

## Resources for a Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Celebration



**A** multi-faith community service offers a powerful and meaningful opportunity to bring together people from all across your community who may never have connected before. It is a chance to highlight our shared concern — across religious traditions — for justice and protecting and nurturing children.

It is a meaningful time to discover what our different faith traditions hold in common as well as to learn about the unique perspectives, texts, and traditions that each brings. It is a time to unite in shared commitment to take action to solve the problems facing children in our communities and nation.

**B**e sure to read the planning steps for organizing a multi-faith community-wide service, which are outlined in the “Planning Your Children's Sabbath” section of the Children's Sabbath manual. Follow them to bring together a planning committee that represents the many religious traditions in your community.

Following, you will find materials to help to create your own multi-faith Children's Sabbath service that is inclusive, respectful of different traditions, focused on the Children's Sabbath core themes, and adaptable to your particular community and leadership:

- **A suggested outline** for your multi-faith community-wide Children's Sabbath service;
- **A sample multi-faith Children's Sabbath service** that can be used “as is” or adapted;
- **Additional resources** for your multi-faith community-wide Children's Sabbath service from which you may choose. Select those resources that appeal to your planning team, supplement them with your own, or adapt them as desired. Add readings or prayers from other traditions as appropriate to reflect the leadership and participation in your community.
- **Resources from many faiths**

## Suggested Outline for a Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Service

### I: Gathering of the Community

The service begins with a “Gathering of the Community” that creates a sense of welcome and inclusion and affirms a sense of shared purpose. These earliest moments in the service should be planned with care to reassure people that this service is a “safe” space in which their own faith will not be denigrated and ease any anxieties that people may bring to a multi-faith experience.

The Gathering of the Community segment of the service may include some or all of the following:

- **Prelude:** Choral or instrumental music that either creates an atmosphere for contemplation and reflection or that builds excitement and generates enthusiasm. One choir or more could offer a selection, for instance, or an organist or pianist could play.
- **Opening Procession of Religious Leaders and Children:** This can provide a visual appreciation for the range of religious traditions represented and add a sense of importance and broad support for the event. You may want to include symbolic elements to the procession or other visual enhancements like banners, liturgical dancers, drummers, candle lighting, or another creative element.
- **Welcome:** The religious leader in whose place of worship the multi-faith service is being held may offer a very brief welcome. If the service is not being held in a place of worship, one of the key leaders involved in planning the Children's Sabbath may give a brief welcome, or the welcome may be omitted and the service may move directly from the Opening Procession to the Gathering Words.
- **Gathering Words:** Beginning with an opening prayer, call to worship, or another form of “Gathering Words” can make people from many different communities feel united in why they are there and reassured that all are welcome. See the sample resources below for Gathering Words that can be used, adapted, or simply serve as an inspiration for your own creation.
- **Congregational Hymn or Choral Anthem:** A musical selection at this point may keep the service lively. Remember, if *everyone* is asked to sing or say it, the words should include *everyone*. For instance, if the *congregation* will be singing, remember to select a song with inclusive words that people from many different faiths will feel comfortable singing — ensure that it does not use language specific to just one tradition, such as “Jesus Christ.” If a *choir* is presenting an anthem to which the congregation will listen, singing music specific to that choir's tradition, remember to balance the choirs represented and to ensure that no anthem, while specific to a tradition, puts down another faith tradition.

### II: Time of Lament

**Time of Lament:** *Greenless Child* by Ann Weems

I watched her go uncelebrated into second grade,  
A greenless child,  
Gray among the orange and yellow,  
Attached too much to corners and other people's sunshine.  
She colors the rainbow brown

And leaves balloons unopened in the packages.  
Oh, who will touch this greenless child?  
Who will plant alleluias into her heart  
And send her dancing into all the colors of God?  
Or will she be left like an unwrapped package on the kitchen table?  
Too dull for anyone to take the trouble?  
Does God think we're her keeper? (By Ann Weems)

This is a time to focus attention on the serious problems affecting children, to declare our concern for children's suffering, and recognize our responsibility as people of faith, adults, parents, citizens, and community members for how we have contributed to or failed to prevent or end child suffering and ensure justice and care for all children.

The time of lament portion of the service might include one or more (but not all) of the following:

- **Prayer**
- **Litany**
- **Responsive reading**
- **Creative or symbolic action**
- **Visual experience** that underscores the problems to which we have come to respond (e.g., PowerPoint or slide presentation or a brief video, or liturgical dance)
- **Anthem, hymn or song**

### III: Call to Service

This part of the worship service proclaims the call to justice, compassion, and faithful action for children that is central to our religious traditions.

