



Promoting Your Children's Sabbath: Ideas for All Faiths

Your Children's Sabbath will have the greatest impact if it is effectively promoted and publicized both within your place of worship and to the broader public. This chapter has suggestions and resources for:

- Spreading the Word in Your Place of Worship
- Reaching Out to the Community and Media
- Reproducible Resources: bulletin and newsletter inserts

Spreading the Word in Your Place of Worship

- ❑ **Bulletin Inserts:** Place the first bulletin insert in this section announcing the Children's Sabbath in your congregation's bulletin or newsletter approximately one month before the date. (The second bulletin insert is intended to be distributed on the Children's Sabbath.)
- ❑ **Newsletter:** Include other information in your congregation's newsletter. (Adapt the sample congregational newsletter article in this section or write your own.)
- ❑ **Posters:** Make posters announcing the Children's Sabbath and display them in the congregation's building. Involve the congregation's youths and children in making these posters.
- ❑ **Announcements:** Request time to make an announcement during the worship service one or two weeks before the observance.
- ❑ **Emails:** If your place of worship has an email list of members, get permission to send an email to the members reminding them of the upcoming Children's Sabbath.
- ❑ **Yard Sign:** Make a yard sign to place on the grounds in front of your place of worship, announcing the Children's Sabbath.
- ❑ **Letters:** Send the bulletin insert or a letter about the Children's Sabbath home with the children who participate in your place of worship's educational programs. After securing any needed permission to send a letter to the mailing list for your place of worship, write a letter describing the Children's Sabbath and encouraging members to join in the celebration on the designated weekend.
- ❑ **Website:** If your congregation has a website, put an announcement on the website.
- ❑ **Keep it up!** Don't forget to continue to focus attention on the Children's Sabbath and the needs and opportunities for response after the weekend itself. Use these same media channels to report on the congregation's response, announce the total items and money collected, share stories of children and families who were helped, and encourage continued action.

Sample Article for Congregation's Own Newsletter

[Name of Congregation] to Celebrate Children's Sabbath to Work for Equity and Justice in Education

On [date], [name of your congregation] will join with thousands of other congregations across the nation in the annual multi-faith National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® weekend sponsored by the non-profit, non-partisan Children's Defense Fund and supported by [*add the name of your denomination or religious tradition, if they have formally endorsed*], Catholic Charities U.S.A., the Islamic Society of North America, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., the National Spiritual Assembly of Bahá'ís in the U.S., the Sikh Council on Religion and Education, the Union for Reform Judaism, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, and more than 200 other religious organizations and denominations.

The 2011 Children's Sabbath, "*Justice, Justice Shall You Pursue: Answering God's Call to Protect Children*," will focus on the education achievement gap that leaves too many children, especially poor and minority children, reading and doing math below grade level, leading to lower rates of school completion. Educational attainment is the greatest predictor of future income. The best poverty-prevention strategy we have is ensuring high levels of school completion—supporting children to complete high school and to go on to complete a four-year college education.

Justice requires equitable and excellent education, especially for the most vulnerable children. When we work for excellent and equitable education, we not only protect children from current injustice but we protect their futures by putting them on the path to a promising and productive adulthood.

As people of faith we recognize the sacred responsibility to nurture and protect children and to work for the world God intends. On the Children's Sabbath, we will remember the children in struggling schools and difficult circumstances, we will reflect on the teachings of our faith that lead us to respond, and we will commit to putting our faith into action to help *all* children learn and succeed.

At [name of congregation], we will join in this united voice for children by [*describe the events, giving dates and times*]. This is [name of congregation]'s [number—e.g., first or tenth] time celebrating the Children's Sabbath. Leading the observance of Children's Sabbath here are [*names of several of those who will be involved*]. All are invited. This will be a good time to invite other families or children to visit our congregation. For more information or to find out how you can help, contact [*name and phone number of contact person in the congregation*].

