



Resources for a Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Celebration

A multi-faith community service offers a powerful and meaningful opportunity to bring together people from all across your community who may not have ever connected before. It is a chance to highlight our shared concern—across religious traditions—for justice and protecting and nurturing children. It is a

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

Resources for a Multi-Faith Children’s Sabbath Celebration

Be sure to read the planning steps for organizing a multi-faith community-wide service that are outlined in Planning Your Children’s Sabbath at www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths. Follow them to bring together a planning committee that represents the many religious traditions in your community.

Following you will find a suggested outline and resources for you to create your own multi-faith Children’s Sabbath service that is inclusive, respectful of different traditions, focused on the Children’s Sabbath core themes, and adaptable to your particular community and leadership.

- **A suggested outline** for your multi-faith community-wide Children’s Sabbath service is the “recipe”;
- **Resources** for your multi-faith community-wide Children’s Sabbath service are the “ingredients” —readings, prayers, and other resources from many religious traditions from which you may choose. Select those resources that appeal to your planning team, supplement them with you own, or adapt them as desired. Add readings or prayers from other traditions as appropriate to reflect the leadership and participation in your community. You may also wish to invite one or more to offer brief (one to three minutes) reflections on the religious traditions’ call to do justice and protect children.

Please note: you are not expected, nor is it recommended, to use every one of the options or resources provided below, as that would make the service run too long. (Aim for a service that is about an hour. A service much longer than that may lose the attention of children and youths present—adults, too!)

Be sure to intersperse readings, prayers, and other parts of the service with musical selections sung by the congregation or choirs. This will help to keep the service lively and to engage congregation members.

Suggested Outline for a Multi-Faith Children’s Sabbath Service

I: Gathering of the Community

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

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

- **Prelude:** choral or instrumental music that either creates an atmosphere for contemplation and reflection or that builds excitement and generates enthusiasm. One or more choirs could each offer a selection, for instance, or an organist or pianist could play.
- **Opening Procession of Religious Leaders and Children:** this can provide a visual appreciation for the range of religious traditions represented and add a sense of importance and broad support for the event. You may want to include symbolic elements to the procession or other visual enhancements, like banners, liturgical dancers, drummers, candle-lighting, or another creative element.
- **Welcome:** The religious leader in whose place of worship the multi-faith service is being held may offer a very brief welcome. If the service is not being held in a place of worship, one of the key leaders involved in planning the Children’s Sabbath may give a brief welcome. Or the welcome may be omitted and the service may move directly from the Opening Procession to the Gathering Words.

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- **Gathering Words:** Beginning with an opening prayer, call to worship, or another form of “Gathering Words” can make people from many different communities feel united in why they are there and reassured that all are welcome. See the sample resources below for Gathering Words that can be used, adapted, or simply serve as an inspiration for your own creation.
- **Congregational Hymn or Choral Anthem:** A musical selection at this point may keep the service lively. (Remember, if *everyone* is asked to sing or say it, the words should include *everyone*. For instance, if the *congregation* will be singing, remember to select a song with inclusive words that people from many different faiths will feel comfortable singing—ensure that it does not use language specific to just one tradition, such as “Jesus Christ.” If a *choir* is presenting an anthem to which the congregation will listen, singing music specific to that choir’s tradition, remember to balance the choirs represented and to ensure that no anthem while specific to a tradition puts down another faith tradition.)

II: Time of Lament

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

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

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

III: Call to Service

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

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

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

IV: Commitment to Action

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

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

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

V: Blessing

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

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

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

Sample Resources for a Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Service

Justice, Justice Shall You Pursue: Answering the Call to Protect Children

In addition to the resources provided below, and those which your planning committee creates or finds, draw from faith resources offered elsewhere in this resource manual.

Remember: you are not expected to use all of the resources offered below in one service!

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

Resources for the Gathering of the Community

Opening Prayer

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

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

Lift up our spirits with examples of people and services that make a difference and are getting children ready to learn and succeed. Strengthen our hands to reach out and our voices to speak up on behalf of children. Finally, we pray that you will inspire us by your divine presence to commit ourselves to serving your children so that each child may learn and succeed and live out the life for which you created them. Amen.

Gathering Words/Opening Prayer

Eternal source of love and justice, we gather here from many places, different traditions, and diverse experiences. We give you thanks for the richness of our diversity and the treasured uniqueness of each one here.

We also gather here, brought together by what unites us and makes us one: concern for children in need—those left behind by inequitable education, pressed down by poverty, passed over for health care, pushed along a pipeline to prison. We give you thanks for planting in each of us a heart that cares for your most vulnerable children and a passion for justice so that every child may grow and flourish. We give you thanks for our shared concern and commitment.

Use us now, we pray, to seek justice and protect children so that each is educated and encouraged, prepared for a future bright with promise. Let all people of love and justice say, **Amen.**

Resources for the Time of Lament

It's Time

(Each reader, below, will snap as soon as they finish speaking and then again at a designated interval of time. The next speaker should begin speaking after the previous speaker has snapped twice—once when they finished speaking and again after the designated interval. Every reader—except the fifth—will continue snapping at designated intervals until the Leader's second line "Time. It's time to act....")

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Leader: Time. It's time to lament, to pay attention to the crises facing our children.