This part of the service could include some of the following:

- **Readings from sacred texts** such as Torah and other Hebrew texts, the New Testament, Qur'an, Baghavad Gita, and others. If the readings are recited in another language, either have the readers also read the English translation or, to keep the service from becoming too lengthy, provide written translations into English in the service program.
- **Hymns, anthems, and songs** focused on our call to service.
- **A reflection on the theme "Precious in God's Sight: Answering the Call to Cherish and Protect Every Child"**: a brief reflection — perhaps five minutes — during which a leader reflects on the shared concerns for children and the strong call to work for change for children to end poverty heard in our faith traditions.

## IV: Commitment to Action

After the gathering, lament, and call to service, people should be ready to respond to what they've heard and experienced with a commitment to action on children's behalf. This enables them to channel the experience into a positive, forward-looking, hopeful response that puts their faith into action.

The commitment to action section of the service might include one or more of the following:

- **A charge to the congregation:** a brief, inspirational charge from a powerful speaker that encourages those present to respond to the call to service just heard with a commitment to action manifesting the justice and peace God intends. Five minutes may be an appropriate length to give the speaker for her/his charge.
- **Prayer of commitment**
- **Act of commitment:** a responsive reading that invites the congregation to respond aloud and declare their intention to act on behalf of children.
- **Symbolic action:** a creative action or response through which the people or one or more leaders make visible the commitment to act. Options include: each person writing a commitment on a slip of paper that is collected with the others; distributing a small item to each person present that will serve as a reminder of their commitment; or lighting candles.
- **Song, hymn, or anthem** with words that emphasize the commitment to faithful action.

## V: Blessing

The last portion of the multi-faith service prepares the people to leave the time together inspired and committed to action, reassured that the gathered community will be dispersed but still joined in commitment and that they will continue to be guided and sustained by the divine.

The blessing portion of the service might include one or more of the following:

- **Blessing of the children:** many traditions have rituals for blessing the children that could be adapted for a multi-faith gathering. Consider ways that those who have not come accompanied by children can feel part of the blessing experience.
- **Charge:** not as lengthy as the "charge to the congregation" in the commitment to action, this very brief charge can precede the final blessing as a reminder of what we go forth to do;
- **Final blessing:** the last words offered by a religious leader, reminding the congregation that God goes with us as we depart to do God's work;
- **Closing hymn or song:** a final song that has a "sending forth" theme, such as the traditional spiritual, *Guide My Feet*. The religious leaders who processed in may process out during the closing hymn or remain in place.
- **Postlude:** instrumental (or choral) music as the congregation disperses

In addition to the resources provided below, and those which your planning committee creates or finds, draw from faith resources offered in other sections of the Children's Sabbath resource manual on CDF's website at [www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths](http://www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths).

## Sample Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Service

Unless otherwise noted, all resources were written by Shannon Daley-Harris

### Prelude

*(The prelude could feature music from a variety of groups representing different faith and music traditions.)*

### Opening Procession

*(Religious leaders from all of the traditions represented could process in, perhaps each with a child, and be seated at the front facing those gathered — or in a designated section in the front rows — to provide a visual reminder of the broad and united religious representation. Liturgical dancers, bearing candles, or carrying diverse, representative banners would also add visual interest.)*

### Welcome

*(The chair of the Children's Sabbath planning committee or the leader in whose place of worship the multi-faith service is taking place might offer very brief — a minute or less — words of welcome that affirm the purpose of the gathering, reassure all from every faith tradition that they are welcome, and generally convey that all religions will be respected.)*

## Sample Children's Sabbath Service

### Gathering Words

*(This could be read by one leader or several. If desired, the leader/s could read the lines beginning "Welcome..." and the people gathered could read the lines "coming together..." If you decide to make it a responsive reading, put the people's lines in bold type so they will know when to join in. If it is all read by a leader, do not bold any of the lines.)*

Welcome to this time of community —

**coming together from different religions, neighborhoods, and experiences,  
we join as one.**

Welcome to this time of caring —

**coming with hearts that love children and want to do more,  
we join as one.**

Welcome to this time of concern —

**coming with hearts troubled by the serious problems facing children,  
we join as one.**

Welcome to this time of commitment —

**coming with determination to answer the call  
to cherish and protect children,  
we join as one.**

Welcome to this multi-faith, community-wide Children's Sabbath. Welcome.