Reaching Out to the Community and Media

- ❑ **Introduce the Children's Sabbath to clergy and interfaith associations**, civic groups, and other organizations that may be interested in supporting, attending, or publicizing your Children's Sabbath.
- ❑ **Mail a letter to civic, social, and religious organizations in your community** offering to speak about the Children's Sabbath at their meetings or gatherings. For example, you might contact the PTA, Lions Club, Rotary, interfaith associations, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and others. Invite them to participate in your congregation's Children's Sabbath or to plan their own Children's Sabbath observance.
- ❑ **Attend community events** such as school open houses, local health fairs, and parades to distribute information about the Children's Sabbath, with permission of event organizers.
- ❑ **Put up posters or flyers** on community bulletin boards and in other permissible locations in the community.
- ❑ **Remember the impact of an invitation and the influence of "word of mouth."** Encourage congregation members to invite friends, neighbors, and colleagues to the Children's Sabbath. People who have written off organized religion as irrelevant to them and their lives may be pleasantly surprised to find your place of worship working joyfully for justice to improve the lives of children in our nation.
- ❑ **Adapt the sample news release in this section and submit it to the religion page of your local newspaper and to area religious newspapers or newsletters**, including denominational publications as appropriate. Follow up with a telephone call to each.
- ❑ **Reach out to a newspaper columnist.** If you have any contacts who know a columnist for the local paper, solicit their help in pitching the Children's Sabbath to the columnist.
- ❑ **Contact your local radio station** to learn the requirements and formats for having your Children's Sabbath events publicized as a Public Service Announcement (PSA) or on its community calendar or community bulletin board. You may be asked to prepare a "live read" script—a brief (10 seconds) script giving the basic information.

For example:

"[Name of congregation] located at [cross streets or address] is planning a special Children's Sabbath celebration and events on [date] to focus on closing the education achievement gap. Today, more than 60 percent of 4th, 8th, and 12th grade students—and nearly 80 percent of Black and Hispanic children—are reading or doing math below grade level. On the Children's Sabbath, congregations of many faiths all across our nation are committing to work so that education is the engine of equality, not inequality, and every child is prepared for a promising, productive future. Through worship services, education programs, and activities [congregation] invites young and old to seek justice so that all children have the great education they need to succeed. For more information, call [name of congregation]."

Type it, double-spaced, with accurate names, times, and addresses. Be sure to include your name as a contact for the station, with daytime and evening phone numbers. Send it to the station at least two weeks in advance.

Promoting Your Children's Sabbath

- ❑ **Invite the local media—television, radio, and print—to attend and publicize the Children's Sabbath.** Tell them about aspects of the events that promise to be visually interesting and emotionally compelling. Point out that the Children's Sabbath is a way to focus attention on serious problems facing children and on positive ways to make a difference. Let them know about any well-known speakers who will be participating in your Children's Sabbath.
- ❑ **Arrange for a local spokesperson or an interfaith panel of speakers to participate on a radio or television talk show program** about an issue of concern for the children in your community.
- ❑ **If your community has a cable or public access television station, contact the station's producers to arrange an interview.** Check if they will list the Children's Sabbath on their billboard of local events.
- ❑ **Write a letter to the editor** about the education achievement gap and call for education to be the engine of equality, not inequality, so that every child is prepared for a productive, promising future. Offer the Children's Sabbath as a way to learn more and become involved. Watch the newspaper for articles about education, poverty, and children in general so that you can relate your letter to those articles and time it appropriately.

News Release for Local Media

One of the goals of the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths is to reach a wider, secular audience with a message about children's needs and the religious community's concern and commitment to meeting those needs. We encourage you to use the sample news release below as a model for explaining the Children's Sabbath to your local newspaper's religion or community news editor and as a means of generating a news story. If you know of other congregations in your community that will also be celebrating the Children's Sabbath, contact them about preparing a joint news release.

Here are steps to follow:

- 1) **Call your newspaper** to obtain the name of the religion writer or city editor. If you know someone who works for the newspaper or has contacts there, ask for his or her help in getting the news release into the right hands.
- 2) **Mail the news release** to the right person at the paper in early October, two to three weeks before your Children's Sabbath.
- 3) **Follow up with a telephone call a few days later.** Remember, the news media are looking to cover a newsworthy story, not to promote a particular event. In your communication with them, emphasize that the Children's Sabbath is about children's issues of concern to many people and is a practical and inspiring example of how people are taking action. Emphasize that your celebration is part of a growing national movement among religious congregations to improve the well-being of America's children. Suggest that reporters contact the Children's Defense Fund's Communications Department at (202) 628-8787 for background information and a national perspective to supplement your own.
- 4) **Send a letter of thanks to the reporter** if the paper does cover your story, with copies to superiors. Building and maintaining a good relationship with the religion writer or other reporter may help gain coverage of followup efforts developing from your Children's Sabbath and of the Children's Sabbath in subsequent years.
- 5) **Send a copy of any coverage you receive to the Religious Action Division of the Children's Defense Fund** to assist in further promotion of the Children's Sabbath. Send information about your Children's Sabbath to CDF, 25 E Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001 or email a description to religiousaction@childrensdefense.org.