Reader 1: Every second, a public school student is suspended. Each time I snap my fingers, it represents the students who are suspended in that space of time each and every school day. *[Snaps as finishes speaking, and then keeps snapping every second throughout the rest of the readers.]*

Reader 2: Every 8 seconds of the school day, a high school student drops out. Each time I snap my fingers, it represents another child whose feet are no longer on the path to a promising future. *[Snaps fingers with 8 seconds in between each snap. Keeps snapping every 8 seconds throughout the rest of the readers.]*

Reader 3: Every 20 seconds of the school day a public school student is corporally punished. Each time I snap, think of a child who experiences school as a place of pain and punishment instead of positive guidance and constructive redirection. *[Snaps fingers with 20 seconds in between.]*

Reader 4: Every 21 seconds a child is arrested. Each time I snap, think of a child who is being pushed along the Cradle to Prison Pipeline instead of along a path of promise. *[Snaps fingers with 21 seconds in between, continuing to snap throughout rest of the readers.]*

Reader 5: Every 31 seconds a baby is born into poverty. The odds for school success are stacked against this baby before she even enters a classroom for the first time. *[Snaps fingers and then snaps again in 31 seconds. After that second snap, all readers stop snapping as Leader speaks:]*

Leader: Time. It's time to act, to work together to assure that every child has an equitable and excellent education.

Reader 1: It's time to act so that we assist children early to reduce suspensions and expulsions, keep them in school and help them graduate.

Reader 2: It's time to act so that all children graduate from high school on time, with the education that will equip them for productive futures.

Reader 3: It's time to act to dismantle the Cradle to Prison Pipeline and ensure that all children are set on paths of promise.

Reader 4: It's time to act so that every school is a place of excellence and equity, where all children are expected to learn and achieve, where kindness and commitment prevail.

Reader 5: It's time to act to end child poverty in our rich nation so that every child has what they need to survive and to thrive.

Leader and Readers (together): It's time!

Leader (to congregation): Let all who agree, respond together with one snap: *(lifts both hands high to lead a collective snap.)*

The Children¹

Rushing to school, their faces red and expectant,
Dancing and smiling through the classroom doors,
Hopeful for another day, another chance
To live, to grow, to learn.

¹ By Celeste Rossetto Dickey, reprinted with permission of the author cdickey@uoregon.edu

Resources for a Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Celebration

Many come from loving families,
Eager for new adventures.
For others, school is a welcome change,
A haven from chaos and fear.

A few come in anger and rage,
Daring another one to disappoint,
Afraid to try, to trust, to care
Their hatred masking years of hurt.

How to reach you, little child,
How to touch your heart with peace,
How to remove the hurts ingrained,
How to give your spirit release.

Our God, the answers lie with you.
Let your love and wisdom flow through me.
I place each precious one in your hands.
Give me courage and strength to do your work.

(By Celeste Rossetto Dickey)

Resources for the Call to Service

Following are resources from a variety of faith traditions: the Bahá'í faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Native American traditions, Shinto, Sikhism, and Unitarian Universalism. For each tradition, there is a passage from sacred texts or other writings central to the tradition, a prayer, and a reflection.

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

The Bahá'í Faith

A Bahá'í Reading

The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favour of the All-Merciful, for education is the indispensable foundation of all human excellence and alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding glory. If a child be trained from his infancy, he will, through the loving care of the Holy Gardener, drink in the crystal waters of the spirit and of knowledge, like a young tree amid the rolling brooks. And certainly he will gather to himself the bright rays of the Sun of Truth, and through its light and heat will grow ever fresh and fair in the garden of life.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha*)²

² *Selections from the Writing of ‘Abdu’l-Baha*. Copyright © by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States. Reprinted with permission of the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL.

Bahá'í Prayers

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

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from *Prayers For Young Bahá'ís* —Compiled from the Writings of Baha’u’llah, the Bab, ‘Abdu’l-Baha, and the Greatest Holy Leaf)³

O God! Protect these children, graciously assist them to be educated and enable them to render service to the world of humanity. O God! These children are pearls, cause them to be nurtured within the shell of Thy loving-kindness. Thou art the Bountiful, the All-Loving.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from *Prayers For Young Bahá'ís* —Compiled from the Writings of Baha’u’llah, the Bab, ‘Abdu’l-Baha, and the Greatest Holy Leaf)⁴

A Bahá'í Reflection

Philosophy of Bahá'í Education

Among the greatest objectives of humanity is the education and training of children. This education ensures human progress, and prepares each soul for its entry into the next level of existence.

Education must therefore be divine as well as material. Spiritual education embodies those virtues or attributes which, when enkindled in the hearts and minds of children, not only guide their morals, but also enhance their material education. ‘Abdu’l-Baha spoke of this dual necessity, and its benefit: “If...the child be trained to be both learned and good, the result is light upon light.”

(From *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha*)⁵

The Bahá'í writings state that, before all else, children must be taught to love and obey God. This love and obedience is represented to a great extent in a child's relationship with his or her parents and in service to humankind. Because service to the world of humanity is the highest station to which a person can aspire, spiritual education programs must have service to the world of humanity as both a foundation and an outcome.

(From *Summary of the Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education by the National Bahá'í Education Task Force*)⁶

Buddhism

A Buddhist Reading

If educational institutions are narrowly focused or their spirit is confined by the boundary of self and others, then the world's civilization will be held back. Our aim is to advance the world's civilization by expanding educational institutions, transcending the boundary of self and others, widely educating future generations, and enabling all human beings to lead an ideal life.

³ *Prayer for Young Bahá'ís*. Copyright © by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States. Reprinted with permission of the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL.

⁴ *Prayer for Young Bahá'ís*. Copyright © by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States. Reprinted with permission of the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL.

⁵ *Selections from the Writing of ‘Abdu’l-Baha*. Copyright © by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States. Reprinted with permission of the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL.