## Song

Today, there are many “greenless” children,  
children who don't have all they need to survive and thrive,  
facing challenges that make it harder to grow and blossom:  
problems like poverty,  
poor quality child care,  
no spaces in Head Start,  
no Pre-K available, or  
abuse and neglect.

Too many of our children enter school not ready to learn and grow.  
Will we plant joy in the hearts of *all* children?

## Speaker/Reflection

*(Invite a speaker to talk about the challenges facing children, especially those without what they need for strong early childhood development. What must we do to treat every child as precious, to cherish and protect them?)*

## Words and Songs from Many Traditions Calling Us to Cherish and Protect Children

Leader: We come together from many religious traditions. We share concern for children and commitment to cherishing and protecting them. We know that each child is precious.

*(Include readings from the sacred texts represented by those present or songs from various traditions. Draw from readings in this section or invite religious leaders to identify texts, in advance, in keeping with the theme and focus of the Children's Sabbath service. For example, you might have a Baha'i leader read this Baha'i Prayer by 'Abdu'l-Baha:*

“O God! Educate these children. These children are the plants of Thine orchard, the flowers of Thy meadow, the roses of Thy garden. Let Thy rain all upon them; let the Sun of Reality shine upon them with Thy love. Let Thy breeze refresh them in order that they may be trained, grow and develop, and appear in the utmost beauty. Thou art the Giver. Thou art the Compassionate.”)

## Renewing the Vision: Dreaming and Planting and Working for Our Children

**Leader:** Jewish tradition tells of a sage, Choni, who wondered about the psalmist's declaration that when the captives returned from Zion, they would be like those who dream. He wondered, could one dream for those many years in captivity?

“While the sage Choni was walking along a road, he saw a man planting a carob tree. Choni asked him: ‘How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?’ ‘Seventy years,’ replied the man. Choni then asked: ‘Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?’ The man answered: ‘I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise, I am planting for my children.’”

The sage then fell into a dreaming sleep for seventy years; when he awoke, he saw the young trees now grown to fullness and maturity.

**People:** **We too dream of and work for a time when no child is bound by injustice.**

**We too plant, not for ourselves but for the next generation.**

**We too work for the day that our children and *all* children may grow and thrive.**

**Leader:** We dream and plant and work so that all new parents will be supported and strengthened to nurture their baby from the very first days.

We dream and plant and work so that soon all children will have care at home or in child care that helps them grow in mind, body, and spirit.

We dream and work so that soon all eligible children can enroll in Early Head Start and Head Start so that we leave no child behind in their earliest years.

We dream and plant and work so that soon pre-K will be available to all children so that every child may enter school ready to learn and succeed.

**People: We dream and plant and work so that one day  
all children are recognized as precious.**

**We dream and plant and work so that one day  
all children will be cherished.**

**We dream and plant and work so that one day  
all children will be protected. May it be so.**

### Call to Action

**To You** by Langston Hughes

*(This poem should be read by a child or teen.)*

To sit and dream, to sit and read,  
To sit and learn about the world  
Outside our world of here and now-  
Our problem world  
To dream of vast horizons of the soul  
Through dreams made whole,  
Unfettered, free-help me!  
All you who are dreamers too,  
Help me to make  
Our world anew.  
I reach out my dreams to you.

*At this point in the service, you could invite a speaker to deliver a brief (about 5 minutes) call to action to dream big, plant well, and work hard for our children to ensure that every child has a strong start and good early childhood development. How will each person present—child, youth, and adult—answer the call to cherish and protect children?*

*Alternatively, you might want to engage participants in giving voice to their dreams for children and their commitment to make it so. Perhaps ask the following questions, and invite participants to share their responses with the person next to them for two minutes each. Or, ask the questions and invite participants to write their responses on slips of paper, with paper and pencils distributed before the service began. The slips of paper could be collected in baskets or participants could post them on a designated wall at the end of the service.)*

What are your dreams for our world?

What are your dreams for our children?

What will you do to make your dreams for our children come true?

