



It's mid-August, and we are eager to draw every last bit of joy out of an Upstate New York summer. At the same time, God opens up many opportunities for exciting and productive ministry in a local church. Here are some random ideas for congregations:

1. Anticipate the beginning of the school year –

-Truth be known, whatever the calendar says, the first week in September is New Years' Day for most of our families. It is then that the priorities are set for the year – what activities will the kids be taking part in? how will the rest of the family schedule settle in around the school routine? what new supplies, clothes, resources will be needed?

What support can congregations give?

- School supplies and clothing for those who need them.
- Expressions of appreciation for educators as they begin another school year –
  - a prayer card to teachers;
  - a supportive sign in front of the church building;
- Making contact with school nurses and counsellors to help stock their supply closets for emergency needs – clothing; lice kits; first aid supplies, etc

2. Anticipate fresh energy for participation –

-Even individuals not directly connected with school can return from summer vacation with new energy. It's time to get back into a routine, maybe incorporate some fresh ideas – sign up for a class; branch out in some way; help the deeper spiritual awareness of the summer last.

What can congregations do?

- Launch a new spiritual growth or study group.
- Have a 'Back From Summer' event, with special invitations to the community
- Put up a Remembering Summer bulletin board, with pictures from members of their favorite summer place – the camp, the hiking trail, the garden, the front porch – where they encountered God.

3. Be renewed and give thanks –

-Whatever late summer planning may need to take place, remember to schedule (or just let happen) plenty of time to take in the beauty of this special part of the world. Let the bounty and grace of the Creator fill your spiritual cup. Enjoy your loved ones, and be an open vessel to God's generosity.

God is good – all the time.

Jesus Christ has given love and life for you.

The Holy Spirit is moving and powerful.

You and I are in this place here and now – invited to share Good News and hope – and that is a good and blessed gift. Praise God!

***In Christ, Everett***