



Promoting Your Children's Sabbath: Ideas for All Faiths

Your Children's Sabbath will have the greatest impact if it is effectively promoted and publicized both within your place of worship and to the broader public. This chapter has suggestions and resources for:

- Spreading the Word in Your Place of Worship
- Reaching Out to the Community and Media
- Reproducible Resources: bulletin and newsletter inserts

Spreading the Word in Your Place of Worship

- ❑ **Bulletin Inserts:** Place the first bulletin insert in this section announcing the Children's Sabbath in your congregation's bulletin or newsletter approximately one month before the date. (The second bulletin insert is intended to be distributed on the Children's Sabbath.)
- ❑ **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.
- ❑ **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 to Create Change for Children

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 Children's Sabbath, "Blessed to Be a Blessing: Lifting Up the Next Generation," will focus on the more than 14 million children in our nation who live in poverty and how we can end child poverty so that every child has the opportunity to fulfill their God-given potential.

As people of faith we recognize the sacred responsibility to nurture and protect children and to work for the world God intends. On the Children's Sabbath, we will remember the children in poverty, we will reflect on the teachings of our faith that lead us to respond, and we will commit to putting our faith into action to lift up the next generation.

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 child poverty in America. Today, more than 14 million children live in our poverty in our rich nation. On the Children's Sabbath, congregations of many faiths all across our nation are committing to work to end child poverty and lift up the next generation. Through worship services, education programs, and activities [congregation] invites young and old to use their blessings to *be* a blessing to children in poverty. 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.

❑ **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.** Ask if they will also air the Children's Sabbath video. Also check if they will list the Children's Sabbath on their billboard of local events.

❑ **Write a letter to the editor** about the crises facing uninsured children and call for justice so that every child has health coverage. Offer the Children's Sabbath as a way to learn more and become involved. Watch the newspaper for articles about health care, poverty, and children in general so that you can relate your letter to those articles and time it appropriately.

Promoting Your Children's Sabbath

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) **Mail 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) 628-8787 for background information and a national perspective to supplement your own.
- 4) **Send a letter of thanks to the reporter** if the paper does cover your story, with copies to superiors. Building and maintaining a good relationship with the religion writer or other reporter may help gain coverage of follow-up efforts developing from your Children's Sabbath and of the 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, DC 20001 or email a description to religiousaction@childrensdefense.org.

Sample News Release for Community Newspapers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October [date], 2010

[YOUR CONGREGATION'S NAME] JOINS THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND IN MULTI-FAITH NATIONAL OBSERVANCE OF CHILDREN'S SABBATHS® 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*] to draw attention to the needs of the more than 14 million children in our rich nation who are living in poverty.

[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 (CDF)'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.

According to organizers, the Children's Sabbath theme this year, "Blessed to Be a Blessing: Lifting Up the Next Generation" urges everyone—young and old—to use the resources, skills, and talents with which they have been blessed to *be* a blessing to children by ending poverty and raising up the next generation.

Reports the Children's Defense Fund, "More than 14 million children in America are poor, but they live in working families. A disproportionate number are Black and Latino. Poor children lag behind their peers in many ways beyond income: They are less healthy, trail in emotional and intellectual development, and are less likely to graduate from high school. Poor children also are likely to become the poor parents of the future. Every year that we keep children in poverty costs our nation half a trillion dollars in lost productivity, poorer health and increased crime.

Marian Wright Edelman, CDF Founder and President, states, "There is no excuse for child poverty in a wealthy nation such as ours. It reflects a lack of political will, a lack of civic determination, and a lack of ethical responsibility—*not* a lack of resources. Our vision is to end child poverty. To do so, we must invest in high quality education for every child, livable wages for families, income safety nets like job training and job creation, the Earned Income and Child Tax Credits, and work supports like child care and health coverage. We also must work with partners to educate families about benefits for which they are eligible. Each great religious tradition recognizes the sacred charge to defend children and those in poverty. Now is the time to put our faith into action. Every day, poverty deprives millions of children of the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential. We don't have a moment to wait or a child to waste."

[*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 Insert (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 these two pages back-to-back on 8 ½" x 11" paper and cut down the middle to make two inserts per photocopy.

Children's Sabbath Service Insert (pages 9-10)

This is an insert that may be used on the day you celebrate the Children's Sabbath or thereafter. 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.