## Song

### Prayer of Commitment: O God of All Children

O God of the children of Somalia, Sudan, and Syria, of South Africa and South Carolina,  
Of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and of India, Iraq, Iran, and Israel  
Of the Congo and Chicago, of Darfur and Detroit  
Of Myanmar and Mississippi and Louisiana and Yemen  
*Help us to love and respect and protect them all.*

O God of Black and Brown and White and Albino children and those all mixed together,  
of children who are rich and poor and in between,  
of children who speak English and Russian and Hmong and Spanish  
and languages our ears cannot discern,  
*Help us to love and respect and protect them all.*

O God of the child prodigy and the child prostitute,  
of the child of rapture and the child of rape,  
of runaway or thrown away children who struggle every day  
without parent or place or friend or future,  
*Help us to love and respect and protect them all.*

O God of children who can walk and talk and hear  
and see and sing and dance and jump and play  
and of children who wish they could but can't  
of children who are loved and unloved, wanted and unwanted,  
*Help us to love and respect and protect them all.*

O God of beggar, beaten, abused, neglected, homeless,  
and AIDS-, drug-, violence-, and hunger-ravaged children,  
of children who are emotionally and physically and mentally fragile,  
and of children who rebel and ridicule, torment and taunt,  
*Help us to love and respect and protect them all.*

O God of children of destiny and of despair, of war and of peace,  
of disfigured, diseased, and dying children,  
of children without hope and of children with hope to spare and to share,  
*Help us to love and respect and act to protect them all.*

By Marian Wright Edelman

## Song

### Sending Forth

*(If someone knows American Sign Language it could add a powerful dimension to this sending forth. Have them sign this Sending Forth as they or another says it aloud.)*

Let us go forth with eyes open to behold *every* child as precious in the sight of the Eternal;  
Let us go forth with hearts full of love to cherish every child  
Let us go forth with hands and voices determined to protect every child.  
Let us go forth to live out our Children's Sabbath commitment not this day alone,  
but in all the days to come. Let us go forth!

## Additional Resources for Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Services

### Opening Prayer

O Holy One, we know you by many different names and worship you in many different ways. Yet together we believe that you alone are the source and meaning of our existence, and it is your call that we must heed. Help us in this time together to hear your call to cherish and protect children, to help them be ready to learn and to succeed.

Disturb our hearts with the harsh reality of poverty, sickness, and violence confronting so many children today and hindering their readiness to learn and success. Trouble our consciences that millions of children are left in unsafe and unstimulating situations: in some child care programs, schools, and after school, delaying their readiness to learn and succeed.

Lift up our spirits with examples of people and services that make a difference and are getting children ready to learn and succeed. Strengthen our hands to reach out and our voices to speak up on behalf of children. Finally, we pray that you will inspire us by your divine presence to commit ourselves to serving your children so that each child is cherished and protected and all children know that they are precious in your sight. **Amen.**

### Opening Litany: Who Cares for You?

**Leader to children:** Who cares for you?

**Child 1:** My mother.

**Child 2:** My father.

**Child 3:** My grandma.

**Leader to children:** Who cares for you?

**Child 4:** My teacher.

**Child 5:** My sitter

**Child 6:** My Big Brother

**Leader to Children:** Who cares for you?

**Child 1:** My neighbors

**Child 2:** My church

**Child 3:** My synagogue

**Child 4:** My mosque

**Child 5:** My temple

**Child 6:** My community

**Leader to children:** Who cares for you?

**All Children:** God cares for me.

**Congregation:** God's people do, too.

**Leader:** May it be so.

## Prayers of the People

**Leader:** The Holy waits with tender compassion, steadfast faithfulness, and passionate concern for the last, the lost, and the least. Let us bring our prayers before the Holy.

**Leader:** For children everywhere and their sense of wonder, trust, curiosity, and love,

**People: We give you thanks.**

**Leader:** For parents who reflect your steadfast love and hopefulness,

**People: We give you thanks.**

**Leader:** For those who love and care for children, offering nurture, guidance, and comfort,

**People: We give you thanks.**

**Leader:** For children who are not loved and cared for,

**People: We ask your comfort.**

**Leader:** For parents who anguish over earning a living and assuring safe, loving care for their children,

**People: We ask your comfort.**

**Leader:** For lonely and vulnerable youths left to care for themselves,

**People: We ask your comfort.**

**Leader:** For our leaders facing decisions about investing in the care and protection of all children,

**People: We ask for guidance.**

**Leader:** For our religious leaders, that they lead us in caring for every child as a sacred trust from you,

**People: We ask for guidance.**

**Leader:** For ourselves, that we care for children and speak out on their behalf until every child is nurtured and protected,

**People: We ask for guidance.**

**Leader:** Amen.

## Act of Commitment

**Leader 1:** Rabindranath Tagore, Hindu winner of the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature, wrote, "I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."