⁶ *Summary of the Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education by the National Bahá'í Education Task Force*. Copyright © by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States. Reprinted with permission of the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL.

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- 1) As we have entered an era when the defects of education are removed, we ought to educate the children of others as if they were our own children whether or not we have children of our own. For the realization of this ideal, we must support educational institutions as far as we can and we must educate as many children as we can as if they were our own children.
- 2) A nation and society must establish a wide variety of educational institutions and carry out the educational plan successfully.
- 3) In religious orders, societies, nations, and the world, those who carry out the ideal of educating the children of others should be recognized and rewarded for their meritorious deeds.

(From the Scripture of Won Buddhism)

A Buddhist Reading:

A mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects her child, her only child. In the same way should you cultivate love without measure toward all beings. You should cultivate toward the whole world—above, below, around—a heart of love unstinted, unmixed with any sense of differing or opposing interests. You should maintain this mindfulness all the time you are awake. Such a state of heart is the best in the world.

(From *The Buddha Speaks*, edited by Anne Bancroft)⁷

A Buddhist Prayer

May Dharmakaya Buddha nurture in us concentration, wisdom, and compassion.

We pray everyone becomes emboldened in heart to see the path that leads to love and peace.

May we spend more time in meditation and silence to see the truth: the truth about ourselves, the truth about others, and the truth about the universe for the benefit of the earth community.

Let us find the faith and courage to plant seeds of hope for children and thus flourish as one Family in One World.

May we recognize interdependency and interconnectedness: that humanity is one family and the world is the house we share. May we become co-workers on earth among congregations and communities to foster the quality of children's life. May the ... Children's Sabbath deepen and strengthen our love for all children.

(By the Venerable Dr. Chung Ok Lee)⁸

A Buddhist Reflection

Education, Children, and Responsibility

Buddhists believe in Law of Causality and Rebirth. This understanding invites us to have long-term vision of past, present, and future generations. According to the concept of rebirth, it is our own duties and responsibilities to educate and protect future generations since we want to come back to a happier house and more enlightened society. Therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to create a loving and nurturing environment for children. Since future generations will become our future parents, it is crucial to provide good education and health care for them. It is especially critical to give quality education for all girl children of future generations because they will become our future mothers. The quality of their life and education will have direct impact on our future.

⁷ *The Buddha Speaks*, edited by Anne Bancroft, © 2000 by Anne Bancroft. Reprinted by arrangement with Shambhala Publication Inc., Boston, MA. www.shambhala.com

⁸ Reprinted with permission of the author, the Venerable Dr. Chung Ok Lee, Won Buddhism United Nations Office, New York, NY

Resources for a Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Celebration

We must understand that the education, health, and welfare of all children is our shared responsibility. The Scripture of Won Buddhism stresses that in order to enhance the world's civilization and endow all human beings with a blessed life, the public is to educate all younger generations, expanding the educational opportunity for spiritual, mental, and physical growth and transcending the boundary between oneself and others. Transforming these words into practice, schools, congregations, community, and government must address the special needs of children, especially those that fall beyond existing safety nets. To eradicate the problems plaguing young people, we must unite at a grassroots level for change. If we can replace our disbelief and disillusion with faith and courage, entering a level of selflessness, we will awaken ourselves to the fact that our youth is our future, and our future is hopeful.

(By the Venerable Dr. Chung Ok Lee)⁹

Christianity

Christian Reading

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to [God's] chosen ones who cry to [God] day and night? Will [God] delay long in helping them? I tell you, [God] will quickly grant justice to them.

(*Luke 18:1-8a*)

Christian Prayer

Prayer for Children

Great God,
guard the laughter of children,
Bring them safely through injury and illness,
so they may live the promises you give.
Do not let us be so preoccupied with our purposes
that we fail to hear their voices,
or pay attention to their special vision of the truth;
but keep us with them, ready to listen and to love,
even as in Jesus Christ you have loved us,
your grown-up, wayward children. Amen.

(*The Book of Common Worship*)¹⁰

Christian Reflection

What do children and youth need from religious leaders and people of faith today? They need us to be present and to care—day in and day out—as they struggle to make it though childhood to adulthood, and to lead in reweaving the fabric of community so essential to family stability. They need the integrity of our lived example of what it means to be a person of faith....

⁹ Reprinted with permission of the author, the Venerable Dr. Chung Ok Lee, Won Buddhism United Nations Office, New York, NY

¹⁰ From *The Book of Common Worship*

Resources for a Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Celebration

Children need our caring presence and support when the adults in their families fail, hurt, or cannot care for them. They need our rituals, moral clarity, and examples in a faithful community of disciplined caring. And parents, and increasingly grandparents, need our ongoing support as they try to raise children in these challenging times.

Children need our affirmation when they do well and loving and constructive admonitions when they stray....

Children need assurances that God will never abandon or leave them alone through our unfailing presence as God's surrogates in the world. They need adults to see and speak to, smile at and compliment them....

Children need our continuous countercultural voices, examples, and guidance in a world awash with false prophets spouting false values, and they need constant reminders that they are sacred children of God—each equal to all others. Children of color especially need to know their great heritage and that they are made in the image of God and not BET and the latest American definitions of external beauty....

Children need Christian faith leaders to work harder to end the reality that 11 a.m. on Sunday morning is still the most segregated time in America. They need to see you and all faiths reaching out to the needy, the stranger, and partnering with congregations and community institutions of different races, ethnicities, and faiths.

Beyond the charity and service all faiths demand, children need faith institutions to speak and stand up to those who treat them unjustly....The faith community has extraordinary power and resources to save children and end poverty if it would mobilize and use them effectively.

