Every congregation participating in the 2018 Children's Sabbath is encouraged to host a Children’s Sabbath World Cafe Conversation on ending child poverty, ending immigrant family separations, or ending gun violence. A suggested session outline and materials are provided in the Actions Guide of the 2018 Children’s Sabbath materials. You may use those materials for a Children’s Sabbath World Cafe Conversation class with adults, with high school students, or for a combined, intergenerational session.

It could be held for your members or for a conversation held jointly with members from one or more additional places of worship or even as a community-wide conversation. Also in this section is a discussion guide centered on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s final Sunday sermon, “Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution.” It could also be used with a high school group, adult group, or an intergenerational session.
In addition, congregations may want to use the following lesson plans, based on a passage from Habakkuk, with their children. The following Lesson Plans are designed for a one-hour class. They may be used instead of your regular curriculum on the Children’s Sabbath, incorporated into your curriculum, or used during a special Children’s Sabbath educational session on the Children’s Sabbath weekend or on a weekend or weeknight preceding the Children’s Sabbath. **The lesson plans should be adapted to be most appropriate for your particular place of worship. Please adapt suggested activities and conversations based on what is permissible and appropriate for your religious tradition. Plan to incorporate additional religious texts and teachings from your tradition as you see fit.**

Several of the lesson plans have activities with end products that can be shared with the whole congregation, such as a mural, a rally, and a dramatic dialogue. Decide in advance how and when these results might appropriately be shared with the congregation. Will you present them after the education hour or after services on the day of your Children’s Sabbath? Will you extend the focus on children in need and share the created end products the following week? Or you may want to use these lessons the week before the Children’s Sabbath so that, for example, the dramatic dialogue could be incorporated into the Children’s Sabbath service.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Whenever you raise problems facing children, there is the possibility that your own students are facing some of these concerns themselves. This calls for two kinds of preparation. First, you want to be sensitive to the students so they don’t feel embarrassed or ashamed if you are talking about a problem that they are facing themselves. Second, you need to be prepared to respond to disclosures that may be prompted by the discussion, such as a conversation about children who experience violence in their home or community. Know in advance how you would respond to a disclosure and what resources you would turn to, such as the rabbi or pastor or a child welfare hotline. Contact a director of an early childhood program or after-school program, a scout leader, or the local office of child welfare for information on how to get help in your community. Please don’t let this caution deter you from raising these topics; just be prepared. You may end up making more of a difference in the life of a child than you could have imagined.
Preschool Lesson Plan (ages 3-5)

Theme: “Share a Picture of God’s World”

Scriptural Passages: Habakkuk 2:2

Focus: Discovering the kind of world God wants children to grow up in and how we can help

Lesson Objectives

Students will:
- Think about the good things God wants all children and families to have
- Discuss things that help children grow up healthy, safe, and hopeful
- Participate in an active response to help other children be healthy and feel safe and hopeful

Materials

- Dollhouse-sized figures of a family, doctor or nurse, police officer, food, house (check with a local preschool or child care program to borrow these or purchase them from a toy or craft store or, alternatively, cut out magazine pictures of these things and glue them onto stiff paper or use felt-board figures)
- Collage materials: long strip of mural paper; child-safe scissors; glue, glue sticks, or paste; lots of pre-selected magazine pictures of children, parents, health care providers, police officers, fire fighters, religious leaders, and nutritious food
- Nutritious snack foods, such as fruit slices, cheese, and whole grain crackers
- Good Morning, Good Night Kits: resealable plastic bags, preferably the quart size; children’s toothbrushes; child-friendly toothpaste; travel-size containers of shampoo; soap; and washcloths (optimally with a fun, child-friendly design).
- For Heart Cards: Stiff paper such as oaktag or file folders; crayons and markers, plus glitter sticks or any other decorating supplies desired