**Leader 2:** "I slept and dreamt that life was joy."

**All: We dream of a day when all children know the joy of loving families and caring communities and will work to make it so.**

**Leader 2:** "I awoke and saw that life was service."

**All: We renew our commitment to lives of service that nurture and protect children.**

**Leader 2:** "I acted and behold, service was joy."

**All: We are ready to act with joyful commitment.**

**Leader 1:** Rabindranath Tagore also wrote, "Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of [humankind]." Let us leave to fulfill God's hope and expectation; let us answer the call to cherish and protect every child, precious in God's sight.

## Resources from Many Faiths

The following pages provide resources from a variety of faith traditions: the Bahá'í faith, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Native American traditions, Sikhism, and Unitarian Universalism. The resources include passages from sacred texts or other writings central to these traditions, prayers, and reflections. **For Christian and Jewish resources, please draw from the extensive materials provided elsewhere in the Children's Sabbath resource manual.**

These resources may be used in an interfaith Children's Sabbath service, to spark a Children's Sabbath in congregations of these traditions, or to enrich the Children's Sabbath of congregations from other traditions. They also may be used in an interfaith educational program you develop for your Children's Sabbath.



### Bahá'í Resources

O God! Rear this little babe in the bosom of Thy love, and give it milk from the breast of Thy Providence. Cultivate this fresh plant in the rose garden of Thy love and aid it to grow through the showers of Thy bounty. Make it a child of the kingdom, and lead it to Thy heavenly realm. Thou art powerful and kind, and Thou art the Bestower, the Generous, the Lord of surpassing bounty.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, from *Prayers for Young Bahá'is*)

Children are even as a branch that is fresh and green; they will grow up in whatever way ye train them. Take the utmost care to give them high ideals and goals, so that once they come of age, they will cast their beams like brilliant candles on the world. . . [and] will set their hearts on achieving everlasting honour and acquiring all the excellences of human kind.

(‘Abdu’l- Baha, from *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha*)

O my Lord! O my Lord! I am a child of tender years. Nourish me from the breast of Thy mercy, train me in the bosom of Thy love, educate me in the school of Thy guidance and develop me under the shadow of Thy bounty.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, from *O Thou Kind Lord! Prayers and Readings for Children from the Bahá'í Writings*)

I have wakened in Thy shelter, O my God, and it becometh him that seeketh that shelter to abide within the Sanctuary of Thy protection and the Stronghold of Thy defence.

Illumine my inner being, O my Lord, with the splendours of the Day-Spring of Thy Revelation, even as Thou didst illumine my outer being with the morning light of Thy favour.

(Baha'u'llah, from *O Thou Kind Lord! Prayers and Readings for Children from the Bahá'í Writings*)

O Lord! Make this youth radiant, and confer Thy bounty upon this poor creature. Bestow upon him knowledge, grant him added strength at the break of every morn and guard him within the shelter of Thy protection so that he may be freed from error, may devote himself to the service of Thy Cause, may guide the wayward, lead the hapless, free the captives, and awaken the heedless, and that all may be blessed with Thy remembrance and praise. Thou art the Mighty and the powerful.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, from *O Thou Kind Lord! Prayers and Readings for Children from the Bahá'í Writings*)

O ye loving mothers, know ye that in God's sight, the best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in all the perfections of humankind. . .

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, from *Family Life*)

The instruction of these children is even as the work of a loving gardener who tendeth his young plants in the flowering fields of the All-Glorious.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, from *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha*)

Every child is potentially the light of the world—and at the same time its darkness; wherefore must the question of education be accounted as of primary importance.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, from *Bahá'í Education*)



## Buddhist Resources

Life is filled with suffering, but it is also filled with many wonders, like the blue sky, the sunshine, the eyes of a baby. To suffer is not enough. We must also be in touch with the wonders of life. They are within us and all around us, everywhere, any time.

(Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace*)

Better than a hundred years lived in idleness and in weakness is a single day lived with courage and powerful striving.

(The Dhammapada, 112)

The Buddha said to Ananda: “Truly, Ananda, it’s not easy to teach the way of freedom to others. In teaching freedom to others, the best way is to first establish five things and then teach. What are the five? When you teach others, you must think:

‘I will teach in a gradual and sensitive way.  
I will speak with the goal in mind.  
I will speak with gentleness.  
I will not speak in order to gain anything.  
I will not speak with a view to harming anyone.’

“If you establish these five things, your teaching will be well received.”

(Anguttara Nikaya, in *The Buddha Speaks*)

Whatever living beings there may be—feeble or strong, small or large, seen or unseen, those who live far or those near, those who are born and those who are yet to be born—may all beings, without exception, experience a happy mind.

