



## National Observance of Children's Sabbath® Manual

A Multifaith Resource for Year-Round Child Advocacy

### “How Long Must I Cry for Help?”

Bending the Arc Toward God's  
Vision of Justice for Children



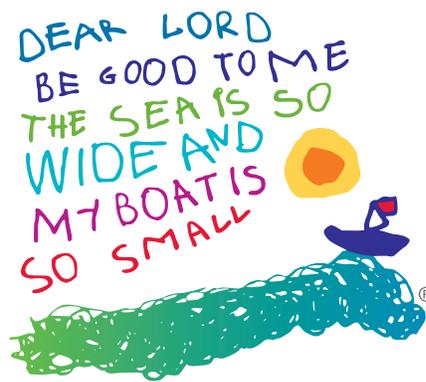
Children's Defense Fund

# How Long Must I Cry for Help? Bending the Arc Toward God's Vision of Justice for Children

**National Observance of  
Children's Sabbaths® Celebration**  
A Multifaith Resource for Year-Round  
Child Advocacy

Volume 24

By Shannon Daley-Harris



Children's Defense Fund

# Welcome to the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® Celebration



Thank you for your interest in the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® Celebration. Whether you are ready to start planning right away or are just beginning to learn about the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths*, this section is a great place to start. In this section you will find:

- A letter from Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund.
- Welcome to the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths*, an overview that explains what the Children's Sabbath is and answers frequently asked questions.
- Examples of Children's Sabbaths celebrated in 2014, which will give you a glimpse of the varied and inspiring ways that places of worship bring their concern, commitment, and creativity to planning Children's Sabbaths.
- An excerpt from CDF's report *Ending Child Poverty Now*. The full report may be found at [www.EndingChildPovertyNow.org](http://www.EndingChildPovertyNow.org)

## A Letter from Marian Wright Edelman

### *“How Long Must I Cry for Help?” Bending the Arc toward God’s Vision of Justice for Children*

Dear Faithful Friend of Children:

Fifty years ago, on March 21<sup>st</sup> 1965, I traveled from Mississippi to Selma, Alabama to join Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and thousands of fellow citizens marching the 54 miles to the steps of the state’s capitol in Montgomery. As millions of Americans now know, thanks to the movie *Selma* and the recent 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, Selma was the site of a courageous voting rights campaign by Black citizens which was met by brutal Southern Jim Crow law enforcement and citizen violence. The nation was shocked two weeks earlier when John Lewis and Reverend Hosea Williams set out on a nonviolent march with a group of 600 people toward Montgomery to demand their right to vote and were brutally attacked by lawless state and local law enforcement officials at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The televised images of “Bloody Sunday” and the savage beatings of the marchers — including Congressman Lewis whose skull was fractured — were a pivotal moment in the Civil Rights Movement and in America’s struggle to become America. It provoked the thousands of us (ultimately about 25,000) who came together later to finish the march, safer thanks to Federal District Court Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr.’s order that we had a right to peaceful protest and with National Guard protection. And we were buoyed by President Johnson’s March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1965 address calling on Congress to pass what became the Voting Rights Act of 1965.



When we at last reached the state capitol, Dr. King addressed the courageous but weary crowd of children, women, and men spanning race, religion, age, and geography who had united to complete the march from Selma to Montgomery. He said, “I know you are asking today, ‘How long will it take?’ Somebody’s asking “How long will prejudice blind the visions of men?’ I come to say to you this afternoon however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because truth pressed to earth will rise again. How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever. How long? Not long, because you still reap what you sow....How long? Not long. Because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice....Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer [God]. Be jubilant, my feet. Our God is marching on.”

Fifty years after that turning point in the Civil Rights Movement, some of us are asking “How long will it take?” Still deeply pained by the killing of Trayvon Martin, with fresh anguish over the killing of unarmed Black boys in Ferguson, Cleveland, and countless other cities and towns across our land, we’ve heard this year the collective question, “How long will racial prejudice blind our vision, how long until we affirm and act like precious Black lives matter?”

Fifty years after President Johnson’s war on poverty, some of us are asking “How long will it take? How long will it take until we end the child poverty that traps one in five children — one in two Black babies and one in three Hispanic babies? It is a national moral disgrace that there are 14.7 million poor children and 6.5 million extremely poor children in the United States of America — the world’s largest economy. It is also unnecessary, costly, and the greatest threat to our future nation, our economic and military security. And soul.