Teacher Preparation

- Review the lesson and gather the needed materials. If desired, use a highlighter to make the suggested teacher lines easy to read during the lesson and/or adapt the suggested lines to suit your style.
- For the mural, print the following heading along the top edge of the mural paper: “A Picture of God’s World: Children Are Healthy, Safe, and Loved!” Locate and cut out magazine pictures of diverse children, parents, and grandparents, fire fighters and police officers, health care providers, religious leaders, children’s medicine, nutritious food, children exercising, houses and apartments, and other images that show the things children need to be healthy, safe, loved, and hopeful.
- For the following heart card preparation, prepare enough to have one for each child plus a few extras for unexpected visitors: cut small cards out of the stiff paper. Print “God Loves You!” on each with a colorful marker. Leave decorating the cards for the children to do. Gather supplies for decorating noted in “Materials.”
Ahead of time, contact a refugee agency, a foster care agency, or a shelter serving families to arrange a donation of the “Good Morning, Good Night” kits (some may call them “hygiene kits” and children’s books with bookmarks.)

For a week or two before using this lesson plan, invite the children to bring in items for the Good Morning, Good Night kits. Send a letter or a flyer home for their parents. Alternatively, purchase the items for the children to prepare for donation, or invite the congregation members to donate them.

**Overview**

1. **Activity For Early Arrivers**
   Invite children arriving early to class to color a picture of someone who makes them feel safe and loved.

2. **Opening and Introduction to the Message**
   Greet the children and gather them in a circle on the floor or around a table, whichever is customary for your class. Tell them that today is a special day. It is a day to remember how special and terrific children are. It is a day to remember that God thinks children are very, very important. God wants everyone to help take very good care of children and make sure that all children are healthy, safe, and loved. The name for this special day is “Children’s Sabbath.”

   Ask, “Who are some of the people who love you? [Allow time for the children to share.]”

   Ask, “Who are some of the people who help keep you safe?” [Allow time for children to share.]

   Ask, “What are some things that every child needs to grow up healthy, strong, and safe?” [Allow time for children to share. You may want to supplement answers with: healthy food, a place to live, a doctor for check-ups and when they are sick, grown-ups who love and keep them safe, a school when they are old enough.]

3. **Exploring the Message**

   **Creating a Dollhouse Community**
   All of the following should be dollhouse-sized: figures of a family (adults and children) and a doctor or nurse and a police officer, a house or apartment building (perhaps drawn on shoe-boxes), and food (fruit & vegetables if possible).

   Show the children one of the child-sized figures. Say, “Let’s pretend this little girl (or boy) is named [choose a name appropriate for the children’s racial/ethnic community]. What does she (or he) need to be healthy and safe?” (Ask questions to elicit the following kinds of responses: [answers varied based on specific context and needs].)
Parents/grandparents to take care of her, perhaps a babysitter or child care teacher to take care of her while her parents are at work, a place to live, food to eat, a doctor to take care of her when she's sick or hurt, a good school when she's older, no fighting, police officers and other people like firefighters to keep the neighborhood safe. Such questions might be: who might take care of her during the day? What does she need to eat to grow healthy and strong?) As responses are given, add the appropriate prop to the scene (the parent figures, house, food, etc.).

Allow the children some unstructured time to play with the dollhouse figures. If available in the classroom, allow the children to use the play kitchen area to pretend to make healthy foods, use the building center to build a hospital, fire station, and other related buildings, and the creative play area to make pretend foods out of Play-Doh.

**Making a Collage Picture of God's World**

Gather the children around the prepared mural paper that is either hung low on a wall or stretched out on a table or the floor. Read the heading: “A Picture of God’s World: Children Are Healthy, Safe, and Loved!” Remind the children that this is the kind of world God wants, where every child is healthy, safe, and loved.

Invite the children to glue or paste the pre-cut magazine pictures onto the mural. As they do so, talk about the pictures and how they show people and things that children need to be healthy and feel safe and loved.