(By Marian Wright Edelman, excerpted from *The Sea Is So Wide and My Boat Is So Small: Charting a Course for the Next Generation*)

Hinduism

Hindu Readings

I am firmly seated in the hearts of all. From Me comes knowledge and memory and the departing of doubts. I am the Knower and Knowledge of the Vedas. I am the author of Vedanta (the sacred Upanishads and their teachings, the means to spiritual salvation/liberation).

—From the Bhagavad-Gita, XV:15 (God, as Krishna, speaking)

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

—From Svetasvatara Upanishad, IV:1-4

Hindu Prayers

Sri Guru Pranama

Come together in unity. Speak in profound agreements. May your minds converge (in deep consensus). May your deliberations be uniform and united in your hearts. May you be firmly bound and united in your intentions and resolves.

Rig Veda, X-191,2-4

A Hindu Reflection

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most ambitious, comprehensive, and laudable effort to protect, preserve, and enlarge the welfare of children. The quality of human life in the 21st century will depend almost entirely on what the world community will do to its children today. In the classical Hindu tradition, however, it is not simply [a matter] of rights but a question of duty, obligation, and virtue which has characterized human relations in Hindu society. [This] is the overarching principle that should govern relations between persons and collectives.

(Dr. Anand Mohan-Hindu)

Islam

Amir Al-Islam
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An Islamic Reading

Read! In the name of the Lord and Cherisher, Who created—created human beings from a [mere] clot of congealed blood: Read! And thy Lord is Most Beautiful, He who taught the use of the pen, taught man that which he knew not.”

—From the text of the Holy Qur'an, (Chapter 96 verses 1-5)

These were the first verses of the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, which is an indication of the importance that Islam places on knowledge of education, particularly for children. The training of children is one of the most sacred acts in Islam, and one that is said to be particularly pleasing to Allah. Throughout all its chapters and verses, the Qur'an emphasizes the significance of knowledge and encourages Muslims to learn and to acquire knowledge, not only of God's laws and religious injunctions, but also of the world of God's creation. The Qur'an is replete with verses inviting human beings to use their intellect, to ponder, to think and to know, for the goal of human life is to discover the Truth. It places the gaining knowledge as the highest religious activity and one that is most pleasing to God

An Islamic Reading:

(If the passage is read in Arabic, either print the translation in the program or ask the leader to also read aloud the English translation.)

“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to justice, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear God. For God is well-acquainted with all that you do.” (Qur'an 5:8)

Islamic Prayers

“O Allah! You are our Creator. You are our provider and sustainer. All things are in Your hands and all authority rests with You and You alone. You have no helpers and need no assistance. Without Your guidance and light, we are in darkness. Help us. Without Your help, we are helpless. We depend solely on You.”

“O Allah! You know that the children are our future, and we have not done what you have commanded us to do. Have mercy on us and overlook our faults. Protect the children, Allah, for surely you are the only protector. Give us the wisdom and the strength to work together for the welfare of all of our beloved children. O Allah! Save the children.”

An Islamic Reflection

Philosophy of Islamic Education

Islam is a way of life based on knowledge of and belief in the oneness of God, an understanding of God, an understanding of God's laws and religious teachings, and a commitment to implement those instructions in one's life. These teachings are embodied in the sacred text of the Holy Qur'an. For Muslims, the Qur'an is the actual Word of God revealed through the archangel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad(s) and it is the source of all Islamic doctrines and ethics. Muhammad (God's peace and blessings be upon him), the last Prophet of God, was entrusted with explaining, interpreting, and living the teachings of the Qur'an. This body of teachings and practices is embodied in literature that Muslims call Hadith.

The Hadith literature is full of references to the importance of knowledge and education. Prophet Muhammad(s) said, "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave." And these teachings have echoed throughout the history of Islam and have inspired Muslims to seek knowledge wherever they can.

According to Islam, education is obligatory for every Muslim, male and female. And the primary objective of education is to teach human beings about the nature of their existence and the objective for their creation, which is to worship and obey God in all of their affairs. Muslims understand that the most important knowledge is that which teaches about the oneness of Almighty God, His laws and religious injunctions. However, Muslims are also exhorted to study the world of nature. The Qur'an constantly refers to the importance of seeing, contemplating, and reasoning about the world of creation and its diverse phenomena.

It is critical that we understand that the education, health and welfare of children are our collective responsibility. Children represent the hope of our future, and it is critical that we educate them properly in order to prepare them for the challenges that lie ahead. In Islam, proper education entails teaching children first to love and obey God. This is the foundation of their learning and provides them with understanding of their relationship and obligation to humanity.

Many children in America are suffering from neglect, which threatens to undermine our society's future. If we expect to survive as a human family, we must embrace all children, particularly those unfortunate ones who are on the margins of society.

Judaism

A Jewish Reading

"You shall appoint magistrates and officials for your tribes, in all the settlements that the Lord your God is giving you, and they shall govern the people with due justice. You shall not judge unfairly: you shall show no partiality; you shall not take bribes, for bribes blind the eyes of the discerning and upset the plea of the just. Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you. (Deuteronomy xx:18-20 JPS)

A Jewish Prayer

O Source of light and truth,
Creator of the eternal law of goodness,
Well-spring of justice and mercy,
Help us to find knowledge by which to live.
Lead us to take the words we shall speak
Into our hearts and our lives.

Resources for a Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Celebration

Bless all who enter this sanctuary in search and in need,
All who bring to this place the offering of their hearts.
May our worship here lead us to fulfill our words and our hopes
With acts of kindness, peace, and love.