Our cry “How long” echoes the cry of the Hebrew prophet Habakkuk who asked God in anguish, <sup>2</sup>*O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save?* <sup>3</sup>*Why do you make me see wrong-doing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.* <sup>4</sup>*So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous— therefore judgment comes forth perverted.”*

The answer the prophet received? *“Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it.* <sup>3</sup>*For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.* <sup>4</sup>*Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.”*

God’s answer came to and through Habakkuk and to and through that other prophet, Dr. King: How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever. How long? Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.

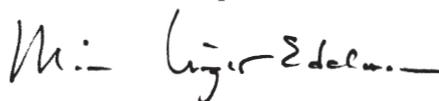
So ours is the task, now is the time, to write the vision and make it plain: every child matters and no child deserves to live in poverty. We can and must end child poverty now. Not only does child poverty cost far more than eliminating it would, we have so many better choices that reflect more just values as well as economic savings. We believe that food, shelter, quality early childhood investments to get every child ready for school and an equitable education for all children should take precedence over massive welfare for the rich and blatantly excessive spending for military weapons that do not work. We cannot let our leaders spend \$246 billion, without offsets, to repeal the estate tax, which benefits only the wealthier 0.2 percent of Americans with estates worth over \$5.4 million for an individual. How can we then say we cannot afford to ensure every child is housed and fed?

Ours is the task and now is the time to help bend the arc toward God’s vision of justice for children. We can start by ending child poverty now and here in our rich nation. How? CDF’s recent report, *Ending Child Poverty Now*, outlines steps that we can take to make a huge down payment on ending preventable, costly, and immoral child poverty in our wealthy nation. By investing an additional 2 percent of the federal budget into existing programs and policies that increase employment, make work pay, and ensure children’s basic needs are met, our nation could reduce child poverty by 60 percent and Black child poverty by 72 percent lifting 6.6 million children out of poverty immediately. We are urging every place of worship that participates in the Children’s Sabbath this year to hold a study session to learn more about how we can end child poverty now. You can download the CDF report, *Ending Child Poverty Now*, and the study session outline in the Children’s Sabbath Action Section.

Ours is the task, now is the time to help bend the arc toward God’s vision of justice for children by uniting with places of worship all across the nation on the Children’s Sabbath weekend. Together, we will hear the cries of our children and respond through service and action not only on the Children’s Sabbath weekend but throughout the year to come.

Thank you for your commitment to living your faith in action with and for children, to help bend the arc toward God’s vision of justice. Together we can and will make a difference.

With faith and hope,



Marian Wright Edelman

## Welcome to the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® Celebration

Welcome to the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* manual. Whether this is your 24<sup>th</sup> celebration or your first, we are so grateful that you are a part of this multifaith effort. You make a difference in the lives of children and in the life of your place of worship — by connecting the two, you can improve the lives of children in your place of worship, community, and across our nation and bring new inspiration and excitement to your worshipping community.

By participating in the multifaith *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* weekend, you are part of a powerful, diverse multifaith voice for children spanning our nation and crossing all lines of income, race, ethnicity, and political party. What unites us is the belief that God calls us to protect children, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, and the conviction that our faith calls us to live out God's justice and compassion.

This inspiring weekend focuses attention on the urgent plight of children in our nation and calls us to put our faith into action to meet children's needs through direct service and work for justice. Through the service of worship, educational programs, and activities, you can affirm what your place of worship already does with and for children while challenging members to take new actions and commit to new efforts to meet the needs of children in your community, state, and our nation.

**The 2015 *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* title is “How Long Must I Cry for Help? Bending the Arc toward God's Vision of Justice for Children.”** Together, people of faith and places of worship will respond to the cries of poor children and families and work to end child poverty. As Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund, has written, “It is a national moral disgrace that there are 14.7 million poor children and 6.5 million extremely poor children in the United States of America — the world's largest economy. It also unnecessary, costly, and the greatest threat to our future nation, economic, and military security....Not only does child poverty cost far more than eliminating it would, we have so many better choices that reflect more just values as well as economic savings. We believe that food, shelter, quality early childhood investments to get every child ready for school and an equitable education for all children should take precedence over massive welfare for the rich and blatantly excessive spending for military weapons that do not work.” On the Children's Sabbath weekend and beyond, places of worship and people of faith will work together to end child poverty and help “bend the arc” toward God's vision of justice for children so that every child has what they need to survive and thrive.

## What is the Children's Sabbath?

**The Children's Sabbath is a weekend that unites places of worship of all faiths across the nation in shared concern for children and common commitment to improving children's lives and working for justice on their behalf.** In that respect, it is bigger and more powerful and more inspiring than the efforts of any one congregation on its own. On the Children's Sabbath, places of worship have a strong sense of participating in a larger movement for children. Some places of worship plan services, educational sessions, and activities for their own place of worship. Others join with one or more places of worship in shared services and activities. In some communities all of the faith communities work together to sponsor a multifaith service to which the entire community is invited. Often, local organizations serving children or working on their behalf join in the planning of these community-wide multifaith Children's Sabbaths.