Let one not deceive another nor despise any person whatever in any place. In anger or ill will let one not wish any harm to another.

Let one’s thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity.

(Samyutta Nikaya, *The Buddha Speaks*)

It is in this way that we must train ourselves: by liberation of the self through love. We will develop love, we will practice it, we will make it both a way and a basis, take our stand upon it, store it up, and thoroughly set it going.

(Samyutta Nikaya, *The Buddha Speaks*)

Arouse your will, supreme and great,  
Practice love, give joy and protection;  
Let your giving be like space,  
Without discrimination or limitation.  
Do good things, not for your own sake  
But for all the beings in the universe.  
Save and make free everyone you encounter,  
Help them attain the wisdom of the way.

(Prajnaparamita, from *The Buddha Speaks*)

Recently I was sitting with a group of children, and a boy named Tim was smiling beautifully. I said, “Tim, you have a very beautiful smile,” and he said, “Thank you.” I told him, “You don’t have to thank me, I have to thank you. Because of your smile, you make life more beautiful. Instead of saying, ‘Thank you,’ you should say, ‘You’re welcome.’”

If a child smiles, if an adult smiles, that is very important. If in our daily life we can smile, if we can be peaceful and happy, not only we, but everyone will profit from it. This is the most basic kind of peace work. When I see Tim smiling, I am so happy. If he is aware that he is making other people happy, he can say, “You are welcome.”

(Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace*)



## Hindu Resources

May there be welfare to all beings;  
May there be fullness and wholeness to all people;  
May there be constant good and auspicious life to everyone;  
May there be peace everywhere. . .  
May all be full of happiness and abundance;  
May everyone in the world enjoy complete health, free from diseases;  
May all see and experience good things in their lives,  
May not even a single person experience sorrow and misery.  
Om!  
Peace! Peace! Peace!

(Daily prayer of Hindus)

The Hindu mind is singularly dominated by one paramount conception: the divinity of life. Regarding the creation of the universe, Hindu tradition, based on the experience of illumined mystics, asserts with deep conviction that God is the supreme creator of everything and every being. . . Hindus give God a favored place in our homes as mother, friend, child, even husband or sweetheart. God, being the most beloved object of life, must find a place in our family life. He must be dear and near to us. This ideal of the sweet God, lovable God, playmate God, child God has been admirably illustrated in Hinduism in the personality of Sri Krishna. So, every child can be looked upon by anyone as a baby God, and spiritual life can be quickened in this manner.

(Swami Tathagatananda, Vedanta Society, New York, from "Our Children, Their Earth," United Nations Environmental Programs)

Oh Brahman Supreme! Formless and colorless are you. But in mystery, through your power you transform your light and radiance into many forms and colors in creation. You bring forth the creation and then withdraw them to yourself. Fill us with the grace of your auspicious thoughts and vision. . . You are in the woman, in the man. You are in the young boy, in the youthful maiden. You are in the old man who walks with his staff. . . You are in the dark butterfly, in the green parrot with red eyes. . . You are without beginning, infinite, beyond time and space. All the worlds had their origins in you.

(From Svetasvatara Upanishad, IV:1-4)

### Benediction in Vedic Sanskrit

*Pasyati Puthram, Pasyati Poutram  
Aputraahas santu putrinaha, Putrinah santhu poutrinaha  
Daanyam, dhanam, Bahuputralaabhah.*

May one live to see children,  
May one live to see grandchildren,  
May those that are childless have children,  
May those that have children have grandchildren!  
May you have lots of grain, wealth, and many children.



## Islamic Resources

Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter?  
And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee  
guidance.

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَى ۝٦

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَى ۝٧

And He found thee in need, and made thee independent.  
Therefore, treat not the orphan with harshness,  
nor repulse him who asks: but the bounty of thy  
Lord—rehearse and proclaim!

وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَى ۝٨

فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ ۝٩

وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ ۝١٠

(Surah 93, 6-11)

O ye who believe!  
Stand out firmly  
For Allah, as witnesses  
To fair dealing, and let not  
The hatred of others  
To you make you swerve  
To wrong and depart from  
Justice. Be just: that is  
Next to Piety: and fear Allah.  
For Allah is well-acquainted  
With all that ye do.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوِّمِينَ لِلَّهِ

شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ

شِقَاقَ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا أَعْدِلُوا هُوَ

أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ

بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ۝٨

(Surah 5, 8)

For those who give  
In Charity, men and women,  
And loan to Allah  
A Beautiful Loan,  
It shall be increased manifold  
(To their credit),  
And they shall have (besides)  
A generous reward.

