited understanding. We have so many worries and so many prayers. Bless us and hold us as we hold the hands of our children and youth. God walk with us, as we walk with these families. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.