### **A Children's Sabbath weekend typically has four elements:**

- 1) **A service of worship or prayers**, during which the divine mandate to nurture and protect children calls us to respond to the needs of children today;
- 2) **Educational programs**, during which people of all ages learn more about the needs of children today and the sociopolitical structures that keep children in need, explore the sacred texts, teaching, and traditions that lead us to serve and seek justice for children, and develop specific, active responses to help children;
- 3) **Activities** that immediately engage participants in compassionate service to help children and in action to seek justice (such as writing letters to elected officials); and
- 4) **Follow-up actions** that use the inspiration, information, and motivation of the Children's Sabbath weekend to lead individual members and places of worship as a whole into new, effective efforts to improve the lives of children in the congregation, community, and nation throughout the year.

**The Children's Sabbath is sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund, guided by a multifaith advisory committee, and endorsed by hundreds of denominations and religious organizations.** The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. CDF provides a strong, effective and independent voice for *all* the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor children, children of color and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investments before they get sick, drop out of school, get into trouble or suffer family breakdown.

CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by individual donations, foundation, corporate and government grants.

From its inception, CDF has recognized the importance of the faith community's partnership in building a movement to *Leave No Child Behind*. A nation that lets its children be the poorest citizens has at its heart a spiritual and ethical crisis. Thus, the religious community must help to transform our nation's priorities so that we defend those who are youngest, weakest, poorest, and most vulnerable. For many years CDF has worked to support denominations and religious organizations as they develop and maintain child advocacy campaigns. The *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* celebration was launched in 1992 to coalesce these efforts into a united moral witness for children that crosses all lines of geography, faith tradition, race, and ethnicity.

**The Children's Sabbath observance is guided by a multifaith advisory committee with Muslim, Jewish, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Bábá'í, and Sikh members.** It is endorsed by more than 200 denominations, faith groups, and religious organizations. If you are interested in having your organization become an official endorser of the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* movement, please email [sdaleyharris@childrensdefense.org](mailto:sdaleyharris@childrensdefense.org)

**The Children's Sabbath is a mix of joy and sorrow, celebration and sober commitment.** To be sure, a Children's Sabbath exudes the happiness of a wonderful celebration. Children delight in their roles of the day, parents hug children a little tighter, more conscious of the gift that they are, balloons may adorn buildings, children's artwork may brighten hallways, child-friendly snacks may replace the usual after-services fare. It is a day that children and families look forward to, and those without children at their side can also appreciate the extra energy and excitement of the event.

At the same time, the Children's Sabbath is sobering, as the service and activities deepen our understanding of the terrible plight facing millions of children in our country and the injustice that we have left unchallenged. It is painful to think about children who are hungry or homeless, without access to health care, abused or neglected, victims of gun violence, without good quality child care, or denied a place in Head Start. The Children's Sabbath can be an eye-opening experience. And done properly, the Children's Sabbath will do more than open eyes to the problems facing children — it also will lift up new ways to help children and families and inspire and motivate people to respond and get involved.

**The Children's Sabbath is an annual event.** The *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* weekend is designated for the third weekend of October each year.

Because it is an annual event, places of worship participating for the first time can just “stick a toe in the water” and participate in small, simple ways... although some want to jump in completely right from the start. Others build their participation year by year, adding more elements to their observance. Because it occurs annually, places of worship have the opportunity to evaluate what worked well and what didn't and improve their plans for the following year.

Most importantly, because the Children's Sabbath takes place each fall, children look forward to it from year to year, having a consistent experience of their place of worship as community that cares about children and is committed to nurturing and protecting them.

**The Children's Sabbath is flexible.** While there is a suggested theme each year, places of worship are encouraged to focus on the most urgent problems confronting children and families in their communities. The Children's Sabbath downloadable resources are chock full of materials from which you can pick and choose those best suited to your places of worship. Most can be used as is, or adapted, or simply serve as inspiration for you to create your own materials. Materials prepared for one faith tradition may be enriching for another tradition.

And while the suggested date is the third weekend of October, if that date doesn't work for your place of worship's calendar, pick a different date that does. What is most important is finding a time to focus on the needs of children and our responsibility to nurture and protect them.

