

Many of the summer activities are coming to a close and school is just around the corner. For some of us, we just finished the last school year. This is technically my 'summer vacation'. As I am writing this, camps are winding down. Our youth are in Independence at IYF and traveling to Graceland University on Saturday for the beginning of SPEC. It has been a memorable summer.

During this break, I find myself gearing up for the new school year. There is excitement and anticipation as I find myself making the numerous preparations for that "First Day" and for the entire school year. It is a refreshing time. Each new school year brings many new opportunities, new perspectives, new challenges, new staff members and new students. Reconnecting with people is thrilling and meeting new people is exciting. It is a time where I am eager to see which students and staff members are returning to school and who has moved on.

Working in schools offers blessings of community. It brings a new group of people to work together, learn together and be together. With it comes many new opportunities, new perspectives, new challenges and a new circle of peers. As I am preparing for that first staff meeting, some aspects I encounter are: having a meaningful meeting that will bring 40+ people from 6 different disciplines and ranging in ages from the early 20's to the late 60's with various years of experience working in the schools. What better time than this to experience the importance of 'blessings of community' and incorporate it into the planning.

There is also the realization that for some, this time of the year also comes with sadness and despair. Some families are faced with unfulfilled desires when there aren't the resources available to purchase the needed supplies or desired new clothes. Yet, they are relieved to return so they can receive the needed meals that are provided since many don't have food at home. Many students receive a free breakfast and lunch as well as food for the weekends. With school beginning, many have their needed meals.

How can we help to Abolish Poverty and End Suffering? How will we respond to the needs that are amongst us, within our neighborhoods and our own communities? How will we share our own resources? A statement I read recently has touched me: "Maybe we can be the light at the end of the tunnel for someone else."

God, where will your Spirit lead today? Help me be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant me courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen.

Barb