**Song**

Tell the children that the class will be learning a new song, with some words that might be new to them. Explain to the children that peace is when we are safe and there is no fighting. Tell them that joy is when we feel very, very happy and know that God loves us. Explain that our soul is the deep down part of ourselves that feels happy or sad. Tell the children than when we are safe and healthy and taken care of, and when we know God loves us, we feel peace, joy, love, and hope. Teach them the song “I’ve Got Peace Like a River.” (Music is printed on page 7.)

I’ve got peace like a river,
I’ve got peace like a river,
I’ve got peace like a river in my soul.

(Repeat.)

Verse 2: I’ve got joy like a fountain...
Verse 3: I’ve got love like an ocean...

Optional (if time permits): After the children have learned the words, you may want to teach them hand motions to accompany it: flowing hands like a river, hands spraying up like a fountain, hands making waves like an ocean. Or, have them join hands and walk in a circle while singing it, or dance.

**Snack**

Gather the children for a healthy snack, such as fruit slices, cubes of cheese or cheese sticks, and whole grain crackers. Talk about how these are the kinds of foods that help children be healthy.
4. Responding to the Message
Tell the children that some children are sick or hurt or don’t feel safe. They can help these children feel better!

Assembling Good Morning, Good Night Kits
Ask, “What are some of the things that you do when you wake up in the morning at your house?” [Allow for responses]
Ask, “What are some of the things that you do before you go to bed at your house?” [Allow for responses.]
If these answers aren’t offered, ask “Do you brush your teeth? Do you take a bath or wash your face? Do you read a bedtime story?”

Tell the children that some children and families don’t have their own homes right now. Their parents may have travelled a long way looking for a safe place for the family or they may not have enough money for their own house. Grown-ups are working hard to make that better so that every family has a home. There is a way that children can help right now. Tell the children that they will be making “Good Morning, Good Night Kits” that will be given to families who may not be able to stay in their own homes right now. That way, those children will be able to wake up and brush their teeth and wash their face. That way, before bed those children will be able to brush their teeth and have a bedtime story.

Have the children make “Good Morning, Good Night Kits.” Give each child a resealable plastic bag, preferably the quart size. Into the bags, have each child put a child’s toothbrush, tube of child-friendly toothpaste, travel-size container of shampoo, bar of soap, and a washcloth. Arrange to donate the Good Morning, Good Night Kits through your congregation’s food pantry or through an organization serving families in need, such as a refugee organization, foster care program, or homeless shelter.

Give children the prepared heart cards. Tell them that the words say “God Loves You!”, and explain that knowing God loves us can help us feel loved and hopeful even when we are having a hard time or in a scary situation. Tell them that the “God Loves You!” cards will be included in the Good Morning, Good Night kits.

Invite them to decorate the cards with markers, crayons, glitter, or whatever supplies you have provided. If the tags are large enough, children could be helped to sign their names.

Talk about how good a child will feel to have the Good Morning, Good Night kit and the card they made.

5. Closing
Tell the children how proud of them you are for the ways that they are helping other children to feel safe and healthy. Tell them that God is proud of them too. Sing “Peace Like a River” again. Then, pray for each child to have peace, to share joy with others, and to share God’s love, and that all children will be healthy and feel safe and loved.
I’ve Got Peace Like a River

African-American spiritual

1. I’ve got peace like a river, I’ve got peace like a
2. I’ve got joy like a fountain, I’ve got joy like a
3. I’ve got love like an ocean, I’ve got love like an

I’ve got peace like a river in my soul.
I’ve got joy like a fountain in my soul.
I’ve got love like an ocean in my soul.
Elementary Lesson Plan

Theme: “It’s Not Fair... So What Are You Going to Do About It?”