## The Children's Sabbath is a time to...

### **Celebrate and strengthen existing efforts for children**

The Children's Sabbath seeks to affirm and celebrate the important work that places of worship are already doing with and for children. The faithful, week-in and week-out efforts of places of worship make an enormous difference in children's lives, and the Children's Sabbath seeks to highlight, applaud, and build even greater support for those important, ongoing efforts. Hopefully, by the end of the Children's Sabbath weekend, existing efforts in your place of worship to help children and families will have more visibility, new volunteers, increased resources, and fresh energy.

### **Discover new opportunities to help children**

The Children's Sabbath provides an opportunity for each place of worship to consider in what new ways they might work — as a body or as individuals — to help children not only in your midst, but in the community and across the nation. Religious leaders, committees, and members may discover additional problems confronting children — like poverty, lack of health care, or violence — and come up with new ways to respond to them. This might include starting a new program sponsored by your place of worship. Or it might mean exploring and promoting opportunities for individual members to commit their time, services, or resources. Or it might mean forging a new partnership with another place of worship or community organization to help children. It could mean establishing a new child advocacy committee to guide your work for justice for children.

### **Pray, study, and reflect**

The Children's Sabbath is a time to look deeply at what one's faith tradition says about our responsibility to nurture and protect children. This is done through the worship service — in prayer, readings, songs, and sermon or other aspects of your place of worship's devotional life. It is also done in educational sessions, whether classes for children and youths or adult forums or inter-generational discussions.

### **Take action**

The Children's Sabbath is a time for action that springs from that faithful study and reflection. It is not only a time to pray, but also a time to put prayer into action. It is not only a time to study, but also a time to serve children directly. It is not only a time to sing, but also a time to speak out to elected leaders and others about the need for justice. So on the Children's Sabbath weekend, after worship/prayers or at another time, members and leaders should join in hands-on activities to help children as well as engage in working for justice — perhaps writing letters or planning a visit to an elected official.

### **Commit to new, long-term efforts**

The Children's Sabbath is intended to inspire new long-term efforts to help children and families. However wonderful the weekend celebrations may be, what matters most is what individuals and places of worship do in the following weeks and months and years to help children. Some places of worship will start new service or advocacy efforts (on their own or in partnership with other places of worship or community organizations), such as an after-school tutoring program or housing a Head Start program or an outreach and enrollment campaign to help uninsured children get health care. Other places of worship will work to encourage individual members to find new ways to volunteer time or resources to help children and change the systems that keep children in need.

## Frequently Asked Questions About the Children's Sabbath

### **Is the Children's Sabbath the same thing as Children's Day, Youth Sunday, Tot Shabbat or Children's Service?**

The Children's Sabbath shares some aspects of Children's Day, Youth Sunday, Tot Shabbat, and children's services, but it is distinct and unique in some vital ways.

Some congregations celebrate June Children's Day, often to congratulate and celebrate youngsters who have completed Sunday school. Like a Children's Day, the Children's Sabbath celebrates the gift of children and has a sense of hopefulness and joy. But the Children's Sabbath also focuses attention on the urgent problems facing children across our nation and provides a call and support to respond to improve children's lives. And while Children's Day is more typically celebrated only in churches, from the start the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* weekend has been a multifaith movement.

Many congregations have Youth Days when they turn the service over to the young people to plan and lead. Like a Youth Day, on the Children's Sabbath children and youths often participate in the planning and leadership of the day. But on the Children's Sabbath, the adults aren't only the "audience," because the Children's Sabbath is an intergenerational event drawing on the leadership and involvement of *all* ages to convey its message that each of us, no matter our age, has a role to play in nurturing and protecting children and working for justice.

Some places of worship have separate services designed just for children to attend. Like those "children's services," or a 'Tot Shabbat,' worship on the Children's Sabbath is intended to be engaging and meaningful to the children who attend. But the Children's Sabbath is a service for everyone, and it aims to speak to all ages.

### **I want to get involved in the Children's Sabbath movement. Where do I start?**

Reviewing these Children's Sabbath resource materials is the first important step in getting involved in the Children's Sabbath, so you are already on your way!

The next planning steps can be found in the "Planning Your Children's Sabbath Celebration: Ideas for All Faiths" section of this resource. One of the first decisions you and those who join you in the planning will need to make is whether to plan a Children's Sabbath just for your place of worship or to join with other faith communities or denominations to plan a multifaith or ecumenical Children's Sabbath in your community. Either option is a valuable way to participate. You should determine what is right for your place of worship this year.

These Children's Sabbath resource materials provide planning suggestions, promotion ideas, worship resources, educational resources, activity ideas, and suggestions for building on your Children's Sabbath to help children throughout the year.

### **What if my place of worship can't participate on the designated dates?**

Choose an alternate date! While it's great to celebrate on the same weekend as thousands of other places of worship, what's most important is to participate in the movement at a time that works for your place of worship.