(From *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur*)¹¹

God of the generations, God of new beginnings, children are Your promise of tomorrow made in Your image, a reflection of Your divine love. Teach us to raise our children worthy of this sacred trust of life. Sustain us and our children in health and love. We are thankful for the beauty of our lives and the ability to bring new life. We are thankful to all those who help us to raise our children in love.

(Adapted from *Rabbi's Manual* by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association)¹²

Jewish Reflections

Rav once came to a certain town and ordered the people to fast and pray in order to bring down rain. But no rain fell.

The Reader of the congregation then went before the Ark and recited the words from the prayer book, "God who causes the wind to blow," and immediately the wind began to blow. He then recited, "God who causes the rain to fall," and rain began to fall.

Rav asked him, "What special deed have you done to merit such reward?"

The Reader answered, "I teach young children, those of the poor as well as those of the rich. I take no fees from anyone who cannot afford to pay. Also, I have a fish pond, and if a child does not want to study, I give him some fishes to keep and win him over in that way so that soon he becomes eager to learn. In his day, if one had a learned father, the father would teach, and if not, one did not learn. Then they instituted a publicly funded school in Jerusalem. But those with parents were brought up to Jerusalem, and those without still did not learn. They then set up a school in each district, and the children were to enter at 16 or 17, but when the teachers tried to discipline them, they rebelled and left. They then instituted publicly funded schools for any child six or older. And if there was a long way, or a bridge to cross, they could compel the town to build another school."

Baba Batra 21a

Loving life and its mysterious source
With all our heart and all our spirit,
All our sense and strength,
We take upon ourselves and into ourselves
these promises:
to care for the earth
and those who live upon it,
to pursue justice and peace,
to love kindness and compassion.

¹¹ Excerpts from *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur* © 2007; and is under the copyright protection of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and reprinted for use by permission of the CCAR. All rights reserved.

¹² From the *Rabbi's Manual*. Reprinted with permission of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association.

We will teach this to our children
Throughout the passage of the day—
As we dwell in our homes
And as we go on our journeys,
From the time we rise until we fall asleep.
And may our actions be faithful to our words
That our children's children
May live to know:
Truth and kindness have embraced,
Peace and justice have kissed
And are one.

(From *Mishkan T'Filah: A Reform Siddur*)¹³

Native American Traditions

A Native American Hymn

(Traditional Choctaw, sung to the tune of "Amazing Grace.")

Choctaw:

1. Shee-lom-bish Ho-lee-to-pah-mah!
Ish meen-tee pol-lah chah,
Hah-tahk eel-buh-shah pee-ah hah
Ish pee yok-pah-lah-shkee.

2. Pee chok-osh no-see ah-tok-mah
Ahnt ish ok-chuh-lah-shkee,
Ish pee yo-bee-ee-cheek-bah-no;
Ee cheem ah-uh-neh-shkee.

3. Shee-lom-bish Ho-lee-to-pah mah!
Peem ah-nok-fee-lah huht
Ok-theel-it kuh-nee-uh ho-kah,
Ish-pee on to mah-shkee.

4. Pee chok-ush nok-hahk-lo yo-kah
Ahnt pee ho-po-luh-chee;
Eel ah-uh-shuh-chee-kah yo-kah,
Ish pee kah-sho-fah-shkee.

English:

(English paraphrase by Harry Folsom)

1. Come, O Holy Spirit! Come to us who are poor in spirit. Bless us!
2. Come and awaken our hearts. Give us your peace, we implore you.
3. O Holy Spirit! Our minds are clothed in darkness. Enlighten us!
4. Our hearts are filled with sorrow. Come and comfort us, sinners that we are. Cleanse us!

¹³ Excerpts from *Mishkan T'Filah: A Reform Siddur* © 2007; and is under the copyright protection of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and reprinted for use by permission of the CCAR. All rights reserved.

A Native American Prayer

O Great Spirit,
Whose breath gives life to the world and
whose voice is heard in the soft breeze,
We need your strength and wisdom.
May we walk in beauty.
May our eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset.
Make us wise so that we may understand what you have taught us.
Help us to learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.
Make us always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes
So when life fades, as the fading sunset, our spirits may come to you without shame.

A Native American Reflection

The whole community sits around a circle called a Medicine Wheel. Around that wheel are representatives of all the different aspects of the community. In the East, there's the fool. In the West, there's the witch. In the South, there's the hunter. In the North, there's the creator. Others positioned around the circle are the shaman, the politician, etc. And in the center of the circle is the children's fire. Next to the children's fire sit the grandfather and grandmother.

If you want to build a condominium in the community of Spirit Lake, you have to enter the Medicine Wheel in the East, at the position of the fool. The Question you ask is, "May I build a condo on Spirit Lake?" The fool takes your question, turns it around backwards and asks, "What would Spirit Lake say about such a condo?" You then have to take the question the fool gives you to everyone around the Medicine Wheel. Each will respond to you according to their position in the community. The last people you must ask the question to are the grandmother and grandfather who guard the children's fire. If these two decide that the request is not good for the children's fire, then the answer is "no." They are the only ones in the circle who have veto power. The concept of the ultimate question is simple. Does it hurt or help the children's fire? If it can pass the test of the children's fire, then it can be done.

(Excerpted from materials by Congregations Concerned for Children. This story was told to Magaly Rodriguez Mossman by Robin Van Doren, who heard it from elders of the Hopi nation.)

Shintoism

A Shinto Reading and Reflection

Shintoism believes it is important to transmit faith to children. Parents are taught that a goal in faith should be to rectify their own minds and nurture good children. Konko Kagamitaro (the fourth patriarch of Konkokyo) has expressed the essence of parent-child relations in the following terms:

Both father and mother
And child as well, must be born and raised as one
Father, mother, and child.

