



## Promoting Your Children's Sabbath: Ideas for All Faiths

**Y**our 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.)
- ❑ **Newsletter:** Include other information in your congregation's newsletter. (Adapt the sample congregational newsletter article in this section or write your own.)
- ❑ **Posters:** Make posters announcing the Children's Sabbath and display them in the congregation's building. Involve the congregation's 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 congregation has a website, put an announcement on the website.
- ❑ **Social Media:** Use various forms of social media such as Facebook pages, blogs, Twitter accounts and other forms of social media to spread the word about your Children's Sabbath.
- ❑ **Keep it up!** Don't forget to continue to focus attention on the Children's Sabbath and the needs and opportunities for response after the weekend itself. Use these same media channels to report on the congregation'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 Congregation's Own Newsletter

### [Name of Congregation] to Celebrate Children's Sabbath

Something is terribly wrong when our political leaders are putting billionaires before babies. There is no denying we need to get our budget priorities straight in this time of soaring deficits, but anyone who cares about children knows it would be a mistake to cut child investments, especially those that lift children out of poverty. When 16.4 million children in America are poor, and children under five are the poorest age group in the country, we have a crisis. Yet the U.S. House of Representatives has passed a budget that would not only extend the Bush-era tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires, but would give them an even bigger tax cut on top of it and make deep cuts in food stamps, health coverage and education for children to pay for it. Now is the time for action to protect child investments from budget cuts before it is too late.

On [date], [name of your congregation] will join with thousands of other congregations across the nation in the annual multi-faith National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® weekend sponsored by the non-profit, non-partisan Children's Defense Fund and supported by [add the name of your denomination or religious tradition, if they have formally endorsed], Catholic Charities U.S.A., the Islamic Society of North America, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., the National Spiritual Assembly of Bahá'ís in the U.S., the Sikh Council on Religion and Education, the Union for Reform Judaism, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, and more than 200 other religious organizations and denominations.

The 2012 Children's Sabbath, "*Pursuing Justice for Children and the Poor with Urgency and Persistence*" will focus on protecting children from budget cuts at the federal, state and local levels and closing the education achievement gap that leaves too many children, especially poor and minority children, reading and doing math below grade level in the fourth, eighth, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades if they have not already dropped out of school into the pipeline to prison. As a nation we are spending on average two-and-a-half times as much per prisoner as we spend on public school students. It is time to reorder our priorities and focus on prevention, not punishment, so that every child is set on the path to a promising, productive future that God intends for each and every one.

Unless we focus our efforts on early intervention and prevention, rather than punishment, we are robbing thousands of youths each year of their futures and our country of vital human resources. We must reduce detention and incarceration by increasing investment in prevention and early intervention strategies, such as access to quality early childhood development and education services and to the health and mental health care children need for healthy development.

To get there, we will need to pursue God's standard of justice with urgency and persistence.

At [name of congregation], we will join in this united voice for children by [describe the events, giving dates and times]. This is [name of congregation]'s [number—e.g., first or tenth] time celebrating the Children's Sabbath. Leading the observance of Children's Sabbath here are [names of several of those who will be involved]. All are invited. This will be a good time to invite other families or children to visit our congregation. For more information or to find out how you can help, contact [name and phone number of contact person in the congregation].

## 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 congregation'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 congregation 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.
- ❑ **Adapt the sample news release in this section and submit it to the religion page of your local newspaper 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:

"[Name of congregation] located at [cross streets or address] is planning a special Children's Sabbath celebration and events on [date] to focus on ending the criminalization of children and closing the education achievement gap. Today, 60 percent or more of fourth, eighth, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students—and over 75 percent of Black and Hispanic children—are reading or doing math below grade level. A Black boy born in 2001 has a 1 in 3 chance of incarceration in his lifetime. On the Children's Sabbath, congregations of many faiths all across our nation are committing to work so that prevention, not punishment and prison, is our priority; education is the engine of equality, not inequality; and every child is prepared for a promising, productive future. Through worship services, education programs, and activities [congregation] invites young and old to seek justice so that all children have the great education they need to succeed. For more information, call [name of congregation]."