**Which is better to do, a Children's Sabbath in my own place of worship or a multifaith, community-wide service?**

Both are valuable. A service in your own place of worship communicates that this concern is an integral part of the life of your congregation and makes it easier to plan follow-up efforts. A community-wide service is an exciting experience and expression of the shared concerns and common commitment to children of many faith traditions. They can create new partnerships for effective community efforts to help children. But they can also take a lot more work to plan and generate turn-out!

**We just heard about the Children's Sabbath weekend and don't have much time left to plan. What can we do?**

There are a couple of options. You could schedule your celebration for a later date to allow for more planning time. Or, you could still plan to participate on the third weekend of October, but just start with what is quickest and easiest to do, such as photocopying and distributing one of the bulletin inserts, or including one of the prayers or readings provided in the Children's Sabbath resource materials. (You might still have time to invite a guest speaker who is engaged in work to improve the lives of children.) Then, you could plan an educational program or activities to serve or seek justice for children to take place in the months and year that follow.

**Should we bother participating in the Children's Sabbath celebration if my place of worship already cares about children?**

The Children's Sabbath is an opportunity to affirm what we already do and at the same time deepen our understanding both of God's call and the current crises facing children so that we may more fully, persistently, effectively, and faithfully live out that calling not only on the Children's Sabbath weekend but throughout the year.

There is an extraordinary power in participating in the Children's Sabbath, knowing that all across the country, in places of worship of many different faiths, we are united in our concern for children and in our commitment to respond.

## Examples of Children's Sabbaths Celebrated in 2014

Like our children, no two Children's Sabbath celebrations are alike, but each is precious and important. Read on for inspiration and ideas from just a few of the countless Children's Sabbath celebrations that took place last year from coast to coast, in places of worship large and small, through celebrations in individual places of worship and community-wide gatherings, from first-time participants to congregations celebrating for two decades or more.

*[We would love to share the ideas and inspiration of what you plan for the 2015 Children's Sabbath, so please let us know by sending an email to [sdaleyharris@childrensdefense.org](mailto:sdaleyharris@childrensdefense.org). Send us a line before or after your events. We would welcome any information — from simply the congregation's name, location, and date of the celebration to a longer description of what is planned or what was done.]*

**Worship, Education, and Action:** The 2014 Children's Sabbath celebration at the **Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta** included opportunities for worship, education, and action. They celebrated the 2014 Children's Sabbath with worship services focused on children's issues followed by "Lunch and Learn" during which congregation members and guests joined in roundtable discussions with experts about specific children's issues. To support action after the Children's Sabbath, the UUCA social justice groups set up tables in the social hall where members could learn what the groups were already doing to improve the lives of children and families and how members could volunteer. UUCA members were also encouraged to join in the Interfaith Children's Movement of Atlanta Prayer Breakfast the following week.

**Partnering with Another Faith Community:** **Ezher Bloom Mosque** and **Oakton United Methodist Church**, in **Oakton, Virginia**, joined for an interfaith Children's Sabbath. Organizers wrote, "Children's Sabbath is a time to unite religious congregations of all faiths in shared concern for children and common commitment to improving their lives and working for justice on their behalf... By joining with those of another faith, we help bring to light the plight of children in a bigger and more powerful and more inspiring way than the efforts of any one congregation or denomination can accomplish on its own."

Both congregations gathered for a single worship service. Children and youths from both faith communities were invited to participate and met a week ahead of time to rehearse. A time of fellowship followed the shared service, during which they made children's blankets to be shared with those in need and collected donations of diapers.

**A Guest Speaker:** **Skyline Church, United Church of Christ**, in **Oakland California**, celebrated the 2014 Children's Sabbath with an emphasis on "the preciousness of EVERY child." They celebrated with "a fun, dynamic, moving, child- & teen-friendly service...[with] drama, music, singing, story-time, and dancing." The service included a presentation on child advocacy by a representative from Interfaith Worker Justice, and was followed by lunch and a time of fellowship.

**Speaking Out for Justice:** Reform Synagogues across the country were urged to contact their Senators to support the summer food program, as the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism wrote in an article on their website, “On this Children’s Shabbat, We Challenge Ourselves to End Child Hunger in the US,”

“This Friday marks the National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths, which unites tens of thousands of religious congregations and over 200 religious organizations (including the RAC) of a variety of faiths to speak out and act faithfully for justice for children and their families. This weekend, religious congregations will hold special worship services, lead religious education programs as well as other congregational activities that will inspire people of faith to respond to children’s needs and commit to making this a better and safer world for all children. The RAC even helped create the program guide to accompany this important Shabbat event.... The bipartisan Summer Meals Act of 2014 (S. 2527) would expand, strengthen, and protect access to the Summer Nutrition Programs, which provide federal funding to serve nutritious foods during the summer break. *Tell your Senators to support the Summer Meals Act of 2014 now!* As we conclude Sukkot and look to celebrate Children’s Shabbat, think of how you can answer your faith tradition’s call to honor the children who, like all people, are created *b’tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). This weekend, over our shared days of rest, people of faith are uniting together around our joint goal of ensuring a better future for all children.”