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While this simple verse speaks of the father, mother, and child being born together, it doesn't refer to literal simultaneous birth, but rather to the fact that the relationships involved all come about at one and the same time. Accordingly, the child must grow at the same time—and at the same rate—as the parent grows. In Shinto today, children are viewed as beings in relation to parents; the perception is thus that the “problems of children” are at one and the same time the “problems of parents.”

(By the Very Rev. Tatsuo Miyake–Shinto)¹⁴

Sikhism

Amrit Kaur
Guru Gobind Singh Foundation
Washington, D.C.

A Sikh Reading

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

—From the *Guru Granth Sahib*

A Sikh Hymn

You are the Father, the Mother, we are Your children
In Your grace lies our whole joy.
No one knows Your limits, O Lord,
You, the maker of our destiny, are
the highest of the high.
All Your creation is strung on Your thread:
And all you have created is in Your command.
You alone know Your end and state:
So, Nanak, Your servant, is forever sacrifice unto You.

A Sikh Reflection

Sikh religion started in India in the 15th century. The founder was called Guru Nanak who was succeeded by nine other Gurus who radiated the same divine light that manifested in Guru Nanak. Sikh scripture is a magnificent collection of spiritual poetry, rendered in Classical raags. Liturgy and hymns are inseparable in Sikh scripture. This massive volume of inspirational and devotional hymns is revered by the Sikhs as Guru (Divine Master) and is addressed as Guru Granth Sahib. Hence kirtan (Sikh way of singing hymns) an integral part of worship. Sikh places of worship are called Gurdwara. There is no Sabbath Day designated in Sikhism. One is supposed to have constant remembrance of God always, though there are special morning and evening prayers.

¹⁴ The Very Rev. Tatsuo Miyake–Shinto–WCRP President and Chief Senior Minister Designated, Konko Church of Izuo, Japan.

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Sikh children are taught these prayers at an early age. They are also taught kirtan (hymn singing) in classical raags to the accompaniment of musical instruments (mainly harmonium and Tabla). In Gurdwaras, classes are held for children to teach them Punjabi, the language of scripture and Sikh philosophy. They are also taught the Sikh history. At many places summer camps are conducted to enthuse the children, to educate them, and to inspire them to be good Sikhs and equally good citizens. These camps are held in natural environments to bring them in tune to the Creator and also to make them aware of the abundant blessing of Nature, for the Sikhs believe that this whole universe is the manifestation of the same divine light who is the Creator, Nourisher, and Protector. Strong emphasis is laid on character building and in developing leadership qualities. Sikhism believes in the equality of mankind and advocates strongly that all the human race is one. To perpetuate this concept Sikh youths are sent to inter-religious youth retreats and camps.

In some educational centers many modern techniques, such as computers, slide shows, and live discussions are employed for the purpose of education. Since gurdwaras are the center of religious growth, many times youths are encouraged to conduct, participate in, and perform in regular congregations. In Sikhism, there is equality of sexes so male and female children alike can participate in all the events. Children can lead in prayer service, sing hymns, recite anecdotes from the biographies of the Gurus, and perform other tasks required of them. Like all other religious communities, Sikhism believes that children will be the torch-bearers for tomorrow and they have to be trained in the ways of religious traditions while being part of the mainstream American society.

Unitarian Universalism

A Unitarian Universalist Prayer

Giver of all life and love,
You, who are creator of all natural beauty,
Your, who are creator of all living things,
We your children thank you for all you have given us.
Help us to dedicate our lives to nurturing children;
To instill in them the sense of value they need;
To design and build for them communities of love.
Help us to be responsible for meeting their needs;
To teach by example so they may grow in their own right;
To provide the resources to improve and sustain their lives.
Help us to be sensitive listeners, and respectful of differing opinions;
To work with patience and gain understanding;

To learn from our children how to live with loving hearts.

Giver of all life and love,
May we share all your gifts with the children,
And may they share theirs, now and in the future.

A Unitarian Universalist Reflection

The Great End in Religious Instruction

The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds upon the young, but to stir up their own;
Not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own;
Not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth;

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Not to form an outward regularity but to touch inward springs;
Not to bind them by ineradicable prejudices to our particular sect or peculiar notions,
But to prepare them for impartial, conscientious
judging of whatever subjects may be offered to their decision;
Not to burden the memory, but to quicken and strengthen the power of thought;
Not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment.

In a word, the great end is to awaken the soul, to excite and cherish spiritual life.

(By William Ellery Channing from *Singing the Living Tradition*)

Resources for the Commitment to Action

Prayers of the People

(Before the prayers of the people, pass along the pews baskets containing crayons, pencil stubs, chalk, Band-Aids®, pennies, and pens. Invite each congregation member to take one item. These items will be referenced in the Prayers of the People. Invite them to respond to each petition "hear our prayer." Afterward, encourage members to take the item home and to pray for those it symbolizes.)

Eternal Source of Love and Justice, the challenges facing children and those who care for and about them can seem so huge and so abstract that we lose touch with the reality. Help us to remember that the needs and prayers of each child, each parent, each teacher, each caring person are as real and individual to you as the items in our hands.

