

Volunteering at Metcalfe Elementary



Before I talk about Metcalfe specifically, I want to take this opportunity to sing your praises. Upon joining First United Methodist Church of Gainesville, I felt a real difference in this church community when compared to my previous experiences. This church doesn't just *talk* about our community and what we think it needs, or where it's going wrong. You work to provide the services you hope can best meet those needs. You help. You act. There is a card in the pew in front of you. It asks for your information, if you have any prayer requests, and if you would like to help in any specific areas of our ministry. From the first entrance into this church, it creates a "Call to Action." Faith and Works (I still think of the forks you gave out, Beth.) This church has created a sense of service in me that I have never felt before. So, thank you for that. It is because of you, that I was motivated to volunteer at Metcalfe Elementary last year, and it was a very rewarding experience.

When I first heard the Principal of Metcalfe come to our church 2 years ago. I felt a strong sense that this was an area in which I could help. At the time, I didn't have a flexible work environment, so I couldn't volunteer weekly at the school. However, I still helped with school supplies and with monetary donations. Last year was different. I have a wonderful position that allows flexibility in work hours, and I felt comfortable taking 1 hour out of my work week to be a classroom volunteer. I worked in Mr. James's 4th grade class every Monday from 9:30-10:30am. Working in this class gave me such an appreciation for Mr. James as an educator. His advice for me was, "Just show them love. That's what they really need." His students ranged in skills from 1st grade reading levels to 6th grade reading levels. Can you imagine the skill it takes as a teacher to navigate that wide range of need? This is where the volunteers come in. I helped those who struggled with reading comprehension, while he was able to focus on those students who would read and finish quickly. This way, I was able to help students understand the material in time for the class



discussion. It put everyone on a more even playing field. It was a wonderfully rewarding experience to see the students engage with and understand the material. I hope to volunteer once again with these students.

Now, I can't talk about my experience with Metcalfe, without once again being so grateful to all of you. My church. I'm so immensely proud to be a member of this congregation. One day, as I was leaving Mr. James' class, he quickly slipped me a small stack of fundraising sheets for the Safety Patrol. The school had been struggling to come up with the funds to send all of the students on a special educational field trip to Washington DC. His simple request was to put these out at our church and, hopefully, a couple of you would pick one up and donate \$5 or \$10. He told me his hope was for \$50 extra dollars. I cannot express the look of wonder on his face when we gave him \$5000. I'm crying as I'm writing this. You are the most amazing people. You made so many children and families happy last year.



I hope that some of you will find time to volunteer at the school, either once again, or for the first time this year. It was an incredible experience that I plan on repeating. However, I know that if you cannot, you will always be willing to do what you can for them. Even as I write this on Wednesday, I know that come Sunday morning, as you read this, there will be bags and bags of school supplies on the altar. In addition to the generous gifts of time, money, and supplies, I ask that you pray for them. Pray for the children, their families, the teachers, the teacher's aides, the staff, and the administration. Pray that our relationship with Metcalfe continues to be a blessing for them and for us. It has been such a blessing for me personally, and I thank you so much for that.

With gratitude,
Erin Bruce

