



Multi-Faith Resources for the Children’s Sabbath

The Children’s Sabbath’s power and inspiration comes, in large part, from the connections it makes across faith traditions, across our nation, across generations. It is an extraordinary opportunity to recognize and celebrate our shared commitment to assuring justice and care for children and to affirm the unifying message of every great religious tradition that calls us to nurture and protect those who are young, poor, sick, and vulnerable.

Over the past 17 years, many communities have come together to proclaim and respond to that mandate through multi-faith Children’s Sabbath celebrations. These community-wide *National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths* events stand as an important example of the promise and power of multi-faith partnership for a common cause. If planned with care, sensitivity, and a commitment to inclusion, a multi-faith Children’s Sabbath can be a time of new understanding, of celebration, and most importantly, of uniting and strengthening your community to nurture and protect children.

In this section, you will find resources for planning a multi-faith, community-wide Children’s Sabbath:

- ◆ **Tips for planning the content and leadership of the service**
- ◆ **A suggested outline for a multi-faith community-wide Children’s Sabbath service** that you can follow or modify as you see fit
- ◆ **Sample resources for your multi-faith Children’s Sabbath service** from which you may select those that you prefer. You are not expected to use all of them. Please supplement them and draw from the resources offered throughout this resource manual to reflect the multi-faith leadership and participation in your community-wide service.

Tips for Planning the Content and Leadership of a Multi-Faith, Community-Wide Children's Sabbath Service

If everyone will be speaking or singing it, be sure it is inclusive. If a part of the multi-faith service, such as a prayer or song, will be spoken or sung by the congregation, be sure that it does not include language that feels exclusive (such as “Jesus Christ” or “Muhammad”). Instead, draw on the universal and unifying aspects of our various religious traditions. Appropriate ways of addressing God in an interfaith service are Creator, Source of All Life, Divine, Our God and Sustainer, Eternal, Holy One, and Source of Our Being. Some appropriate closing addresses include: “In Thy name we pray,” “In the name of God,” or simply “Amen.”

Have representatives present readings or prayers specific to their traditions. If individual leaders will be presenting readings or offering prayers, they may include references specific to their own traditions (such as “Jesus Christ” or “Muhammad”). Similarly, a choir that is performing an anthem could sing music specific to its tradition. Just make sure that you invite representatives from a range of faith traditions and encourage them to select readings and prayers that are as inclusive as possible and do not denigrate other religious traditions. (If you won't have time to include readings from every single religious tradition represented, you may want to print additional readings in the service program.)

Be as broadly representative as possible. Try to include representatives from as many faith traditions as possible. Also be sure to balance gender, racial, and ethnic representation. You may not be able to give every representative a “speaking part” in the service. Invite those who will not be able to speak in the service to participate in an opening procession (with each processor wearing robes or other religious garb appropriate to their tradition) and sit in a special section, either on the stage with the speakers or at the front of the congregation. List the processors and their religious affiliation in the service program.

Know ahead of time what will be spoken and sung. A multi-faith service is not the right time for surprises! It is important that the service have a unified message that lifts up children's needs and inspires people to action. While one would never constrain leaders from reading or praying

what they feel is right in services entirely under their leadership, in a cooperative service like a multi-faith Children's Sabbath, which aims to lift up particular concerns, it is entirely appropriate to exercise such oversight for the service.

- One possibility is to use a service that you, along with your planning team, write in advance. Then assign the pre-written parts to religious leaders. The only part that would not be pre-written would be the sermon. It is important to select a leader to give the sermon who you are confident will speak in terms appropriate for a multi-faith gathering and also will address the children's concerns that are the focus of the service. The suggested outline for a multi-faith Children's Sabbath service in this section is one model that you could use.
- Another possibility is to have the invited religious leaders write their own “parts” or select their own readings. In this case, be sure that they give you a copy of their prayer or reading in advance. If the prayer or reading is not in keeping with the Children's Sabbath theme, give them more guidance about the Children's Sabbath theme and purpose and ask them to select another prayer or reading.