Sample News Release for Community Newspapers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October [date], 2011

[YOUR CONGREGATION'S NAME] Joins the Children's Defense Fund in Multi-Faith National Observance of Children's Sabbath® Weekend

[Name of your town, state]— [Your congregation's name] will [*describe events planned, such as holding a special worship service or conducting service and advocacy activities*] on [*date and time*] that will focus on the closing the achievement gap in education that currently has children in poverty and children of color falling further and further behind, and ensuring that education becomes the engine of equality, not inequality. Level of educational achievement is the best predictor of future income; ensuring that every child gets a high quality education is the best poverty-prevention program we have.

[Your congregation's name] is one of thousands of churches, synagogues, mosques, Bahá'í communities, temples, and other places of worship around the nation celebrating the Children's Sabbath this weekend as part of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF)'s annual observance. The multi-faith weekend seeks to inspire congregations and religious organizations to work on behalf of children through prayer, service, and advocacy throughout the year.

According to organizers, the Children's Sabbath theme this year, "Justice, Justice Shall You Pursue: Answering God's Call to Protect Children" urges everyone—young and old—to use the resources, skills, and talents to help end poverty and set the next generation on a healthy, fair, safe, moral, and successful passage to adulthood.

Reports the Children's Defense Fund, "15.5 million children in America are poor, and two-thirds of poor children live in families in which at least one family member works. A disproportionate number are Black and Hispanic. Poor children lag behind their peers in many ways beyond income: They are less healthy, trail in emotional and intellectual development, and are less likely to graduate from high school. Poor children also are likely to become the poor parents of the future. Every year that we keep children in poverty costs our nation half a trillion dollars in lost productivity, poorer health and increased crime."

Marian Wright Edelman, CDF president, states, "Every child, regardless of the family's socioeconomic status, deserves a high quality education and we must make sure that our public schools provide it for all children. The best hope these children have of lifting themselves out of poverty is a quality education. But for far too long the most vulnerable children in America have been denied this chance. Inequities in educational funding, resources, and opportunities have systematically placed poor and minority children in low-performing schools with inadequate facilities and too many ineffective teachers," Edelman said. "The federal government should be the engine of equality, not the locomotive of inequality. With the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Congress has the opportunity to fundamentally transform American education and set it on the path towards equality and excellence for all children. The 112th Congress can and must save the day by enacting a bipartisan ESEA that strengthens the law's focus on accountability and includes incentives for states and districts to dramatically improve student learning."

[*Add a statement from a local religious leader or young person.*]

The multi-faith *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* weekend is sponsored by the non-profit, non-partisan Children's Defense Fund and supported by Catholic Charities U.S.A., the Islamic Society of North America, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., the National Spiritual Assembly of Bahá'ís in the U.S., the Sikh Council on Religion and Education, the Union for Reform Judaism, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, and more than 200 other religious organizations and denominations.

For more information about [*your congregation's name*]'s celebration of the Children's Sabbath, contact [*contact person's name, title, group affiliation, telephone number, and email address, if available*].

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Reproducible Resources

The following pages provide several resources that may be photocopied. No additional permission is needed.

Announcement Insert (page 8)

The first insert for your bulletin or newsletter is to announce to members of your congregation your plans to participate in the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* weekend. Distribute it about one month before your Children's Sabbath events to alert your members and build excitement and participation.

This insert makes two half-page size inserts per photocopy.

Photocopy page 8 and use those two copies of page 8. Using the one-sided to two-sided function on a photocopier, place those two copies of p. 8 in the copier to make two-sided copies on 8 ½" x 11" paper and cut down the middle to make two inserts per photocopy.

