

BACK TO SCHOOL
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A very dear member of the church I serve, who is also a wonderful and trusted friend, laughs at the idea that prayer has been taken out of schools. A strong Christian, she teaches at a public school in Henry County, and she says each student, teacher, and administrator is covered by prayer every single day. Before she goes inside her school every morning, she sits in her car and prays. She prays off and on all day. She prays with others in her school when the opportunity arises. They're all praying, too. Everyone who knows her knows she's a Christian and deeply involved in her church. She says she feels God's presence every day in her school and sees him in the faces of the children she teaches.

God can be sneaky when he needs to be. There may not be an official prayer time every morning, but my friend and others like her carry the Spirit within them. Where they go, the Spirit goes.

The gospel of John opens with an announcement of the Word – Jesus Christ, who has been with God from the beginning and is God himself. Part of the passage reads, "What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

This Sunday morning in worship, we'll gather all the students, teachers, and administrators who will be returning full time to school on August 5th. We'll hold their hands, pray for them, encourage them, and love them. There are many, and this will take a while. But it's important.

The gospel doesn't say that the darkness will just magically disappear. It says that no matter what, however, it won't overcome the light. We send our kids and faculty members out into the schools and the world as lights that shine in the darkness. We pray that the Spirit will fill them with joy and strength and wisdom. We pray that the light of God's Spirit will be seen and felt in their classrooms, the cafeteria, in every room of their school. We pray that their faith and courage will not only stay strong, but grow deeper. And we pray for their ongoing protection, day in and day out. There's a lot of darkness out there.

But we have the truth of God's Word – no matter what, the darkness has not and will not overcome the light. And whether it's official or not, the light is in our schools, our places of work, our homes, and everywhere. Where we go, the Spirit goes. Pray for the children, the schools, and for yourself – that the light of God that's within each of us would make a difference in the world.