Scriptural Passages: Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4

Focus: Making the world a better, safer, healthier, and more just place for children

Lesson Objectives
Students will:
• Study a scriptural passage and understand its original meaning and application today
• Learn more about needs of children
• Develop a vision of how children’s lives today could be improved
• Participate in an active response to help children in need

Materials
• Mural paper and markers or crayons
• Masking tape
• Construction paper or poster board (for relay game signs)
• Healthy snack food and beverages, such as fruit chunks, cheese and crackers, cut vegetables and dip, and 100 percent fruit juice
• Depending on which of the activities you choose to do in the “Responding to the Message” section, you may need the following materials:
   ▪ Fairness Fund materials: a clean, empty container for each child, such as oatmeal canisters, frozen juice containers, milk cartons, glass jars with lids, shoe boxes, or yogurt containers with snap on lids; stickers, glue, glitter, paper, and markers
   ▪ Sidewalk chalk (at least one stick per student)
   ▪ Letter writing materials: paper, pencils and pens, envelopes, and stamps

Teacher Preparation
• Review the lesson and gather the needed materials. If desired, use a highlighter to make the suggested teacher lines easy to read during the lesson and/or adapt the suggested lines to suit your style.
• Prepare the mural paper with the heading “God's Vision for Our World” or “The Way God Wants Our World To Be.”
• Make signs on construction paper or poster board for the relay game. Make one sign per team. Number of teams will be determined by class size; each team should have at least three students. Print the signs with marker in large, easily readable letters. Possible messages for the signs include: God Loves Children; God Wants Peace; Love One Another; God Loves Poor Children; Be Fair to All; God Feels Our Hurts; God Cares for Everyone. (Note: If you often have children who arrive early to class, you may want to have them prepare the signs while waiting for the other class members to arrive.)
Depending on which of the “Responding to the Message” activities you select, you may need to: 1) research organizations helping children that might receive “Fairness Fund” donations, such as a program serving poor children, and provide three options for the children to select from or 2) secure permission from the appropriate congregational staff person/s for the children to draw on an outside walkway to the congregation (and ask the religious leader to invite congregation members to review the drawings as they leave congregation).

Overview
1. Activity for Early Arrivers: Sign Making
2. Opening and Introduction to the Message (5 minutes)
3. Exploring the Message (15 minutes)
4. Relay Game and Snack (15 minutes)
5. Responding to the Message (20 minutes)
6. Closing (5 minutes)

1. Activity For Early Arrivers
Guide children who arrive early to class in making the signs for the relay game, as described in the Teacher Preparation section. Provide the paper, markers or crayons, and selected phrases for them to copy.

2. Opening and Introduction to the Message
Greet the students and remind them that today is the Children’s Sabbath, a special day celebrated by churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship all across the country to focus attention on the problems facing children and to urge people to help solve the problems. The congregation believes children are a gift from God and that God charges us with nurturing and protecting that gift.

Ask, “When do you say something is not fair?,” or, “Give me an example of something that is not fair.” Allow time for the children to respond. Note that we often say something is not fair about ourselves, when we don’t get to do or have something that we want. But sometimes, we can look around at other people, and see that other people are having a hard time and it’s not fair that they don’t have what they need.

Tell the students that Habakkuk was a man who lived hundreds of years before Jesus. He looked at the world around him and wanted to shout out “It’s not fair!” He saw injustice, things that weren’t fair, all around him. He saw people who were weak and helpless being hurt. He saw all kinds of wrong-doing and trouble. He saw the lawyers and the judges in the courts becoming corrupt and full of injustice. (If necessary, add that being corrupt might mean accepting bribes, which means getting money from someone and then doing something wrong in exchange for the money you got.) He saw people who had lots of money being unfair to people who didn’t have much money. He saw the “bad guys” always coming out ahead of the “good guys.” He wanted to shout “It’s not fair!” and he asked God how long things would keep going like this, how long before God would put a stop to the unfairness.
God’s answer was pretty surprising. Instead of just telling Habakkuk what God would do to fix the problems and the unfairness, God started by telling him what Habakkuk should do! And so God told Habakkuk to write down God’s vision of a world where people were loving and fair to each other and then run with the message to tell all the people.