Children's Sabbath Service Insert (pages 9-10)

This is an insert that may be used on the day you celebrate the Children's Sabbath or thereafter. Insert it into your bulletin, if your place of worship uses one, or simply hand it out at an appropriate time, perhaps as people arrive or depart.

The second announcement insert makes one folded insert with four half-size pages. Here's how to make it: print out the pages with "The ABCs of How You Can Work..." and "Justice, Justice Shall You Pursue" at the top. Place them on the photocopier and make copies using the one-sided to two-sided function, so that you have two-sided copies. Fold each page in the middle for a four-page insert, with "Justice Shall You Pursue" at the top of the front page, "The Education Achievement Gap" at the top of the inside left page, "Ending Educational Inequity Protects Children's Futures" at the top of the inside right, and "The ABCs of How You Can Work" at the top of the back page.

Moments in America Insert and Each Day in America Insert

These two inserts may be distributed at any time to raise awareness and encourage a prayerful response and commitment to act. Each of these inserts makes two half-page size inserts per photocopy. Photocopy each back-to-back on 8 ½" x 11" paper and cut down the middle to make two inserts per copy.

Justice, Justice Shall You Pursue: Answering God's Call to Protect Children

We are joining places of worship of many religious traditions all across the country in the 20th annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths weekend.

This multi-faith event will unite religious congregations in shared concern for our nation's children, especially those who are falling into the education achievement gap, and in common commitment to ensure equitable, excellent education for every child.

Justice demands that every child have the opportunity for a good education. Helping all children achieve academically protects their future, putting them on the path to a productive and promising adulthood.

When? _____

Where? _____

Why? Because we don't have a moment to wait or a child to waste. Our faith calls us to nurture and protect children, especially those who are poor and most vulnerable.

Want to help? _____

Contact _____

DEAR LORD
BE GOOD TO ME
THE SEA IS SO
WIDE AND
MY BOAT IS
SO SMALL


Children's Defense Fund

Each second we live is a new and unique moment of the universe,

A moment that never was before and never will be again.

And what do we teach our children in school?

We teach them that two and two make four

And that Paris is the capital of France.

When will we also teach them what they are?

We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are?

You are a marvel. You are unique.

In all of the world there is no other child exactly like you.

In the millions of years that have passed, there has never been a child like you.

And look at your body- what a wonder it is!

Your legs, your arms, your cunning fingers, the way you move!

You may become a Shakespeare, a Michelangelo, a Beethoven.

You have the capacity for anything. Yes, you are a marvel.

And when you grow up, can you then harm another who is, like you, a marvel?

You must cherish one another

We must all work to make this world worthy of its children.

Pablo Casals

The ABCs of How You Can Work for Equitable, Excellent Education and Protect Children's Futures

Advocate:

- Communicate regularly with your legislators and urge them to lead on ensuring that education is the engine of equality, not inequality. Sign up for the Children's Defense Fund's legislative updates so you will be informed and equipped to act. www.childrensdefense.org

Be there:

- Volunteer as a tutor or mentor to a child who is falling below grade-level.
- It's hard for children to learn when they are hungry, homeless, or lack health care. Make sure families know about the benefits for which they are eligible, like the Earned Income Tax Credit, Supplemental Nutrition Program, and health coverage. Work with a community agency to spread the word.
- Learn more about the Freedom Schools Program and how you can support an existing program or help start a new one. Visit www.childrensdefense.org.

Call on God:

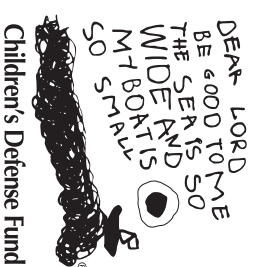
Pray for children who are falling into the education achievement gap. Pray that each of us will find ways to use our resources of time, skills, money, and political influence to assure that every child has the opportunity for a good education that puts them on the path to a promising and productive future. Pray that our leaders will show courage and compassion and make assuring a quality education for all children a priority.

Justice, Justice Shall You Pursue: Answering God's Call to Protect Children

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gavltnty hwrroh.

What's the matter, dummy? Can't you read it?