Be clear about timing. A multi-faith service that strives to be representative runs the risk of being too long. Additionally, a sense of time and appropriate length for services varies by faith tradition. When you invite leaders, be sure they know how much time has been allotted for their part. Emphasize that everyone must keep to his or her allotted time. (This is another reason for having copies in advance of what each leader will be reading or praying.) Know in advance what you will do if the service begins to run too long and you need to shorten it. The least offensive place to cut is usually verses from a congregational song or an entire song. Be sure that the music director knows in advance that this is a possibility and decide who will make the decision and who will communicate it to the leaders and congregation, if necessary.

Brief the leadership in advance. Ask all of the participating religious leaders (both those with speaking parts and those who will be processing) to gather 30-60 minutes before

How Do We Get There? Resources for Your Place of Worship

the start of the service. At that time, give each a copy of the service program, allow time for them to robe or put on their religious garb, and brief them on the logistics of the service: who will process with whom, where they will sit, which podium they will speak from, and other such details. Remember that when leaders are in an unfamiliar place of worship of a tradition other than their own, they may not know the terminology and be reluctant to ask for clarification. (For example, the Christian term “narthex” or the Jewish term “bimah” may be unfamiliar to others.) Be sure that when you brief leaders, you take extra care to ensure that everyone understands the directions about where they are to gather, sit, speak, and so forth. You may want to designate one leader to be responsible for filling in if a leader doesn't show up or for handling unexpected occurrences.

Convene a special combined choir for the service.

Invite a wide range of congregations' choirs to participate (children's, adults, or both). Then send the selected music to each choir director, who will teach the song to her or his choir during their own rehearsals. Schedule several combined rehearsals during which all of the choirs will sing together under the direction of one appointed director. Incidentally, this is a good way to build attendance, since many proud family members are likely to attend to hear their children sing.

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

Multi-Faith Community Service:

When Will We Hear Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Call to End Poverty in America?

Rather than writing out a sample multi-faith service as in years past, this year we are providing a “recipe” and “ingredients” for you to create your own special service. Please note: You are not expected, nor is it recommended, to use every one of the options or resources provided, as that would make the service run too long. Aim for a service that lasts about an hour. A service much longer than that may lose the attention of children and youth present—adults, too!

Following you will find:

- A suggested outline for your multi-faith community-wide Children's Sabbath service
- Resources for your multi-faith community-wide Children's Sabbath service—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 your 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 representatives to offer brief (1-3 minutes) reflections on the religious traditions' call to do justice and bring hope to all children.

Suggested Outline for a Multi-Faith Community-Wide 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.
- **Gathering words:** Beginning with an opening prayer, call to worship, or other 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. (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 poverty and suffering and ensure justice and care for all children.

The time of lament portion of the service may include one or more of the following:

- **Prayer**
- **Litany**
- **Responsive reading**
- **Creative or symbolic action**
- **Visual experience** that underscores the problems to which we have come to respond (i.e., 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.

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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 Call to Justice and Peace and Ending Poverty:** A brief reflection—perhaps five minutes—during which a leader reflects on the shared concerns for children and the strong call to work for peace and 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 (i.e., "This Little Light of Mine," with words adapted for the multi-faith congregation and action for children).

V. Blessing

The last portion of the multi-faith service prepares 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.

Resources for Your Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Service

In addition to the resources provided below, and those that 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!

Resources for the Gathering of the Community

Gathering Words

Leader: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., reminded us: "We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."

People: We come together to celebrate our connections across race, place, and faith, joined as children of the Holy in one human family.

Leader: "For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be."

People: We come together out of shared concern for children who experience need, harm, and hate, and out of a united commitment to assure that all children have what they need to reach their full potential.

Leader: "This is the way God's universe is made; this is the way it is structured."⁵²

People: We come to listen for the sacred call to us, and to renew our commitment to helping achieve the justice, peace, and love for all children that God intends.

Resources for the Time of Lament

Prayer

Eternal source of life and truth,
You speak to us through your prophets and we fail to hear and heed your word.

You speak to us through the stirrings of our hearts and conscience, and we fail to hear and heed your word.

You speak to us through the cries of the children, and we fail to hear and heed your word.

And so we ask now, not that you would speak to us anew, but that you would unstop our ears, stir in our hearts,

move our hands to hear and heed what you have long called us to as individuals, as congregations, as communities, a nation and world: justice and peace. Protection for children, those who are poor, those most vulnerable. Equality. Dignity. Love. Amen.