3. Exploring the Message

Guide the students in responding to the following sentence starters. Write their ideas (perhaps just the key words or phrase) on mural paper. (If you do not have enough time to discuss all of the questions below, select just a few for the children to respond to.)

- Say, “It’s not fair that some children can’t see a doctor when they are hurt or sick because their parents don’t have enough money to pay the doctor.” Then, ask the children what they think would be more fair; what does God want for sick and hurt children?

Tell the children to complete the sentence, “God wants every child to...” After the children have had a chance to share their ideas, you may want to add, “God wants every child to be able to see a doctor for check-ups to keep them healthy and for help when they are sick or hurt.”

- Say, “It’s not fair that some children have kind parents or babysitters or teachers to take care of them during the day, while other children don’t have a safe place with nice babysitters or teachers to go to while their parents work.”

Then, ask the children what they think would be more fair, and how God wants every child to be taken care of. Remind them to complete the sentence, “God wants every child to...”

- After the children have had a chance to share their ideas, you may want to add, “God wants every child to have parents who love them, and caring babysitters and teachers to take care of them when their parents are away.”

- Say, “It’s not fair that some children don’t have enough food to eat or a house or apartment to live in or other things that they need, because their parents don’t have jobs or don’t have jobs that pay enough money.” Then, ask the children what they think would be more fair, beginning, “God wants every child to...” After the children have had a chance to share their ideas, you may want to add, “God wants every child to have enough food to eat and the other things they need to be safe and healthy.”

- Say, “It’s not fair that some children live in neighborhoods where there is lots of fighting and guns that could hurt them, or that some children are hurt by grown-ups.” Then, ask the children what they think would be more fair, what God would want to keep all children safe. After the children have had a chance to share their ideas, you may want to add, “God wants every child to feel safe and be safe in their home and neighborhood and school.”

- Say, “It’s not fair that some children know that God loves them and have grown-ups who teach them to do the right thing, while other children don’t know they are loved by God and don’t have grown-ups to show them how to do the right thing.” Then, ask the children what they think would be more fair. After the children have had a chance to share their ideas, you may want to add, “God wants every child to know that God loves them, and God wants grown-ups to help children know how to do the right thing.”
Now, give the children markers or crayons and invite them to illustrate the ideas they just came up with. Some may want to draw pictures of the problems, and then draw a red circle with a line across it to show that is what we don’t want. (Teach younger children about that symbol if they are unfamiliar with it.)

4. Relay Game and Snack
Remind the students that a prophet—like Habakkuk—was a messenger who was sent by God to share God’s message with people everywhere. God told Habakkuk to write the vision, or the message, so plainly and clearly that he could run with it and take it for all the people to see. Tell them that in this game, they are going to be the prophets who run with God’s message to share it with others.

Divide the group into several relay teams (the number of teams should be determined by your class size. Have at least three students per team). Using masking tape, mark two lines on the floor, a good distance apart. (You may need to move into the hallway, out of doors, or to another suitable area for this game.) Have the teams line up behind one of the masking tape lines. Give the first member of each team a different sign to hold. Instruct them that they must hold the sign up using both hands and the words must face out so that others can read them. (If you are teaching younger children who are beginning readers, read together what each sign says.)

Tell the children that the cue to start running is when you say, “Write the vision, make it plain.” They should run as soon as you say the word “plain.”

Each relay team member must then run, holding the sign in both hands, to the second line marked on the floor, call out the words on their sign, and then run back and give the sign to the next member of their team, who proceeds likewise. If desired and if time permits, you can announce different awards for each team: the fastest, the most enthusiastic, the loudest, the most supportive, the most persistent (this could be saved for the slowest team!), and so on.

If time and interest permit, mix up the teams and play again. When the game is over, have a break for a healthy snack.