Imagine what it's like to be a child who cannot read at grade level, or who can't do math on grade level. Would you try to become invisible, keeping quiet in shame and embarrassment? Would you succumb to hopelessness and even despair? Would your frustration turn you off of school, or make you act out in anger? Would you become the clown to distract attention from your struggles? Would you drop out as soon as you could?



The Education Achievement Gap

Today in our nation, more than 60 percent of all fourth, eighth, and 12th graders are reading or doing math below grade level. More than 25 percent of all high school students drop out or do not graduate on time.

For minority students the results are far worse: Nearly 80 percent of Black and Hispanic children in fourth, eighth, and 12th grade are reading or doing math below grade level. Nearly 40 percent later drop out or do not graduate on time.

Many students who do graduate lack the skills necessary for college or entry-level jobs in civilian and military life.

Ending Educational Inequity Protects Children's Futures

Educational attainment is the greatest predictor of future income. The best poverty-prevention strategy we have is ensuring high levels of school completion—supporting children to complete high school and to go on to complete a four-year college education.

To get there, we can start by ensuring that the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act truly leaves no child behind. Congress will need to go beyond the President's Blueprint for Education and include provisions for education excellence for our most vulnerable children: children in concentrated poverty, children in need of full-day kindergarten, children at risk of dropping out or being pushed out of school, children in juvenile detention, and children in foster care. These children are most at risk of dropping out of school and into the cradle-to-prison pipeline which leads to dead-end lives, costing their families and communities heartache and costing the nation billions of dollars.

Moments in America for All Children

Every second a public school student is suspended.*
Every 8 seconds a high school student drops out.*
Every 18 seconds a baby is born to an unmarried mother.
Every 20 seconds a public school student is corporally punished.*
Every 21 seconds a child is arrested.
Every 34 seconds a child is born into poverty.
Every 42 seconds a baby is born without health insurance
Every 42 seconds a child is confirmed as abused or neglected.
Every minute a baby is born to a teen mother.
Every 2 minutes a child is born at low birthweight.
Every 4 minutes a child is arrested for a drug offense.
Every 8 minutes a child is arrested for a violent offense.
Every 18 minutes a baby dies before his or her first birthday.
Every 45 minutes a child or teen dies from an accident.
Every 3 hours a child or teen is killed by a firearm.
Every 5 hours a child or teen commits suicide.
Every 5 hours a child is killed by abuse or neglect.
Every 16 hours a mother dies from complications of childbirth or pregnancies.

* Based on calculations per school day (180 days of seven hours each)

Prayer

O God, help us to recover our hope for our children's sake.
Help us to recover our courage for our children's sake.
Help us to recover our discipline for our children's sake.
Help us to recover our ability to work together for our children's sake.
Help us to recover our values for our children's sake.
Help us to recover our faith in Thee for our children's sake. Amen.
(By Marian Wright Edelman)

To connect with the faith community resources and other work of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), the non-profit, non-partisan organization sponsoring the multi-faith National Observance of Children's Sabbaths celebration, visit www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths

Data calculated by the Children's Defense Fund.

Each Day in America

2 mothers die in childbirth.
5 children are killed by abuse or neglect.
5 children or teens commit suicide.
8 children or teens are killed by firearms.
32 children or teens die from accidents.
80 babies die before their first birthdays.
186 children are arrested for violent offenses.
368 children are arrested for drug offenses.
949 babies are born at low birthweight.
1,204 babies are born to teen mothers.
1,240 public school students are corporally punished.*
2,058 children are confirmed as abused or neglected.
2,163 babies are born without health insurance.
2,573 babies are born into poverty.
3,312 high school students drop out.*
4,133 children are arrested.
4,717 babies are born to unmarried mothers.
18,493 public school students are suspended.

* Based on 180 school days a year

Prayer of Commitment by Marian Wright Edelman

God did not call us to succeed,
God called us to serve.
God did not call us to win,
God called us to work.
God did not call us to live long,
God called us to live for [God.]
God did not call us to be happy,
God called us to be hopeful.
God did not call us to fame,
God called us to faith.
God did not call us to seek power,
God called us to seek peace.
God did not call us to loot the earth and each other,
God called us to love our earth and each other. Amen.

Data calculated by the Children's Defense Fund.