

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. The third bullet insert may be used at any time.
- ❑ **Newsletter:** Include other information in your place of worship's newsletter. Adapt the sample newsletter article in this section or write your own.
- ❑ **Posters:** Make posters announcing the Children's Sabbath and display them in appropriate locations in your building/s. Involve 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 place of worship has a website, post an announcement.
- ❑ **Social Media:** Use various forms of social media such as Facebook pages, blogs, and Twitter accounts to spread the word about your Children's Sabbath.
- ❑ **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 your place of worship'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 Your Place of Worship's Newsletter:

The Importance of Baby Steps: Making a Difference Through the Children's Sabbath.

One in every 5 children lives in poverty in our rich nation. Nearly half of all children living in poverty are not ready to learn at age 5. When we hear statistics like that, it is easy to feel hopeless about making a difference. When the idea of making a big change is overwhelming, the advice is often to just take “baby steps.” When we think about making a difference for our nation's children, rather than becoming overwhelmed and giving up, we can focus on taking baby steps — the first changes that will set us on the way to giving every child a healthy and productive future.

What's the first step? Ensuring that children in poverty have access to high-quality early childhood development and learning opportunities, so that babies and toddlers and preschoolers receive what they need to enter school ready to learn. High-quality early childhood development and learning interventions serve as a buffer to the negative effects of poverty and provide a foundation for future success with lifelong benefits, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable children. Studies have shown that children enrolled in high-quality early childhood programs are more likely to graduate from high school, hold a job, make more money and be less likely to commit a crime than their peers who do not participate. **The Strong Start for America's Children Act** invests in and encourages expansions of high-quality, voluntary home visiting programs, Early Head Start, Head Start, child care, pre-kindergarten (pre-K) and quality kindergarten programs to reach poor and low-income children birth through age 5.

The 2014 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® Celebration, “Precious in God's Sight: Answering the Call to Cherish and Protect *Every* Child,” takes place this October. We will be joining with thousands of places of worship all across the nation as together people of faith affirm that *every* child is loved by and precious to God, raise a voice of concern with and for children and families in poverty, and promise renewed action throughout the year to cherish and protect every child through direct service, raising awareness, and working for justice.

Here at *[name of your congregation]*, we will *[name elements of your Children's Sabbath observance.]*
For more information and to find out how you can be involved, contact *[name of contact or coordinator in your place of worship.]*

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 place of worship'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 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.
- ❑ **Include information about the Children's Sabbath on your blog, Facebook page and other social media.**
- ❑ **Adapt the sample news release in this section and submit it to the religion page of your local newspaper, local online news feeds, 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:

PSA Live-Read Script

This weekend, all across our nation thousands of religious bodies of many faiths will be uniting to focus on children in need — especially the 16.1 million children who live in poverty and the countless children who do not have access to high quality early childhood development and learning opportunities, putting them at a disadvantage from the start. Together, people of faith will be committing to improve the lives of our nation's children through direct service and work for justice to give every child a strong start. The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, now in its 23rd year, will be marked here in *[name of town]* by *[name of congregation]* on *[date]* at *[time]* with *[name type of event, e.g., worship or education program]*. All are invited to participate as part of the National Observance titled, "Precious in God's Sight: Answering the Call to Cherish and Protect *Every* Child."

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.

- ❑ **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 concerns which your Children's Sabbath is focusing on, whether ensuring every child a strong start through early childhood development or about the violence of child poverty that harms more than 16 million children in our rich nation. Offer the Children's Sabbath as a way to learn more and become involved. Watch the newspaper for articles about early childhood development, gun violence, 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) **Email 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) 662-3585 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 follow-up efforts developing from your Children's Sabbath and of the event 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 Attn: Communications, 25 E Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001 or email a description to religiousaction@childrensdefense.org

Sample News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October [date], 2014

[Insert Congregation's Name] Joins the Children's Defense Fund in National Multi-Faith Observance of Children's Sabbath

Children's Sabbath to Focus on Early Childhood Development and Learning

[Insert City, State] — [Insert congregation's name] will [describe events planned, such as holding a special worship service or conducting service and advocacy activities] on [Insert date, time, and location] with the theme: "Precious in God's Sight: Answering the Call to Cherish and Protect *Every* Child." This year the Children's Sabbath is focusing on assuring every child a Strong Start in life through nurturing early childhood development and learning.

"I believe God dreams of the day we will understand that *every* child is precious and finally cherish and protect every child," said Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund. "The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths is galvanizing places of worship and people of faith across the religious spectrum and nation to ensure that all children have what they need to develop to their full potential through nurturing early childhood development at home and in the community, in child care and Head Start, and in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten."

