

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 bulletin 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, Twitter and LinkedIn to spread the word about your Children's Sabbath activities.
- ❑ **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:

Children of Promise Closing Opportunity Gaps Focus of 2016 Children's Sabbath

The 2016 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® Celebration, "Children of Promise: Closing Opportunity Gaps," 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 enters the world full of promise and potential. However, gaps in family income, early childhood development, and education widen over time making it far harder for some children to thrive, succeed, and fulfill their promise. We will be raising a voice of concern about these opportunity gaps and learning how we can close them so all children have an equal opportunity to become all God intends them to be. We will be taking action on the Children's Sabbath weekend and looking at ways we can continue to work faithfully throughout the year through direct service, raising awareness, and working for justice so every child may realize their full promise and potential.

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 congregations of many faiths will be uniting to focus on children in need — especially the 15.5 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 25th 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, "Children of Promise: Closing Opportunities Gaps."

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 15 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], 2016

[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: "Children of Promise: Closing Opportunity Gaps." This year the Children's Sabbath is focusing on assuring every child a Strong Start in life through nurturing early childhood development and learning.

"To close opportunity gaps so that every child can fulfill their God-given potential, we as adults and political leaders and as a nation need to keep our promise that every child is of equal worth," 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 achieve 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, so that all children have strong schools that expect and support success from every student, and so that no child has their basic needs unmet because of family income."

[Insert statement from a local religious leader]

According to the Children Defense Fund, opportunity to thrive during childhood depends on many factors. If key factors are unavailable to children, the consequences for their development and success as adults can be dire. Poverty hurts children and harms their futures. Too many poor children in rich America are denied opportunity for success when their basic needs are not met, and when they are denied access to high-quality development and learning opportunity beginning in the early years.

[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.

For Page 8, make a one-sided photocopy and cut down the middle to make two sets of 5 ½" x 8 ½" one-page bulletin inserts.

Children's Sabbath Service Inserts (Pages 9 to 10)

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. (The completed insert will have "Children of Promise" at the top of the front page, the inside lefthand side will have "But unequal opportunities and circumstances" at the top, the inside righthand side will have "How do we do that?" at the top, and the back of the insert will have "Where do we start?" at the top.)

For Page 11 and 12, make a two-sided photocopy and cut down the middle to make two sets of 5 ½" x 8 ½" two-sided-page bulletin inserts.

The 25th Annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths is coming!

We will be joining in this multi-faith weekend, uniting with places of worship across the country

- to celebrate the promise in every child
- to recognize the opportunity gaps that make it hard for all children to fulfill their promise
- to draw on and be sustained by our sacred texts, teaching and traditions that affirm every child's sacred worth, and
- to commit to work with love and justice throughout the year until we close the gaps so every child may thrive.

Date: _____

Time: _____

For more information about what we are planning and how you can be involved, contact: _____



Children's Defense Fund

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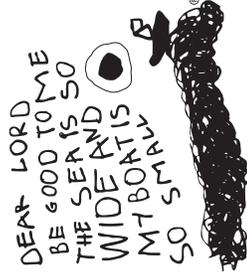
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Children's Defense Fund

Where do we start?

- 1) Pray, meditate, or spend time in other faithful reflection to seek discernment, strength, and courage to value all children and act to put that value into practice.
- 2) Learn more about the challenges children and families face and how we can overcome them, at www.childrensdefense.org.
- 3) Connect with timely information, at www.childrensdefense.org and through the Washington offices or social justice arms of your faith community, to raise a faithful and effective citizen voice calling for justice and actions that close opportunity gaps.
- 4) Reach out in your own place of worship or community to do what you can to help end child poverty, support families in nurturing their children's early development, and strengthening schools and students that need it the most.
- 5) Vote and take your children with you when you do. Talk about the values and priorities you use to make your decision.

Children's Defense Fund

“Children of Promise: Closing Opportunity Gaps” 2016 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths

Every child enters the world full of promise,
meant for the fullness of life,
deserving of love and protection,
equal in worth, with boundless potential.



But unequal opportunities and circumstances — in family income, early childhood development, education, and more — can create small gaps that widen over time, until some children face opportunity gaps so vast they cannot leap across on their own...

Children need us — as people of faith, as adults, as citizens — to bridge the gaps with supports that help children catch up, and to close the gaps so we leave no child behind.



How do we do that?

- 1) By working for policies, programs, and supports so that parents can earn a living wage and no child is left behind in poverty;
- 2) By reaching out and calling for investments so that all babies and toddlers thrive in early childhood through nurturing home, child care, and Head Start experiences;
- 3) By working locally and statewide so that every child attends a good school with sufficient resources and teachers who expect and support every child to succeed; and
- 4) By cherishing every child and by calling on our legislators to do the same by closing opportunity gaps that favor some and disadvantage others.

Each Day in America for All Children

- 2 mothers die from complications of childbirth.
- 4 children are killed by abuse or neglect.
- 6 children or teens commit suicide.
- 7 children or teens are killed by guns
- 21 children or teens die from accidents.
- 41 children or teens are injured with a gun.
- 48 children or teens are injured or killed with a gun.
- 64 babies die before their first birthdays.
- 167 children are arrested for violent crimes.
- 384 children are arrested for drug crimes.
- 690 babies are born to teen mothers.
- 874 babies are born at low birthweight.
- 927 public school students are corporally punished.*
- 1,285 babies are born into extreme poverty.
- 1,526 babies are born without health insurance.
- 1,903 children are confirmed as abused or neglected.
- 2,570 babies are born into poverty.
- 2,857 high school students drop out.*
- 3,617 children are arrested.
- 4,396 babies are born to unmarried mothers.
- 12,816 public school students are suspended.*

*Based on 180 school days a year.

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Moments in America for All Children

Every 2 seconds	Public school student suspended*
Every 9 seconds	High school student drops out*
Every 20 seconds	Baby born to an unmarried mother
Every 24 seconds	Child is arrested
Every 27 seconds	Public school student corporally punished*
Every 34 seconds	Baby born into poverty
Every 45 seconds	Child confirmed abused or neglected
Every 57 seconds	Baby born without health insurance
Every 67 seconds	Baby born into extreme poverty
Every 2 minutes	Baby born to teen mother
Every 2 minutes	Baby born at low birthweight
Every 4 minutes	Child arrested for drug offense
Every 9 minutes	Child arrested for violent offense
Every 23 minutes	Baby dies before first birthday
Every 69 minutes	Child or teen dies from accident
Every 3 hours and 28 minutes	Child or teen killed by firearm
Every 4 hours	Child or teen commits suicide
Every 6 hours	Child killed by abuse or neglect
Every 11 hours	Mother dies from complications of childbirth or pregnancy

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