(by Shannon Daley-Harris)

Litany of Lament and Hope

Reader 1: Langston Hughes wrote a poem, "To You."⁵³

To sit and dream, to sit and read
To sit and learn about the world,
Outside our world of here and now—
Our problem world—
To dream of vast horizons of the soul
Through dreams made whole
Unfettered free—Help me!
All you who are dreamers, too
Help me make our world anew
I reach out my hands to you.

Reader 2: For millions of children today, our world of here and now is indeed a "problem world."

Children in our problem world know the pain of poverty:
In which uncertainty is certain,
Basics become a luxury,
Too much of too little,
And struggle the norm.

Children in our problem world know the pain of racism:
Dignity derided,
Hope dimmed,
Expectations diminished,
Opportunities denied.

Children in our problem world know the pain of militarism and war:
Bodies wounded,
Families separated,
National priorities and resources diverted,
Security shattered.

⁵² Quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., from "Remaining Awake through A Great Revolution," his last Sunday sermon ever preached, delivered at Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., on March 31, 1968.

⁵³ By permission of Harold Ober Associates Incorporated: "To You", from *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* by Langston Hughes, edited by Arnold Rampersad and David Roessel, Associate Editor, copyright © 1994 by The Estate of Langston Hughes.

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Reader 3: Our problem world includes poverty: Almost 13 million children live in poverty in our rich nation—that's one out of every six children.

- Our problem world includes racism: Black youths are almost five times as likely to be incarcerated as White youths for drug offenses, and Latino youths are about twice as likely. A Black boy born in 2001 has a one in three chance of going to prison in his lifetime; a Latino boy, born in 2001, has a one in six chance; and a White boy, born in 2001, has a one in 17 chance of the same fate.
- Our problem world includes militarism: The amount we spend on the Iraq war in four months could lift every poor child in America out of poverty for a year.

Reader 1: But the problems we have created don't change the truth that this world is God's world, and so our children and we still dream of our world as God intends.

Our children and we still dream,

- of a world without poverty;
- of a world without racism;
- of a world without militarism;
- of a world of justice;
- of a world of love; and
- of a world of peace.

[Optional: Invite those present who wish to speak aloud their dream for our children. Or, in advance you could distribute slips of paper and pencils so that during a time of silence or instrumental music at this point, participants could write down their dreams for children in their families, community, nation, and world.]

Reader 2: All you who are dreamers, too, help our children make our world anew. They reach out their hands to you.

Reader 3: Together, let us pray and sing, preach and teach, serve and seek justice to make our world anew.

(by Shannon Daley-Harris)

A Prayer from Zaire ⁵⁴

O God,
You love justice and you establish peace on earth.
We bring before you the disunity of today's world:
The absurd violence, and the many wars,
Which are breaking the courage of the peoples of the world;
Militarism and the armaments race,
Which are threatening life on the planet;
Human greed and injustice,

Which breed hatred and strife.

Send your Spirit and renew the face of the earth;

Teach us to be compassionate toward the whole human family;

Strengthen the will of all those who fight for justice and peace;

Lead all nations into the path of peace,

And give us that peace which the world cannot give.

Amen.

Resources for the Call to Service

Buddhist Readings

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.

(Majjhima Nikaya in *The Buddha Speaks*)

A rich man said to the Buddha, "I see you are the Awakened One, and I would like to open my mind to you and ask your advice. My life is full of work, and having made a great deal of money, I am surrounded by cares. I employ many people who depend on me to be successful. However, I enjoy my work and like working hard. But having heard your followers talk of the bliss of a hermit's life and seeing you as one who gave up a kingdom in order to become a homeless wanderer and find the truth, I wonder if I should do the same. I long to do what is right and to be a blessing to my people. Should I give up everything to find the truth?"

The Buddha replied, "The bliss of a truth-seeking life is attainable for anyone who follows the path of unselfishness. If you cling to your wealth, it is better to throw it away than let it poison your heart. But if you don't cling to it but use it wisely, then you will be a blessing to people. It's not wealth and power that enslave men but the clinging to wealth and power.