**Hands-On Service after the Service:** The service at **St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church** in **Atlanta** included many children in leadership roles, as prayer leaders, oblation bearers, acolytes, choristers, readers, and ushers. The congregation’s third graders received Bibles on the Children’s Sabbath, too. The celebration went beyond the service and the congregation’s own children to embrace children in the community. After the worship service, all ages were invited to “help us cherish every child by pitching in to make sandwiches for Emmaus House Afterschool Program.”

**An Interfaith Prayer Vigil:** In **Houston, Texas**, an **Interfaith Children’s Prayer Vigil** was hosted at the Hope and Healing Center of St. Martin’s Episcopal Church. The community-wide gathering was co-sponsored CDF-Texas and the Houston/Gulf Coast chapter of Get Covered America Campaign. Organizers reported, “The intimate prayer gathering included prayers and teachings on children shared by local members of the Christian and Muslim communities, the meditations and writings of CDF president Marian Wright Edelman read by local children, and a call to action for caring adults to reaffirm and renew a commitment to children, focusing on three urgent challenges: poverty, education, and access to health care.”

**Saturday Forum and Sunday Worship:** **Big Bethel AME Church** in **Atlanta** celebrated its ninth annual National Children’s Sabbath Observance in 2014, hosting an interactive forum on Saturday highlighting health and wellness and a focus on foster care and adoption. With a theme, “Build Healthy Families by Building Healthy Children - Emotionally, physically and spiritually,” they held group discussions for children and youth facilitators on bullying, gun violence, and self-esteem, and ended with an aerobics workout for physical fitness. They concluded the Children’s Sabbath observance with both services of worship on Sunday.

**A Day-Long Advocacy Event:** The **Baltimore Region of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church** and the **Board of Child Care** collaborated on their first annual Children's Sabbath Celebration on Saturday, October 18, 2014. They promoted the event to the community:

“The celebration is an interactive advocacy event that will encourage people of faith to improve the lives of children and their families both locally in Maryland and globally. The weekend observance is part of a national campaign organized by the Children's Defense Fund. Attendees will learn about several existing ministries and what opportunities are available to get their congregations or themselves personally involved. The workshops are designed to empower each individual to take action following the conclusion of the event.

This year's Children's Sabbath theme is, ‘Precious in God's Sight: Answering the Call to Cherish and Protect Every Child.’ Our goal as United Methodists is to multiply our impact as advocates for all God's children.

You are invited to come as an individual or to bring a team from your congregation. This event is appropriate for children who are middle school age and above. Please join us!”

The day included welcoming remarks from the president of the Board of Child Care, a guest preacher and worship with a Praise and Worship Team, group break-out strategy sessions for youth, young adults, and adults, an Act of Commitment — Anointing and Prayer with music from a children's choir, and concluded with lunch.

**Spreading the Word:** The October issue of the **Moravian magazine** reminded members that the Moravian Church endorsed the Children's Sabbath back in 1994 and encouraged those in the Northern and Southern Provinces to participate.

**Writing Letters to Members of Congress:** In addition to using Children's Sabbath resources in their worship and prayers, **Congregational United Church of Christ in Arlington Heights, IL**, encouraged their members to write letters on behalf of extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

**Youth Leadership: First Baptist Church of Asheville,** posted their 2014 Children's Sabbath service on Vimeo, which included a sermon titled, “Ordinary and Extraordinary,” and young worship leaders including acolytes, Bible bearer, a children's choir, the Asheville Youth Choir, youth handbell choir, and more.

**Devotions, Donations, and Displays:** The 2014 Children's Sabbath at **First Presbyterian Church of Dallas** included a number of elements, described in this excerpt from their newsletter:

“Our children's choirs will participate as leaders in worship, there will be a ‘Time with Children,’ and a Minute for Mission about Mi Escuelita Preschools. In preparation for Children's Sabbath, consider using the devotional guide available to you on the Children's Ministry page of the website. This guide will help you think about advocating for and praying

for all of God's Children. In Anderson Common, on Oct. 12, you will find displays highlighting how FPC supports children and youth in our congregation, Stewpot Children and Youth Programs and our Developmental Day School. In addition, there will be information about programs we support and where members volunteer including Reading Partners, Mi Escuelita, All Stars and PCHAS. The Day School will be hosting an open house following worship in the Drane Early Childhood Center Lobby for FPC members to help celebrate 30 years.