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.

## Promoting Your Children's Sabbath

- ❑ **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 education achievement gap and call for education to be the engine of equality, not inequality, so that every child is prepared for a productive, promising future. Offer the Children's Sabbath as a way to learn more and become involved. Watch the newspaper for articles about education, 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 followup efforts developing from your Children's Sabbath and of the Children's Sabbath 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, 25 E Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001 or email a description to [religiousaction@childrensdefense.org](mailto:religiousaction@childrensdefense.org).

## Sample News Release for Community Newspapers

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October [date], 2012

### [YOUR CONGREGATION'S NAME] to Hold Children's Sabbath Service

### Joining the Children's Defense Fund Multi-Faith National Observance Weekend

[Name of your town, state]— [Your congregation's name] will [*describe events planned, such as holding a special worship service or conducting service and advocacy activities*] on [date and time] that will focus on protecting children from federal, state and local budget cuts and closing the achievement gap in education to keep children out of the Cradle to Prison Pipeline™ so that every child is set on the path to a promising, productive future.

[Your 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.

The Children's Sabbath theme this year, "*Pursuing Justice for Children and the Poor with Urgency and Persistence*" urges everyone—young and old—to reach out and speak out to help protect children from budget cuts at a time when child needs have never been greater.

Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, states, "The most dangerous place for a child to grow up in America today is at the intersection of race and poverty. With more than 16.4 million children living in poverty, and children of color at a far greater risk of being born poor, a Black boy born in 2001 has a one in three chance of going to prison in his lifetime, a Latino boy a one in six chance. Incarceration is becoming the new American slavery and poor children of color are the fodder. We must act now to stop the growing criminalization of children at younger and younger ages. We can and must do better for our children by investing in early childhood development and education to provide an equal opportunity for all children and invest in the health and mental health care children need for healthy development."

*[Add a statement from a local religious leader or young person.]*

The multi-faith *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* weekend is sponsored by the non-profit, non-partisan Children's Defense Fund and supported by Catholic Charities U.S.A., the Islamic Society of North America, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., the National Spiritual Assembly of Bahá'ís in the U.S., the Sikh Council on Religion and Education, the Union for Reform Judaism, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, and more than 200 other religious organizations and denominations.

For more information about [*your congregation's name*]'s celebration of the Children's Sabbath, contact [*contact person's name, title, group affiliation, telephone number, and email address, if available*].

###

## 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 to members of your congregation your plans to participate in the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* weekend. Distribute it about one month before your Children's Sabbath events to alert your members and build excitement and participation.

This insert makes two half-page size inserts per photocopy.

Photocopy Page 8 and use those two copies of Page 8. Using the one-sided to two-sided function on a photocopier, place those two copies of Page 8 in the copier to make two-sided copies on 8 ½" x 11" paper and cut down the middle to make two inserts per photocopy.

### **Children's Sabbath Service Insert** (Pages 9 to 12)

The following inserts may be used on the day you celebrate the Children's Sabbath or any time to raise awareness and encourage a prayerful response and commitment to act. Insert it into your bulletin, if your place of worship uses one, or simply hand it out at an appropriate time, perhaps as people arrive or depart.

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

**“Justice and only justice shall you pursue...”**

(Deuteronomy 16:20a)

We will be joining religious communities of every faith all across our nation for

**The 2012 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths Weekend**

as we affirm our commitment to

***Pursuing Justice for Children and the Poor with Urgency and Persistence***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

For more information or to help, contact:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**God calls us and America's children need us to pursue justice with urgency and persistence.**

*“The most dangerous place for a child to grow up in America today is at the intersection of race and poverty. With more than 16.4 million children living in poverty, and children of color at a far greater risk of being born poor, a Black boy born in 2001 has a one in three chance of going to prison in his lifetime, a Latino boy a one in six chance. Incarceration is becoming the new American slavery and poor children of color are the fodder. We must act now to stop the growing criminalization of children at younger and younger ages. We can and must do better for our children by investing in early childhood development and education to provide an equal opportunity for all children.”*

Marian Wright Edelman,  
President, the Children's Defense Fund

The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, established in 1992 by the Children's Defense Fund and endorsed by hundreds of denominations and religious organizations, unites religious communities of every faith in celebrating the blessing of children, focusing attention on the urgent problems facing our nation's children, affirming the divine charge to nurture, protect, and seek justice for children, and putting faith into action through direct service and advocacy with and for children and their families.