The second announcement insert makes one folded insert with four half-size pages. Here's how to make it: print out the pages with "What Can You Do to Be A Blessing" and "Poverty Hurts Children" at the top. Place them on the

photocopier and make copies using the one-sided to two-sided function, so that you have two-sided copies. Fold each page in the middle for a four-page insert, with "Blessed to Be a Blessing" at the top of the front page, "Poverty Hurts Children" at the top of the inside right page, and "What Can You Do to Be a Blessing" at the top of the back page.

If you are able, compile a list of specific ways that congregation members can serve by volunteering with or donating to community- or congregation-based programs serving children or advocating on their behalf, with local contact information. Photocopy it and distribute along with the insert.

Moments in America Insert and Each Day in America Insert

These two inserts may be distributed at any time to raise awareness and encourage a prayerful response and commitment to act. Each of these inserts makes two half-page size inserts per photocopy. Photocopy each back-to-back on 8 ½" x 11" paper and cut down the middle to make two inserts per copy.

Blessed to Be a Blessing: Lifting Up the Next Generation

We are joining places of worship of many religious traditions all across the country in the 19th annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths weekend.

This multi-faith event will unite religious congregations in shared concern for our nation's more than 14 million children who live in poverty and in common commitment to end child poverty and lift up the next generation. All children deserve the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

When?

Where?

Why? Because we don't have a moment to wait or a child to waste. Our faith calls us to nurture and protect children, especially those who are poor and most vulnerable.

Want to help? Contact

DEAR LORD
BE GOOD TO ME
THE SEA IS SO
WIDE AND
MY BOAT IS
SO SMALL


Children's Defense Fund

Blessed to Be a Blessing: Lifting Up the Next Generation

We are joining places of worship of many religious traditions all across the country in the 19th annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths weekend.

This multi-faith event will unite religious congregations in shared concern for our nation's more than 14 million children who live in poverty and in common commitment to end child poverty and lift up the next generation. All children deserve the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

When?

Where?

Why? Because we don't have a moment to wait or a child to waste. Our faith calls us to nurture and protect children, especially those who are poor and most vulnerable.

Want to help? Contact

DEAR LORD
BE GOOD TO ME
THE SEA IS SO
WIDE AND
MY BOAT IS
SO SMALL


Children's Defense Fund

What Can You Do to Be a Blessing to a Child Living in Poverty?

Be a Blessing by Speaking Out

- Communicate regularly with your legislators and urge them to lead on behalf of poor children and families. Sign up for the Children's Defense Fund's legislative updates so you will be informed and equipped to act.
www.childrensdefense.org/signup

Be a Blessing by Reaching Out

- Volunteer as a tutor or mentor to a child in a low-income family.
- Make sure families know about the benefits for which they are eligible, like the Earned Income Tax Credit. Work with a community agency to spread the word.
- Talk with families experiencing financial difficulties or with staff of organizations and agencies serving them. Listen for ways you can help.
- Give even more generously than you already are of your time, talents, goods, and money to benefit children living in poverty.

Be a Blessing by Praying

- Pray for families in difficult financial circumstances. Pray that each of us will find ways to use our resources of time, skills, money, and political influence to end child poverty. Pray that our leaders will show courage and compassion and make ending child poverty a priority.



Blessed to Be a Blessing: Lifting Up the Next Generation

“For much of her adult life, Tinsa Hall felt like she had it made, at least relative to where she’d been. She lived in a six-bedroom home on a wide, tree-lined street in a solidly middle-class neighborhood. Her husband fixed computers for a living. They had three healthy children, and Hall, who’d had some difficulty with her own academic career, attended every school board meeting she could, vowing that her kids would get a better start in life than she. Until last year, that appeared to be the case.

“But things have changed. Hall, 36, now lives in a squat, dark rental on the other side of town, where the sidewalk is jagged and the streets are pocked with holes. Her grand old home was gutted by fire last spring, and her marriage was in tatters months before that. She supports her family on \$19,080 a year — poverty-level wages, according to the federal government — earned training local youth in alternatives to violence. Often, the job keeps her late into the evening, meaning that her teenage son and two daughters are on their own for dinner.

“Hall, however, is glad to have the work. Unemployment in her home state, Mississippi, is over 14 percent for African Americans, and with no college degree, she sees little opportunity to earn more. Rent eats up a third of her monthly income, and after utility bills, food, her car payment and gas, there is nothing left to save. ‘I feel like I’m starting all over again,’ she said.”