إِنَّ الْمَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُصَدِّقَاتِ وَأَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا

حَسَنًا يَبْضَعُهُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ ۝١٨

(Surah 57, 18)

Allah doth  
Instruct you. . .  
Concerning the children  
Who are weak and oppressed;  
That ye stand firm  
For justice to orphans.  
There is not a good deed  
Which ye do, but Allah  
Is well-acquainted therewith.

فِيهِنَّ وَمَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ فِي

يَتْلَىٰ النِّسَاءَ الَّتِي لَا تُوْتُونَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ

لَهُنَّ وَرَرَعِبُونَ أَنْ تَكْفُوهُنَّ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ

مِنَ الْوَالِدِينَ وَأَنْ تَقُومُوا لِلْيَتَامَىٰ

بِالْقِسْطِ وَمَا تَفَعَّلُوا مِنْ حَيْرٍ

فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِهِ عَلِيمًا ۝١٢٧

(Surah 4, 127, p. 256)

They ask thee  
 What they should spend  
 (In charity). Say: Whatever wealth  
 Ye spend that is good,  
 Is for parents and kindred  
 And orphans  
 And those in want  
 And for wayfarers  
 And whatever ye do  
 That is good, -Allah  
 Knoweth it well.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ  
 خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسْكِينِ  
 وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ  
 عَلِيمٌ

(Surah 2, 215)

### Commentary on Surah 2,215

“Three questions arise in charity: 1) What shall we give? 2) to whom shall we give? And 3) how shall we give? The answer is here. Give anything that is good, useful, helpful, valuable. It may be property or money; it may be a helping hand: it may be advice; it may be a kind word; “whatever ye do that is good” is charity. On the other hand, if you throw away what is useless, there is no charity in it. Or if you give something with a harmful intent, e.g., a sword to a madman, or a drug or sweets or even money to some one whom you want to entrap or corrupt, it is no charity but a gift of damnation. To whom should you give? It may be tempting to earn the

world's praise by a gift that will be talked about, but are you meeting the needs of those who have the first claim on you? If you are not, you are like a person who defrauds creditors: it is no charity. Every gift is judged by its unselfish character: the degree of need or claim is a factor which you should consider: if you disregard it, there is something selfish behind it. How should it be given? As in the sight of Allah; this shuts out all pretense, show, and insincerity.

(From *The Holy Qura-An, English translation of the meanings and Commentary*,  
 Revised and Edited by the Presidency of Islamic Researches,  
 IFTA, Call and Guidance)



## Native American Resources

Grandfather,  
Look at our brokenness.

We know that in all Creation  
Only the human family  
Has strayed from the Sacred Way.

We know that we are the ones  
Who are divided  
And we are the ones  
Who must come back together  
To walk in the Sacred Way.

Grandfather,  
Sacred One,  
Teach us love, compassion, honor  
That we may heal the earth  
And heal each other.

(Ojibway Prayer)

It is strictly believed and understood by the Sioux that a child is the greatest gift from Wakan Tanka, in response to many devout prayers, sacrifices, and promises. Therefore the child is considered "sent by Wakan Tanka," through some element—namely the element of human nature.

(Robert Higheagle, Teton Sioux)

Great Spirit, Great Spirit, my Grandfather, all over the earth the faces of living things are all alike. . . Look upon these faces of children without number and with children in their arms, that they may face the winds and walk the good road to the day of quiet.

(Black Elk, Oglala Sioux holy man)

In many Indian cultures, young children are considered sacred gifts to the family and to the tribe. . . Each child is to be treated with personal respect as an individual bearing special traits. . . Each adult generation is to acknowledge the sacredness of young children and to care for the coming generation.

(Wahacanka Ska Win Gough)

The gods and the spirits of the sacred mountains created a [child]. The [child] was made of all rains, springs, rivers, ponds, black clouds, and sky . . . with feet made of earth and legs of lightning. White shell forms the knees and the body is white and yellow corn; the flesh is of daybreak, hair of darkness; eyes are of the sun . . . white corn forms the teeth, black corn the eyebrows and red coral beads the nose. . . tears are of rain, the tongue of straight lightning, and the voice of thunder . . . human's heart is obsidian, the little whirlwind keeps nerves in motion, and motion and movement is the air . . . the name of this new kind of being was "created from everything."