***“Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue...”***

### **Congregations and Communities**

- Organize a forum on incarcerated youth and the funding disparities between prisons and education in our nation.
- Institute a "Cradle Roll" within your faith-based institution or community, linking every child to a permanent, caring family member or adult mentor who can keep them on track and get them back on track if and when they stray.
- Promote learning by starting an after-school program for children.
- Ensure that at least one caring community member attends every public school student suspension meeting or court hearing.
- Encourage families to spend quality time together by hosting a movie or game night at your place of worship.
- Start a support group for single-parent or kinship care families.
- Provide job opportunities and guidance for families and youth in need, include summer job opportunities for youth.
- Create college scholarships for children from disadvantaged, foster care and kinship care families.
- Work with school officials to develop and adopt more child-appropriate discipline policies and procedures.
- Reach out to youth who are homeless or in foster care.
- Prepare care packages of new clothes, personal toiletries and/or a welcome gift for children placed into foster care homes.
- Hold events to celebrate the strengths of our children and provide college scholarships and leadership opportunities to youth.
- Start a halfway house and counseling program for youth who have run away.
- Create and distribute a community resource manual so that parents know where to turn for help for their families.

**Learn more at [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)**

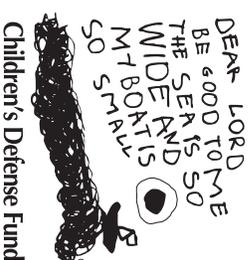
### **2012 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths:**

#### *Pursuing Justice for Children and the Poor with Urgency and Persistence*

Every child has been made in God's image. God looked upon creation and declared it "good." Yet today, some children are treated like treasures while others are treated like trash. Some children are set on paths of promise while others are shunted into the Cradle to Prison Pipeline.

Nationally, 1 in 3 Black and 1 in 6 Hispanic boys born in 2001 are at risk of imprisonment during their lifetime. Although the majority of fourth graders cannot read at grade level, states spend on average two-and-a-half times as much money per prisoner as per public school pupil.

This is America's pipeline to prison—a trajectory that leads to marginalized lives, imprisonment and often premature death. Although the majority of fourth graders cannot read at grade level, states spend about three times as much money per prisoner as per public school pupil.



***“Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue...”***

(Deut. 16:20)

The Children’s Defense Fund’s Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Campaign seeks to reduce detention and incarceration by increasing preventive supports and services children need, such as access to quality early childhood development and education services and accessible, comprehensive health and mental health coverage.

As communities, states, and a nation, we must shift our emphasis to prevention, not prison, for the sake of our children and our nation’s future, for our own sake and for God’s sake. We don’t have a minute to wait or a child to waste.

Visit <http://www.childrendefense.org/programs-campaigns/cradle-to-prison-pipeline/> for more information and to find out what you can do to help.



## **What Can We Do to End the Cradle to Prison Pipeline?**

### **Individuals**

- Mentor a child.
- Volunteer at an after-school program for youth.
- Vote in every election and advocate for children.
- Educate elected officials about the Pipeline.
- Host a house party to educate others about the Cradle to Prison Pipeline and what they can do to dismantle it.
- Volunteer with children who are homeless or in foster care.
- Volunteer your talents or professional services to help a single-parent, kinship care or foster care family by babysitting, inviting them to events with their children, or providing transportation.
- Invite youths to events at the next educational level (e.g., taking a high school student to a college basketball game).