“Though the split with her husband touched off Hall’s economic plunge, the broad outlines of her financial crisis are now shared by millions — more each month as figures tracking home foreclosures, food stamp use and unemployment continue to hover at rates not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s. “Since 2008, about 44 percent of American families have experienced a job loss, reduction in hours or pay cut. Nearly 15 million adults are currently unemployed, and even without the most recent data from 2009, 14 million children, like Hall’s, were growing up in poverty. Rather than being publicly labeled as ‘reduced-lunch kids’ in front of their friends, many prefer to leave school hungry.

“Simply put, poverty is not good for the economy,” said John S. Irons, research and policy director at the Economic Policy Institute. When children grow up poor, they have higher drop-out rates, less education overall and vastly diminished job prospects. Some economists estimate that childhood poverty costs Americans about \$500 billion per year in lost productivity and increased spending on health care and criminal justice.”

(From “The New Poverty” by Claudia Rowe. Reprinted from *Facing South: The Online Magazine of the Institute of Southern Studies.*)

Poverty Hurts Children

More than 14 million children in America are now living in poverty. Most live in working families and more than 6 million of them live in extreme poverty. The current poverty line for a family of four is \$22,050 and the extreme poverty line for a family of four is \$11,025.

A disproportionate number of children living in poverty are Black and Latino. Poor children lag behind their peers in many ways beyond income: They are less healthy, trail in emotional and intellectual development, and are less likely to graduate from high school. Poor children also are likely to become the poor parents of the future. Every year that we keep children in poverty costs our nation half a trillion dollars in lost productivity, poorer health and increased crime. The moral cost to allowing child poverty to exist in a wealthy nation is incalculable.

We Can Help Children

Poverty hurts children, but it doesn’t have to be this way. We can help end child poverty in our rich nation and ensure that all children have the opportunity to fulfill their God-given potential. Our vision is to end child poverty. We must invest in high quality education for every child, livable wages for families, income safety nets like job training and job creation, the Earned Income and Child Tax Credits, and work supports like child care and health coverage. We also work with partners to educate families about benefits for which they are eligible.

Moments in America for All Children

Every second a public school student is suspended.*
Every 11 seconds a high school student drops out.*
Every 19 seconds a child is arrested.
Every 19 seconds a baby is born to an unmarried mother.
Every 20 seconds a public school student is corporally punished.*
Every 32 seconds a baby is born into poverty.
Every 41 seconds a child is confirmed as abused or neglected.
Every 42 seconds a baby is born without health insurance.
Every minute a baby is born to a teen mother.
Every minute a baby is born at low birthweight.
Every 4 minutes a child is arrested for a drug offense.
Every 7 minutes a child is arrested for a violent crime.
Every 18 minutes a baby dies before his or her first birthday.
Every 45 minutes a child or teen dies from an accident.
Every 3 hours a child or teen is killed by a firearm.
Every 5 hours a child or teen commits suicide.
Every 6 hours a child is killed by abuse or neglect.
Every 15 hours a mother dies from complications of childbirth or pregnancy.

* 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.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths or contact CDF's Religious Action staff at sjacobs@childrensdefense.org.

Data calculated by the Children's Defense Fund.

Each Day in America

2 mothers die in childbirth.
4 children are killed by abuse or neglect.
5 children or teens commit suicide.
9 children or teens are killed by firearms.
32 children or teens die from accidents.
78 babies die before their first birthdays.
202 children are arrested for violent crime.
377 children are arrested for drug offenses.
964 babies are born at low birthweight.
1,210 babies are born to teen mothers.
1,240 public school students are corporally punished.*
2,060 babies are born without health insurance.
2,175 children are confirmed as abused or neglected.
2,222 high school students drop out.*
2,692 babies are born into poverty.
4,435 children are arrested.
4,498 babies are born to unmarried mothers.
18,493 public school students are suspended.

* Based on 180 school days a year

Prayer of Commitment by Marian Wright Edelman

God did not call us to succeed,
God called us to serve.
God did not call us to win,
God called us to work.
God did not call us to live long,
God called us to live for [God.]
God did not call us to be happy,
God called us to be hopeful.
God did not call us to fame,
God called us to faith.
God did not call us to seek power,
God called us to seek peace.
God did not call us to loot the earth and each other,
God called us to love our earth and each other. Amen.

Data calculated by the Children's Defense Fund.