(A poetic legend of Indians, *Christians and Native American Concerns in the Late 20th Century*. Church Council of Greater Seattle, 1981)

Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw. For I was seeing in the sacred manner the shape of all things of the spirit and the shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that make one circle, wide as daylight and starlight. And in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy.

(Black Elk)

O Great Spirit, Creator of all things;  
Human Beings, trees, grass, berries.  
Help us, be kind to us.  
Let us be happy on earth.  
Let us lead our children  
To a good life and old age.  
These, our people; give them good minds  
To love one another.  
O Great Spirit,  
Be kind to us.  
Give these people the favor  
To see green trees,  
Green grass, flowers, and berries  
This next spring.  
So we all meet again.  
O Great Spirit,  
We ask of you.

(Mohawk prayer)



## Sikh Resources

Oh child! This is your mother's blessing. May you never forget God even for a moment and always remember the Lord of the universe. By meditating on God all the sins are obliterated and generations are enlightened. Ponder over always on that Lord who is boundless. May the true Guru be kind to you and may you nurture love for the company of saints.

May the preservation of your honor by the Lord be your attire: Singing of His praise your daily bread. Drink ever the nectar of God's name and live long. By remembering God may you attain bliss. May joys and playful pleasures be yours. May your hopes be realized and may you never get distressed. Let your mind hover like a humming black bee at the lotus feet of God. Says the humble Nanak [the founder of Sikhism], be attached to God like a pied-cuckoo that rejoices in ecstasy on finding rain drop.

(Hymn inscribed in Sikh scripture and composed by the fifth Guru Arjun Dev as a blessing to children)

I humbly bow to those who being powerful yet stay meek;  
To those who having status stay lowly;  
To those who having wisdom appear naive;  
To those who live the word and the will of God;  
To those who obey His code;  
Such persons are honored in this world and in eternity.

(Bhai Gurdas, Var)

The Lord is my Mother and Father. He it is who blesses me with sustenance,  
And, the Lord takes care of me. For I am the child of God. He abandons me never and feeds me steadily,  
And minds not my demerits and hugs me to His bosom,  
And he blesses me with all I seek; yea, He the Bliss-giving Father,  
And he has blessed me with Words of Wisdom, yea, the riches of the name, and Made me worthy of Himself. And made me a partner (of His Grace) with the Guru, and now I possess all joys.

May my Lord forsake me not: Yea, He, who is my All powerful Lord.

(Hymn composed by Guru Arjan)



## Unitarian Universalist Resources

### Give Us the Spirit of the Child

Give us the spirit of the child.

Give us the child who lives within:

*The child who trusts, the child who imagines, the child who sings.*

The child who receives without reservation, the child who gives without judgment.

*Give us a child's eyes, that we may receive the beauty and freshness of this day like a sunrise;*

Give us a child's ears, that we may hear the music of mythical times;

*Give us a child's heart, that we may be filled with wonder and delight;*

Give us a child's faith, that we may be cured of our cynicism;

*Give us the spirit of the child, who is not afraid to need; who is not afraid to love.*

(Sara Moores Campbell)

### Benediction

And now, may we have faith in life to do wise planting that the generations to come may reap even more abundantly than we. May we be bold in bringing to fruition the golden dreams of human kinship and justice. This we ask that the fields of promise become fields of reality.

(V. Emil Gudmundson)

### New Life Comes to Us

(Congregations may wish to adapt the following reading, traditionally used for a naming or child dedication, to honor all children.)

New life comes to us as a gift.

*Each new life makes its demand, exacts our attentiveness, enlists and organizes our energies, and blesses us. May we be worthy of the gift, and glad receivers of the blessing.*

New life appeals to us.

*Each new life is helpless and so calls forth our help, is weak and so calls forth our strength, is innocent and so calls forth our wisdom. May we be wise in our strength and ever-strong in our help.*

New life grows.

*Each new life ventures first words, first steps, first essays in the art of living. Each grows, ever surpassing the life that was for the life that shall be. May we patiently wait, and watch in wonder.*

New life bears untold promise.

*Each new life has a story to tell, and we shall listen. Each new life goes forth from us, laying the child's sovereign claim on whole realms of being we had called our own.*

All: God of grace, may they be blessed, whatever the pathways they follow, whatever the life they claim as their own.

(George Kimmich Beach)

### Commitment

I am only one

But still I am one.

I cannot do everything,

But still I can do something.

And because I cannot do everything,

I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

(Edward Everett Hale)