### **Families**

- Spend quality time with your family (e.g., family game night, eating meals together). Have fun together.
- Join the PTA, a parent support group, or other school group. Attend school activities and/or volunteer in the classroom.
- Consistently praise your child’s achievements in school and extracurricular activities.
- Establish and maintain a supportive home learning environment. Create daily homework routines and limit television viewing and other kinds of “screen” time.
- Offer tutoring and homework help to your children or younger siblings.
- Talk and actively listen to children in your extended family.
- Show affection, love and respect to your child every day.
- Adopt a foster child or become a foster parent.



*The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, established in 1992 by the Children's Defense Fund and endorsed by hundreds of denominations and religious organizations, unites religious communities of every faith in celebrating the blessing of children, focusing attention on the urgent problems facing our nation's children, affirming the divine charge to nurture, protect, and seek justice for children, and putting faith into action through direct service and advocacy with and for children and their families.*

## *Pursuing Justice for Children and the Poor with Urgency and Persistence*

2012 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths

**Communities of Faith Must Come Together to Stop the Criminalization of Children at Increasingly Younger Ages and Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention.**

A Black boy born in 2001 has a 1 in 3 chance, a Latino boy a 1 in 6 chance and a White boy a 1 in 17 chance of going to prison in his lifetime. A Black girl has a 1 in 17 chance, a Latino girl a 1 in 45 chance and a White girl a 1 in 111 chance. In 2010, almost 9,500 girls were incarcerated—1 in every 8 juveniles in residential placement is a girl.



States spend on average two-and-a-half times as much money per prisoner as per public school pupil.

We must reduce detention and incarceration by increasing investment in prevention and early intervention strategies, such as access to quality early childhood development and education services and to the health and mental health care children need for healthy development.

**Communities of Faith Must Come Together to  
Close the Education Achievement Gap**

For far too long, millions of children in America have been denied the opportunity to receive a high quality education. Inequities in funding and resources place poor children in low-performing schools with inadequate facilities and often ineffective teachers. Practices such as tracking, retention, out-of-school suspensions, and one-size-fits-all zero tolerance policies continue

to contribute to the discouragement, disengagement, and eventual dropout of countless children in America. Instead of serving as “the great equalizer,” American public education has served as a portal to the Cradle to Prison Pipeline, leading poor and minority children to lives marked by school dropout, arrest, and incarceration.



We must commit to improving outcomes for children in school and in life by working to transform American education and set it on the path toward equity and excellence for all children.

**To learn more about how you can help, visit [www.childrendefense.org](http://www.childrendefense.org)**

## Moments in America for All Children

- Every second and a half during the school year a public school student receives an out-of-school suspension.\*
- Every 8 seconds during the school year a public high school student drops out.\*
- Every 17 seconds a child is arrested.
- Every 19 seconds a baby is born to an unmarried mother.
- Every 29 seconds a child is born into poverty.
- Every 30 seconds during the school year a public school student is corporally punished.\*
- Every 47 seconds a child is abused or neglected.
- Every 67 seconds a baby is born without health insurance.
- Every 85 seconds a baby is born to a teen mother.
- Every 2 minutes a baby is born at low birthweight.
- Every 3 minutes a child is arrested for a drug offense.
- Every 6 minutes a child is arrested for a violent offense.
- Every 21 minutes a baby dies before his or her first birthday.
- Every hour and a half a child dies from an accident.
- Every 3 hours a child is killed by a firearm.
- Every 5-and-a-half hours a child is killed by abuse or neglect.
- Every 8 hours a child commits suicide.
- Every 10 hours a baby's mother dies due to complications from pregnancy or childbirth.

\* Based on calculations per school day (180 days of seven hours each)

### Prayer

O God, help us to recover our hope for our children's sake.  
Help us to recover our courage for our children's sake.  
Help us to recover our discipline for our children's sake.  
Help us to recover our ability to work together for our children's sake.  
Help us to recover our values for our children's sake.  
Help us to recover our faith in Thee for our children's sake. Amen.

(By Marian Wright Edelman)

*To connect with the faith community resources and other work of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), the non-profit, non-partisan organization sponsoring the multi-faith National Observance of Children's Sabbaths celebration, visit [www.childrendefense.org/childressabbaths](http://www.childrendefense.org/childressabbaths)*

*Data calculated by the Children's Defense Fund.*