

## Suggested Activities:

*Choose from among the following activities, based on what is most appropriate for your religious tradition and particular place of worship, or develop your own ideas that will highlight and respond to the need for adults to protect children.*

- **Prayers:** Highlight concerns for children's safety and well-being in the prayers, using one of the prayers provided in these materials or those you create or adapt. If your religious tradition has a customary mourners' prayer, recite it in remembrance of children lost to violence and invite congregation members to stand for those children even if they don't have a family member they are remembering.
- **Advocacy:** Set up a table in a central location with information about sensible gun safety legislation and other policy opportunities to protect children, reduce violence, and care for their health and mental health. (See the Children's Defense Fund's petition and federal policy agenda for specific recommendations.) Make copies of these materials along with contact information for your members of Congress and the White House. Organize efforts beginning this weekend to circulate and sign [CDF's petition](#) and contact policymakers persistently until they take real action to protect children, not guns.
- **Sermon:** Focus the sermon on the connections between the sacred texts and child safety.
- **Offering:** Collect a special offering that will support a local program providing safe haven, conflict resolution skills, health and mental health services, or another contribution to children's safety and well-being.
- **Educational Forum:** Hold a special education program or forum to discuss gun safety, inviting a guest speaker or speakers. Many religious traditions have already developed materials on the topic that can be downloaded and shared, and much information is available at <http://www.childrensdefense.org>.
- **Study Circle:** Start a study circle that will meet regularly to read and respond to publications about children and guns. Two articles with discussion questions are found in this resource and other materials may be found at [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org). *Wrong Place, Wrong Time: Trauma and Violence in the Lives of Young Black Men* by John Rich is another good resource for a study circle or book group. Your religious tradition may also have educational resources prepared on the topics of violence, peace-making, and other related subjects.
- **Remembrance:** Find out the numbers and/or names of children killed by guns in your state in the month since the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Include the names in your prayers and/or bulletin. If your place of worship has a bell, toll it once for each child whose life was lost to guns. If your place of worship has a memorial wall or other location where the names of loved ones who have died are listed, consider adding the names of children lost to violence in the community.

- **Resource:** Compile a list of affordable, accessible mental health resources available to children and families in your community. Make the list available to congregation and community members.
- **Serve:** Create a list of service opportunities for members of your place of worship that will help reduce violence and promote conflict resolution, peacemaking, and good mental health. Options may include after-school programs, in-school programs, juvenile detention facilities, crisis hotlines, and family support programs.
- **Engage Youths:** Plan a special youth program on changing the culture of violence. Create a safe, supportive place for youths to talk about the glamorization of violence in our culture—including video games, music, movies, and more. Let them take the initiative in developing solutions to de-glamorize violence and promote positive values of peace-making. Or, perhaps plan a “fishbowl” discussion where parents sit in a ring around the outside and simply listen to the discussion of the young people on the inside. Adults may be surprised to find out how much they can learn by listening to a candid conversation.