[Insert statement from a local religious leader]

According to the Children Defense Fund, children who receive a high-quality early childhood experience are more likely to graduate from school, maintain a job, and contribute to society and they are less likely to be funneled into the prison pipeline. High-quality early childhood programs have been shown to return an average of 7-10 percent per year for every dollar invested. A safe, nurturing, stable and stimulating environment is crucial to ensuring that a child's brain develops appropriately during these earliest years of rapid development so that they have a path to a successful future.

[Insert 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'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.

For more information about [Insert congregation's name]'s celebration of the Children's Sabbath, contact *[Insert 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 Inserts (Page 8)

The first insert for your bulletin or newsletter is to announce 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 Page 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 Inserts (Pages 9 to 10 and 11 to 12)

The following inserts may be used on the day you celebrate the Children's Sabbath or any time to raise awareness and encourage a prayerful response and commitment to act. 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.

Each of these insert pages are formatted horizontally to include two panels per 8 ½ " x 11" page. Make two-sided photocopies of the bulletin inserts, and fold down the middle to create one set of 5 ½ " x 8 ½" two-page bulletin inserts.

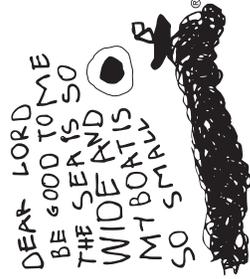
Precious in God's Sight:
Answering the Call to Cherish and Protect Every Child
2014 National Observance of Children's
Sabbaths Celebration
October 17-19, 2014

Every child is precious to God. As people of faith, we are called to cherish and protect every child.

Yet 1 child in 5 lives in poverty in our rich nation.

Early Head Start and Head Start, the largest federal programs supporting early childhood development and learning, enrolled just about 4 percent of eligible infants and toddlers and 41 percent of eligible 3- and 4-year olds on any given day in 2012.

Every child is precious in God's sight; what are we going to do as people of faith to cherish and protect every child?



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On the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths weekend, places of worship from Maine to Mississippi, Washington state to Washington, D.C., Connecticut to California, Hawaii to Puerto Rico will unite in concern and action to answer God's call to cherish and protect every child.

These Children's Sabbath celebrations span faith traditions, race, ethnicity, income, and generations. *Together*, we will answer the call to cherish and protect every child.

On the Children's Sabbath weekend places of worship will:

Pray, Preach, and Hold Services that lift up sacred texts and teachings about our call to cherish and protect every child, because all children are beloved by God.

Proclaim God's call to cherish and protect every child and raise awareness about the millions of children facing poverty and a lack of early childhood development support.

Participate in active responses to cherish and protect children, through education programs, hands-on service projects and advocacy efforts.

Promise to persist in caring acts of service and active work for justice throughout the year.

Why? Because every child is precious in God's sight.

We Will Participate: _____

www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths

What Can We Do to Help Every Child, Precious in God's Sight, Have a Strong Start?

Pray with and for children and parents.

Read with babies, toddlers, and older children — your own and children in the congregation and community. Volunteer with child care or Head Start programs, public libraries, schools, hospitals, shelters, and programs serving low-income families. Donate books.

Talk with babies, toddlers, and older children — create a “word rich” environment and enjoy the special connection forged in conversation and interactions.

Support new parents, especially teen, first-time, and single parents who may welcome an extra hand, encouragement, and an experienced parent’s perspective on child development and how to handle challenges and make the most of those vital years. Support local organizations that help new parents.

Speak out about the need to fund high-quality early childhood development programs. Learn more about the Strong Start for America’s Children Act at www.childrendefense.org.

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Precious in God’s Sight: Answering the Call to Cherish and Protect Every Child

2014 National Observance of
Children’s Sabbaths Celebration

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The colors were brighter than any she had seen before. Shapes, letters, and lots and lots of colors adorned the walls; around the room, children worked together building high

rises with colored blocks and “read” colorful picture books. “I had never seen so much color,” Angelica Salazar recalls of

her first days as a Head Start preschooler in Duarte, Calif. She remembers the discovery of library books and spending

hours curled up on the reading rug. Head Start was Angie’s first formal experience learning English. Her parents, who

spoke mostly Spanish, enrolled her in the program knowing that their little girl would need English to succeed in school.

Today, Angelica Salazar, a graduate of Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, serves as a juvenile

justice policy associate at the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF), where she works to help identify and change policies

that trap millions of our nation’s children in a pipeline to prison every year. Before studying at Harvard, Angie taught

middle school English in an impoverished Los Angeles neighborhood as a Teach for America corps member. Angie

believes her early childhood experience in Head Start put her on the path to academic success and her commitment to

servicing others.