(Holding up a crayon)

And so we pray this day for the child care providers and parents who provide safe, warm, stimulating environments to spark a love of learning and fuel the curiosity of our youngest children as they scribble with crayons, pet the hamster, and try to taste the Play-Doh®. We pray especially for those providers who are underpaid and undervalued, for those parents who can't find quality, affordable care for their children while they work, and for the children whose potential is squelched in poor care. Eternal, with your love, **hear our prayer.**

(Holding up a piece of chalk)

We pray for the teachers, covered in chalk dust, who devote themselves to educating our children and helping them flourish to their potential. For their dedication, imagination, and concern we give you thanks.

We pray especially for those teachers who have given up on themselves or on the children, those who feel unsafe, those who feel unappreciated. Eternal, with your love, **hear our prayer.**

(Holding up a pencil stub)

We pray for students gripping pencils as they strive to learn, especially those faced with the challenges of disability, unsafe schools, low expectations from their parents, teachers, and selves, and inadequate resources. Eternal, with your love, **hear our prayer.**

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(Holding up a Band-Aid®)

We pray for children who are sick and injured, whose ability to learn is hampered by vision and hearing problems or illness. We pray especially for those children who don't have health insurance to get the care they need, and for their parents who worry about what to do, who rely on Band-Aids® when prevention or treatment is needed. Eternal, with your love, **hear our prayer.**

(Holding up a penny)

We pray for the youths who are preparing for the world of work, that you will guide them in discovering their gifts and talents, skills and aptitudes, and surround them with teachers and adults who will get them ready to succeed. We pray especially for those young people who fear they will not be able to find work and earn a living, who don't have adults to help them prepare, and who despair of ever succeeding. Eternal, with your love, hear our prayer.

(Holding up a pen)

We pray for our leaders in government, business, and the media, that the laws they write, the bottom lines that are inked, and the stories they pen will demonstrate an investment and priority in our children today for our future tomorrow. Eternal, with your love, hear our prayer. Amen.

Act of Commitment

(If desired, children could develop a dramatic scene to accompany the reading of Greenless Child by Ann Weems below. Perhaps one child would be dressed in drab gray, while the other children are dressed in bright oranges, yellows, and other vibrant colors and carry streamers. These children could dance and swirl bright streamers while the child in gray sits quietly and forlornly. On the last line, she could look straight out at the congregation. Any number of people, of a variety of ages, could take turns reading the leader lines.)

Leader:

I watched her go uncelebrated into the second grade,
A greenless child,
Gray among the orange and yellow,

Attached too much to corners and to other people's sunshine.
She colors the rainbow brown
And leaves balloons unopened in their packages.
Oh, who will touch this greenless child?
Who will plant alleluias in her heart
And send her dancing into all the colors of God?
Or will she be left like an unwrapped package on the kitchen table—
Too dull for anyone to take the trouble?
Does God think we're her keeper?¹⁵

¹⁵ From *Reaching for Rainbows*. © 1980 Ann Barr Weems. Used by permission of Westminster John Knox Press. www.wjkbooks.com

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Leader: Let us proclaim our commitment to care and to respond, knowing that we do so relying on the love, guidance, and strength of the Holy.

Who will touch the greenless children, and work to see that every child enters school ready to learn, with strong early childhood experiences that are safe and nurturing?

People: We will.

Leader: Who will believe, and act on the belief, that all children can succeed and perform at high levels?

People: We will.

Leader: Who will work to support children, parents, teachers, and principals to make the best educational decisions possible?

People: We will.

Leader: Who will support quality teaching and let our teachers know their work is valued?

People: We will.

Leader: Who will see that children and schools have the resources they need to prepare every child to learn and succeed?

People: We will.

Leader: Who will support families in times of crisis so the needs of the children will not be neglected?

People: We will.

Leader: Who will work to involve our whole community—health care providers, police, social service agencies, neighborhood groups, voluntary organizations, and other congregations—to see that our children get what they need to learn and succeed in school and beyond?

People: We will.

Leader: The Eternal who has called us into community with one another, will be with us as we help all of the children, especially the greenless children, to learn and succeed and fulfill their greatest potential.

Responsive Reading: “We Cannot Merely Pray to You”

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end war;
For we know that You have made the world in a way
So that all of us must find our own path to peace,
Within ourselves and with our neighbors.

*We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end hunger;
For you have already given us the resources
With which to feed the entire world,
If we would only use them wisely.*

We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To root out our prejudice;
For You have already given us eyes

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With which to see the good in all people,
If we would only use them rightly.

*We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end despair;
For You have already given us the power
To clear away slums and to give hope,
If we would only use our power justly.*

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end disease;
For You have already given us great minds
With which to search out cures and healing,
If we could only use them constructively.

*Therefore, we pray to You instead, O God,
For strength, determination, and courage,
To do instead of just to pray,
To become instead of merely to wish.*

Praised are You, O God,
You bless our people ...
And all peoples, with peace.

(By Rabbi Jack Riemer)

Candle-Lighting and Commitment to Action

Reader 1: "It is better to light a single candle than to sit and curse the darkness."
(*Reader 1 lights a candle.*)

Readers 2 and 3: "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." (Margaret Mead)
(*Readers 2 and 3 light their candle from Reader 1's candle.*)

Reader 4: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." (Martin Luther King Jr.)
(*Reader 4 lights candle from reader 3's candle*)

Reader 5: "Worship is a way of seeing the world in the light of God." (Abraham Joshua Heschel)

Reader 6: "In the attitude of silence the soul finds the path in a clearer light, and what is elusive and deceptive resolves itself into crystal clearness. Our life is a long and arduous quest after Truth." (Mahatma Gandhi.)

In silence, let us each seek the path we will follow from this place to be a blessing to children and raise up the next generation.

(*silence*)

As we now share the light and illumine our paths forward, let us sing together.

