



# Children's Defense Fund

## Protect Children Not Guns Interfaith Toolkit

### Selected Readings & Prayers

February 2018

*Select one or more of the following readings or prayers to use in your services.*

#### ***Selected Readings on Non-Violence from Sacred Texts***

- Hinduism teaches, "Do not hurt others, do no one injury by thought or deed, utter no word to pain thy fellow creatures," (Manu 2:161) and "When one injures another, the injured turns around and injures the injurer. Similarly, when one cherishes another, the other cherishes the cherisher. One should frame one's rule of conduct according to this." (Maha, Anusana Parva [Book 13] CXIII)
- Buddhism teaches, "Hurt none by word or deed, be consistent in well-doing." (Dham. 185), and "Conquer your foe by force, and you increase his anger. Conquer by love and you will reap no after sorrow." (Fo-Shoo-Hing-Tsan-King)
- Jainism teaches, "One should do no harm to any living being, neither by thoughts nor words nor acts." (Sutrakritang 1.11.12)
- In Native American tradition, the Lakota teach, "Force, no matter how concealed, begets resistance."
- From the Baha'i faith we learn, "When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love." ('Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, October 21, 1911)
- Sikh scriptures teach, "Fight with no weapon but the word of God; use no means but pure faith."
- Islamic hadith teaches, "There should be neither harm nor reciprocating of harm," and "Repay evil with good and lo, he between whom you and there was enmity will become your warm friend." (Qur'an 41:38)
- Christian tradition teaches, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God," and "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone

strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you." (Luke 6:27-30)

- In Judaism, the Talmud teaches, "He who takes one life it as though he has destroyed the universe and he who saves one life it is as though he has saved the universe" (Midrash Sanhedrin 4:5).

## **Prayer**

O God, forgive and help us transform our rich and powerful nation where toddlers and school children die from guns sold quite legally.

O God, forgive and help us transform our rich and powerful nation which protects guns before children.

O God, help us never to confuse what is quite legal with what is just and right in Your sight.

Help us to stand up together and speak up together and pray together and act together to make America safe, just and right for all Your children.

*By Marian Wright Edelman*

## **Prayer of Confession**

We cannot change what we do not confess. Hear us, O God, as we confess the ways that we have failed you by failing to love and protect all children. *[Time for silent prayers]* Gracious God, forgive us for weeping without work, for love without labor, for prayer without action. Forgive us for crying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace, for papering over problems rather than tackling the hard, messy work of repairing our world. There is anger in our world, in our nation, in our communities, in some of our homes— forgive us for denying it rather than dealing with it, for raging rather than resolving conflict. There is anguish in friends and family, strangers and schoolchildren—forgive us for hardening our hearts rather than helping to heal it. There is fear in our nation and neighborhoods, schools and souls—forgive us for letting it grow rather than uprooting it. Plant in us seeds of peace and purpose, justice and joy, forgiveness and faithfulness. Help us now to turn in a new direction. Amen.

*By Shannon Daley-Harris*

## *Litany of Lament*

Reader 1: Every day in our nation, 8 children and teens are killed by guns.

**People: O Lord, how long shall I cry for help and you will not listen, or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save?**

Reader 2: Every day in our nation, 1,854 children are confirmed as abused or neglected.

**People: Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble?**

Reader 3: Every day in our nation, 1,759 babies are born into poverty.

**People: So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails.**

Reader 4: Then the Lord answered...and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. (Habakkuk 2:1b-4)

*By Shannon Daley-Harris*

## *Act of Commitment*

Leader: Write the vision, make it plain!

**People: We will work and pray to share God's vision for our world.**

Leader: "And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets."

(Zechariah 8:5) **People: We will work and pray for the day when all children may safely revel in the joys of childhood.**

Leader: "No more shall the sound of weeping be heard or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days or an old person who does not live out a lifetime." (Isaiah 65:20a)

**People: We will work and pray for the day when children receive the care they need for health, mental health, and well-being, and all live to see the fullness of years.**

Leader: "The wolf shall lie down with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them." (Isaiah 11:6)

**People: We will work and pray for the day when the gifts and leadership of children are celebrated and honored and children lead us all in the way of peace.**

Leader: "May our sons in their youth be like plants full grown, our daughters like corner pillars, cut for the building of a palace." (Psalm 144:12)

**People: We will work and pray for the day when all young people have the care and guidance they need to flourish to their potential and leave lives of strength and stability.**

Leader: "For there is still a vision of the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay." (Habakkuk 2:3)

*By Shannon Daley-Harris*

## ***We Cannot Pray to You***

*A Prayer by Rabbi Jack Reimer*

We cannot pray to You, O God,  
to banish war,  
for You have filled the world  
with paths to peace,  
if only we would take them.  
We cannot pray to You  
to end starvation,  
for there is food enough for all,  
if only we would share it.  
We cannot merely pray  
for prejudice to cease,  
for we might see  
the good in all  
that lies before our eyes,  
if only we would use them.  
We cannot merely pray  
"Root out despair,"  
for the spark of hope

already waits within the human heart,  
for us to fan it into flame.  
We must not ask of You, O God,  
to take the task that You  
have given us.  
We cannot shirk,  
we cannot flee away,  
Avoiding obligation for ever.  
Therefore we pray, O God,  
for wisdom and will, for courage  
to do and to become,  
not only to look on  
with helpless yearning  
as though we had no strength.  
For Your sake and ours  
speedily and soon, let it be:  
that our land may be safe,  
that our lives may be blessed.