"My teaching does not require anyone to become homeless or resign the world unless he wants to, but it does require everyone to free himself from the illusion that he is a permanent self and to act with integrity while giving up his craving for pleasure.

⁵⁴ Reprinted by permission from *Book of Common Worship*, © 1993, Westminster/John Knox Press.

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“And whatever people do, whether in the world or as a recluse, let them put their whole heart into it. Let them be committed and energetic, and if they have to struggle, let them do it without envy or hatred. Let them live not a life of self but a life of truth, and in that way, bliss will enter their hearts.”

(Majjhima Nikaya)

Reading from the New Testament: Luke 6:20-31

Reading from the Qur'an

(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)

A Prayer of the Chippewa⁵⁵

We pray that someday an arrow will be broken,
Not in something or someone,
But by each of humankind,
To indicate peace, not violence.
Someday, oneness with creation,
rather than domination over creation,
will be the goal to be respected.
Someday fearlessness to love and make a difference
Will be experienced by all people.
Then the eagle will carry our prayer for peace and love,
And the people of the red, white, yellow, brown, and
black communities
Can sit in the same circle together to communicate in love
And experience the presence of the Great Mystery in their
midst.
Someday can be today for you and me. Amen.

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
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 of Israel,
And all peoples, with peace.

(by Rabbi Jack Riemer)

Resources for the Commitment to Action

Act of Commitment

Leader: Today in our nation, nearly 13 million children are living in poverty, waiting for our nation to become people-centered rather than profit- or thing-centered. Where do we go from here: chaos or community?

People: We choose community!

Leader: Today in our nation, a Black boy born in 2001 has a one in three chance of being incarcerated in his lifetime, and a Latino boy born in 2001 has a one in six chance, unless we replace the pipeline to prison crisis with paths of promise and purpose. Where do we go from here: chaos or community?

People: We choose community!

⁵⁵ Attributed to Wanda Lawrence from *The United Methodist Book of Worship* ©1992, by the United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.

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Leader: Today in our nation, for what we spend in four months on the war in Iraq we could lift every poor child in America out of poverty for a year. Where do we go from here: chaos or community?

People: We choose community!

Leader: Today in our nation, we are pulled in different directions: divided by political party, income, race, ethnicity, and religion, yet we here today declare that what unites us is stronger than anything that could be used to divide us, as we join in common concern and shared commitment to our children as expressions of our faith in the Holy.

Where do we go from here: chaos or community?

People: We choose community!

Leader: We commit ourselves to building a world of peace and justice for our children, because we are joined by the Divine into Beloved Community. And so we dare to dream and envision, hope and believe, work and pray that it may be so.

(by Shannon Daley-Harris)

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 seek justice, peace, and love for all children.

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.

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

Sikh Hymn

"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."

(from a Sikh hymn by Guru Arjan)

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

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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.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 34)

Charge and Blessing

As we recall the words of poet Langston Hughes,
“All you who are dreamers, too
Help me make our world anew
I reach out my hands to you,”

You are invited to reach out to take the hand of the person next to you,
A dreamer, too, who will work with you to make our world anew.

**Now, with the blessing of the divine whom we know
by many names,
And who knows each of us and each child by name,
Let us go forth to answer God’s call to justice, love,
and peace for every child.
Amen.**

(by Shannon Daley-Harris)

Charge

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once urged his listeners, “Let us go out with a ‘divine dissatisfaction... Let us be dissatisfied until the tragic walls that separate the outer city of wealth and comfort and the inner city of poverty and despair shall be crushed by the battering rams of the forces of justice.’”⁵⁶ Let us go out with that same divine dissatisfaction that will not rest until no child lives in poverty and all children have justice; until militarism is replaced with a passion for peacemaking; and until no child—no child—feels the cruel slap of racism or prejudice, and every child is recognized and cherished as a beloved child of God.

Blessing

Let us go forth into a world where children suffer harm, to bring peace;
Let us go forth into a world where children suffer hate, to bring love;
Let us go forth into a world where children suffer need, to bring justice.
Let us go, safe in the love of the Eternal for whom every child is beloved. Amen.

⁵⁶ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Where Do We Go from Here?” sermon delivered at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, August 16, 1967.