(Readers disperse with lit candles to light candles of those in the front row, who will pass the light to those next to them. If circumstances in your setting do not permit lighting candles among those gathered, omit the group candle lighting other than the readers, and simply move to the song.)

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Congregation (sings): This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. (x3) let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Shine to help end poverty...

Shine it for the children...

Shine to be a blessing...

A Prayer for Children by Ina J. Hughs

This prayer could also be read different ways, including in unison, with different leaders (including children) reading sections, or alternating sections between "left" and "right" sides of your worship space (be sure to clarify with the congregation which side is which before beginning).

Leader: Let us join in this prayer with not only the words of our mouths but also by pledging the work of our hands.

We pray for children

Who sneak Popsicles before supper,
Who erase holes in math workbooks,
Who can never find their shoes.

And we pray for those

Who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,
Who can't bound down the street in a new pair of sneakers,
Who never "counted potatoes,"
Who were born in places we wouldn't be caught dead,
Who never go to the circus,
Who live in an X-rated world.

We pray for children

Who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions,
Who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money.

And we pray for those

Who never get dessert,
Who have no safe blanket to drag behind them,
Who watch their parents watch them die,
Who can't find any bread to steal,
Who don't have any rooms to clean up,
Whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,
And whose monsters are real.

We pray for children

Who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,
Who throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick at their food,
Who like ghost stories,
Who shove dirty clothes under the tub,
Who get visits from the tooth fairy,
Who don't like to be kissed in front of the carpool,
Who squirm in church or temple and scream in the phone,
Whose tears we sometimes laugh at and whose smiles can make us cry.

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And we pray for those
Whose nightmares come in the daytime,
Who will eat anything,
Who have never seen a dentist
Who aren't spoiled by anybody,
Who got to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,
Who live and move, but have no being.

We pray for children
Who want to be carried and for those who must,
For those we never give up on and for those
Who don't get a second chance,
For those we smother and for those who will grab the hand of anyone kind enough to offer it.

Prayer of Commitment: I Care and I Am Willing to Serve and Stand for Children

One leader or several can read the lines in regular type while the people respond with the words in bold, "but I care...." Perhaps before reading the prayer, the leader could invite each person present to reflect in silence what "I can't" or "I'm not" is in their head or heart that keeps them from most fully living out their calling to pursue justice and protect children.

(As an additional activity, in preparing for the Children's Sabbath celebration, you could engage the children and young people in researching the names mentioned below—especially those that may be unfamiliar to some—and writing up a sentence or paragraph description of these courageous change-makers and heroes for justice, and create a display in the building where the Children's Sabbath will be held. Alternatively, you could prepare a booklet or bulletin insert with their findings.)

Lord I cannot preach like Martin Luther King Jr.
or turn a poetic phrase like Maya Angelou
but I care and am willing to serve and to stand up for children.

I do not have Fred Shuttlesworth's and Harriet Tubman's courage
or Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt's political skills
but I care and am willing to serve and raise my voice with others for children.

I cannot sing like Fannie Lou Hamer
or organize like Ella Baker and Bayard Rustin
but I care and am willing to serve.

I am not holy like Archbishop Tutu,
forgiving like Mandela, or disciplined like Gandhi
but I care and am willing to serve and sacrifice to build our children a better future.

I am not brilliant like Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois or
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, or as eloquent as
Sojourner Truth and Booker T. Washington
but I care and am willing to serve and use the talents I do have to keep children safe.

Resources for a Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Celebration

I have not Mother Teresa's saintliness,
Dorothy Day's love or Cesar Chavez's
gentle tough spirit

but I care and am willing to serve and make a difference for children.

God it is not as easy as it used to be
to frame an issue and forge a solution

but I care and am willing to serve and to keep struggling until we find the way to build the 21st century movement for children.

My mind and body are not so swift as in youth
and my energy comes in spurts

but I care and am willing to serve and to vote for children.

I'm so young
nobody will listen

I'm not sure what to say or do

but I care and am willing to serve.

I can't see or hear well
speak good English, stutter sometimes, am afraid of criticism
and get real scared standing up before others

but I care and am willing to serve.

God, use us as You will to save Your children today and tomorrow and to build a nation and world where no child is left behind and everyone feels welcome. Amen.

(By Marian Wright Edelman)

Resources for the Blessing

Charge and Blessing

Go forth from this place to answer God's call:
Go forth from this place to pursue justice;
Go forth from this place to protect children.

Draw strength from each other;
Draw strength from your faith;
Draw strength from the knowledge that children are counting on you.

And may the blessing of the Holy
surround and sustain you and every child,
this day and forever more. Amen.

Bahá'í Blessing of the Children

Before the blessing of the children, you might invite the parents and other caregivers present to hold the hand or place a hand on the children with them as they receive this blessing:

O Thou kind Lord! These lovely children are the handiwork of the fingers of Thy might and the wondrous signs of Thy greatness. O God! Protect these children, graciously assist them to be educated and enable them to render service to the world of humanity. O God! These children are pearls, cause them to be nurtured within the shell of Thy loving-kindness. Thou art the Bountiful, the All-Loving.

Sending Forth

Friends, with God's grace we are ready, ready to go into the world and help all children learn and succeed. We are ready, ready to spread the word of God's love for children. We are ready, ready to support and uphold each other as we serve children and speak out for them. Know that you go into a world ready and waiting, urgently waiting, for your loving service. And know that God goes with you, even before you, into that world and work. Amen.

Blessing

May the blessing of the divine whom we know by many names be with you and all whom you love; and with children who are loved and those who wait still to know our love. Amen.