EVERY CHILD DESERVES A STRONG START

High-quality early childhood development and learning opportunities effectively prepare children to succeed in school and in life, and provide a substantial economic return to society.

A safe, nurturing, stable and stimulating environment is crucial to ensuring that a child's brain develops appropriately during these earliest years of rapid development.

Children who receive a high-quality early childhood experience are more likely to graduate from school, maintain a job, and contribute to society and they are less likely to be funneled into the prison pipeline.

High-quality early childhood programs pay for themselves over time, with returns of at least 7 percent per year for every dollar invested.

The real "pay-off" of course, is helping every precious child flourish to their God-given potential.

However, many children in poverty do not have access to high-quality early childhood development and learning opportunities, putting them at a disadvantage from the start.

Young children are the most likely to be poor. In 2012, more than 1 in 5 children under age 5 were poor.

Only 48 percent of poor children are ready to learn at age 5 compared to 75 percent of children from families with moderate and high incomes.

Public funding for early childhood development and learning fails to meet the current need:

Early Head Start and Head Start, the largest federal programs supporting early childhood development and learning, enrolled just about 4 percent of eligible infants and toddlers and 41 percent of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds on any given day in 2012.

Less than half of all 3- and 4-years-olds were enrolled in preschool on average in recent years. The quality of such programs varies dramatically.

There were about 224,000 children and families on waiting lists to receive public child care assistance in 2013, with many more not served due to frozen intake at the state level.

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, 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

America: One Family

Imagine God seeing our very wealthy family blessed with five children. Four of them have enough to eat and comfortable warm rooms in which to sleep. One does not. That child is often hungry and cold. On some nights, the fifth child has to sleep on the streets or in a shelter and even be taken away from her family and placed in foster care or a group home with strangers.

Imagine this rich family giving four of its children nourishing meals three times a day, snacks to fuel boundless energy, but sending the fifth child from the table to school hungry, with only one or two meals and never the dessert the other children enjoy.

Imagine this very wealthy family making sure four of its children get all of their shots, regular health checkups before they get sick, and immediate access to health care when illness strikes but ignoring the fifth child, who is plagued by chronic respiratory infections and painful toothaches, which sometimes abscess and kill for lack of a doctor or a dentist.

Imagine this family sending four of their children to good stimulating preschools and making sure they have music and swimming lessons after school but sending the fifth child to unsafe childcare with untrained caregivers responsible for too many children or leaving her occasionally with an accommodating relative or neighbor or older sibling or alone.

Imagine four of the children living with books in a family that is able to read to most of its children every night, but leaving the

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other child unread to, untalked and unsung to, unbugged, or propped before a television screen or video game that feeds the fifth child violence and sex and racially-and gender-charged messages, intellectual pabulum, interrupted only by ceaseless ads for material things beyond the child's grasp.

Imagine this family sending some of their children to high-quality schools in safe neighborhoods with enough books and computers and laboratories and science equipment and well-prepared teachers but sending the fifth child to a crumbling school building with peeling ceilings and leaks and lead in the paint and asbestos and old, old books — and not enough of them — and teachers untrained in the subjects they teach and with low expectations that all children can learn, especially the fifth child.

Imagine most of the family's children being excited about learning, and looking forward to finishing high school, going to college, and getting a job, but the fifth child falling further and further behind grade level, not being able to read, wanting to drop out of school, and being suspended and expelled at younger and younger ages, because no one has taught that child to read and compute. And no one has diagnosed the fifth child's attention deficit disorder or treated the child's health and mental health problems or helped that child keep up with peers.

Imagine four of the children engaged in sports and music and arts, in after-school activities and summer camps, and in enrichment programs, but the fifth child hanging out with dubious peers or going home alone leaving that fifth child alone or on the streets during idle nonschool hours and weeks and months, at risk of being sucked into illegal activities and the prison pipeline or killed in our gun-saturated nation.

This is our American family today, where one in five — 16.1 million — of our children lives in poverty in the richest nation on earth and more than 44 percent of poor children are extremely poor.

It is not a stable, healthy, economically sensible, or just family. Our failure to invest in all our children before they get sick, or drop out of school, get pregnant, or get into trouble is extremely costly. Every year that we let more than 16 million children live in poverty costs upwards of \$500 billion in lost productivity, crime, and health costs.

As our political leaders ponder our nation's choices, let them remember the millions of children living in poverty and extreme poverty and without health coverage and put their needs first and not last. Our economic futures depend on it and so does our nation's soul.

*By Marian Wright Edelman,
President, Children's Defense Fund*