Wish List: As part of our Children's Sabbath Celebration we are asking folks to bring donations of paper products and art supplies for the Mi Escuelita Preschools. **NEEDED:** Paper towels • Kleenex • toilet tissue • paper plates • Dixie cups • construction paper • crayons Please place in the marked box in Anderson Common or on the third floor by the Children's Library through October 19."

**Interfaith Prayers and Posts:** **Minnesota's Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (JRLC)**, comprised of the **Minnesota Catholic Conference**, the **Islamic Center of Minnesota**, the **Jewish Community Relations Council**, and the **Minnesota Council of Churches**, featured the Children's Sabbath and prayers for children in their "Tuesday Teachings" website posts in the weeks leading up to the Children's Sabbath.

**Lighting Candles and Gathering Donations:** In **Winston-Salem, NC**, **First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)** lit a Candle for Children in each service for the month leading up to the Children's Sabbath. On the Children's Sabbath, they gathered donations of items for an elementary school with whom the church partners in the Backpack Program. Donations included notebooks, pencils, glue sticks, washable markers, pens, post-it pads, large crayons, blunt-tipped scissors, and gently used clothing.

**Sharing Children's Sabbath Resources:** The **Northeastern Iowa Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America** posted Children's Sabbath resources on its website to help Lutheran churches participate.

**Decades of Devotion:** **First Baptist Church in Springfield, OH**, celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> Children's Sabbath this year! They held a special worship service with a focus on adoption. The guest speaker was a Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter for the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.

**A First for First:** 2014 was the first time that **First United Methodist Church in Uvalde, Texas**, celebrated the Children's Sabbath. An organizer reported, "Children took over every task that the adults usually do in each service. They were greeters, ushers, liturgists, musicians, singers, prayer leaders, and, in place of a sermon, gave testimonials." Asked about planning outreach or advocacy activities beyond the service this year, the organizer reported, "Not this year since it was our first time and we were testing the waters. But we will definitely include a service opportunity or advocacy and special offering next time."

**Raising Awareness and On-Going Efforts:** At **Idlewild Presbyterian Church** in **Memphis, TN**, the 2014 Children's Sabbath service included children sharing statistics about children in the nation, state, and city. The congregation's on-going efforts for children include weekend food packs for children, a neighborhood garden, tutoring and reading in neighborhood school, offering recreation activities, and art therapy classes.

**Supporting Strong Families:** **Free Mission Missionary Baptist Church** in the Lower Ninth Ward of **New Orleans, Louisiana**, planned a program on the Children's Sabbath theme, engaging the youth counselors and the pastor who preached on the message. The congregation's on-going work in support of strong families includes a parenting program that distributes newsletters and a yearly honors program.

**Multifaith Prayer and Action:** **Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY)**, a Philadelphia area advocacy organization, posted this on their website:

#### **2014 Children's Sabbath to Inspire More Action for Young Children**

Please join PCCY and the Pre-k For PA Campaign for the 21st annual Children's Sabbath Interfaith Service on Sunday, October 19th at 3 pm at the **Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill**. Leaders from every faith will deliver messages on the importance of ensuring preschool children are nurtured and protected. Prominent ministers, local children's choirs and the CAPA Dance Company will inspire reflection and action at this interfaith service. We will also be collecting new and gently used children's books for ages zero to six. We hope you can join us for this special day of fellowship.

[Click here to download a flyer that you can share with your friends.](#)

Participants in this multifaith service included a speaker from the **Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children**, **Singing City Children's Choir**, **GEGISOM Dance Class** Students, **Masjidullah Children's Group**, and the **CAPA Dance Company**. The books collected were donated to Philadelphia Reads and Project Home. The Greater Philadelphia Children's Sabbath Coalition, which planned the event, rotates where the service is held each year. Organizers are already planning the 2015 Children's Sabbath which will be hosted by **Basilica of SS Peter and Paul** in **Philadelphia**.

## Excerpt from CDF's 2015 Report: *Ending Child Poverty Now*

For the first time, CDF's recent report, *Ending Child Poverty Now* shows that by investing an additional 2 percent of the federal budget into existing programs and policies that increase employment, make work pay, and ensure children's basic needs are met, the nation could reduce child poverty by 60 percent and lift 6.6 million children out of poverty.

The United States has the second highest child poverty rate among 35 industrialized countries despite having the largest economy in the world. A child in the United States has a 1 in 5 chance of being poor and the younger she is the poorer she is likely to be. A child of color, who will be in the majority of U.S. children in 2020, is more than twice as likely to be poor as a White child. This is unacceptable and unnecessary. Growing up poor has lifelong negative consequences, decreasing the likelihood of graduating from high school and increasing the likelihood of becoming a poor adult, suffering from poor health, and becoming involved in the criminal justice system. These impacts cost the nation at least half a trillion dollars a year in lost productivity and increased health and crime costs. Letting a fifth of our children grow up poor prevents them from having equal opportunities to succeed in life and robs the nation of their future contributions.

The U.S. can end child poverty by investing more in programs and policies that work. Substantial progress in reducing child poverty has been made over the past 50 years, despite worsening income inequality and increased unemployment and low-wage work. Child poverty dropped over a third from 1967 to 2012 when income from in-kind benefits like nutrition and housing assistance and tax credits are counted. Without these federal safety net programs child poverty would have been 68 percent higher in 2013, and 8.2 million additional children would have been poor. Despite this progress, 12.2 million children were poor in 2013 even after taking into account federal safety net programs because good jobs are still too scarce and safety net programs are stretched far too thin.

Recognizing the harms child poverty causes and building on progress already made in reducing child poverty, the Children's Defense Fund contracted with the Urban Institute to estimate the impact on child poverty if the nation invested more in proven poverty reduction strategies. Focusing on policies and programs that improve families' current economic well-being, CDF targeted changes in nine existing programs and policies that help make work pay, increase employment, and meet children's basic needs.

Using the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) that best accounts for the impact of government benefits and tax policy, and 2010 data, the most recent available when research began, the Urban Institute found that these changes would:

- Reduce child poverty 60 percent — lifting 6.6 million children, 0.5 million of them extremely poor, above the poverty line.
- Improve the economic circumstances of another 4 million poor children, although not enough to lift them above the poverty line.
- Reduce child poverty among children under 3 by 64 percent.
- Reduce poverty among Black children, who suffer the highest child poverty rates, 72 percent.
- Reduce poverty among single-parent households 64 percent.
- Reduce poverty among children in non-metropolitan areas 68 percent.

In all, 97 percent of poor children would experience improvements in their family's economic circumstances.

## Policy Improvements To Reduce Child Poverty By 60 Percent

### Increasing employment and making work pay more for adults with children

- Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit for lower-income families with children.
- Increase the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10.
- Create subsidized jobs for unemployed and underemployed individuals ages 16-64 in families with children.
- Make child care subsidies available to all eligible families below 150 percent of poverty.
- Make the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit refundable with a higher reimbursement rate.

### Ensuring children's basic needs are met

- Base SNAP benefits on USDA's Low-Cost Food Plan for families with children.
- Make the Child Tax Credit fully refundable.
- Make housing vouchers available to all households with children below 150 percent of poverty for whom fair market rent exceeds 50 percent of their income.
- Require child support to be fully passed through to TANF families, fully disregarded for TANF benefits, and partially disregarded for SNAP benefits.

Reducing child poverty 60 percent with these improvements was estimated to cost \$77.2 billion in 2010, only 2 percent of U.S. government spending that year, 0.5 percent of the 2010 U.S. gross domestic product (GDP), and 15 percent of the estimated \$500 billion the nation spends every year for the costs of children growing up poor. By reducing child poverty now the nation would reduce these children's chances of becoming poor adults and reduce child poverty in the next generation.

Our nation can easily afford it. There are multiple ways to increase investments in children without increasing the deficit, from reducing military spending — the U.S. accounts for less than 5 percent of the world's population but 37 percent of the world's military spending — to closing tax breaks and loopholes that cost the nation hundreds of billions while fueling the nation's alarming income and wealth gaps.

The Urban Institute's analysis for CDF is clear: by investing more in existing programs the U.S. could substantially decrease child poverty immediately. Shrinking child poverty by 60 percent and improving economic circumstances for 97 percent of poor children would improve the life chances of millions of children, bring child poverty in the U.S. in line with rates in other high-income countries, and help prevent poverty in the future. As the wealthy and powerful nation we are, it is way past time we commit to ensuring all children's basic needs are met. This report shows for the first time that solutions to child poverty in our rich nation already exist if we are willing to invest in them. Let's create that public will and take action for our children — they cannot wait.

**To read the full report and engage others in learning more, see the Children's Sabbath Action Section. For stories of just a few of the families behind the statistics, see the bulletin inserts in the Promoting Your Children's Sabbath Section and in the full report.**