5. Responding to the Message
Select one or more of the following activities for the class to do.

- **Fairness Fund**: Tell the children that they will be making collection containers for a “Fairness Fund.” For the next month, they are encouraged to invite others (family members, neighbors, congregation members, classmates) to contribute to their “Fairness Fund.” At the end of the month, the class will bring in their containers so the money can be given to a group that helps children. Tell the students about the three organizations helping children that are possibilities to receive the Fairness Fund donation. Have the class decide what group they would like to support. Have each child select a container that you have provided. (Alternatively, during the preceding few weeks ask each child to bring in a container, being sure to provide extras for those who forget or for visitors.) Give them assorted materials such as stickers, glue and glitter, papers and markers to decorate their containers. Have them label the containers “Fairness Fund.” [Alternatively, arrange to distribute Trick or Treat for UNICEF boxes, and talk with the children about ways that UNICEF is working to help refugee and immigrant children and families which is one of the special concerns that]
the 2018 Children’s Sabbath is focused on. Also, if your students already have Tzedakah boxes at home, you may wish to select a different “responding to the message” option or decide how to adapt this action.]

• **Sidewalk Chalk Messages:** With advance permission from the appropriate congregational staff person/s, take the children outside to the walkway to the congregation. Give the children a supply of sidewalk chalk, and have them draw pictures of people helping and caring for children. Help them come up with messages and slogans to write on the sidewalk too. Remind them to “make it plain”; they may make their drawings and messages very large. (You may want to use the messages from the relay game.) Talk about how they are helping to write the message and make it plain for congregation members when they leave the building today, and for other people who will be walking by on the street. (If it is a rainy day, have the children draw on paper and then tape the drawings throughout the congregation’s building for members to discover after the service.)

6. **Closing**
Teach the children this cheer:
“Write the vision, make it plain. Care for children. Say it again!”

Have them repeat it several times. Try starting soft and getting louder, or having half the group say one line and the other half say the other line.

Close with a prayer.
Middle School Lesson Plan

**Theme:** “It’s Not Fair… So What Are You Going to Do About It?”

**Scriptural Passages:** Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4

**Focus:** Working for a better world for children

**Lesson Objectives**

Students will:
- Read a scriptural passage and learn about its original meaning and application today
- Learn more about needs of children
- Develop a vision of how children’s lives today could be improved
- Participate in an active response to help children in need

**Materials**

- Mural paper, markers or crayons, masking tape
- Five index cards
- Two Bibles or two copies of Habakkuk 1:1-4 and 2:1-4
- Poster board; sticks or poles to attach to poster board signs (optional)
- White paper for informational flyers

**Teacher Preparation**

- Review the lesson and gather the needed materials. If desired, use a highlighter to make the suggested teacher lines easy to read during the lesson and/or adapt the suggested lines to suit your style.
- Hang the mural paper on a wall with masking tape. If desired, title it “It’s Not Fair…” This will be the Graffiti Wall.
- Write the statistics about children listed below on index cards.
- Secure permission from appropriate congregational staff for students to stage the protest rally described in “Responding to the Message.”

**Overview**

1. Opening and Introduction to the Message (15 minutes)
2. Exploring the Message (5 minutes)
3. Responding to the Message (25 minutes)
4. Closing (15 minutes)

**1. Opening and Introduction to the Message**

As students arrive, direct them to the Graffiti Wall. Ask them to write or draw what they consider to be some of the most serious problems facing children and young people today. When a student is done writing, she or he can take a few moments to read what others have written.

When all of the students have arrived, gather them together. Greet the students and remind them that today is the Children’s Sabbath, a special day celebrated by churches and synagogues and other places of worship all across the country to focus attention on the problems facing children and to urge people to help solve the problems. Congregations are doing this because we believe children are a gift from God and that God charges us with nurturing and protecting that gift.
Gather by the Graffiti Wall, and invite the students to name the problems they have highlighted. Say that there are other problems facing children today. Ask for volunteers to add this information to the Graffiti Wall after you read it from the index cards:

- Every 2 hours and 48 minutes, a child or teenager is killed by guns.
- Over 2.5 million school-aged children in our nation don’t have health insurance, and can’t see a doctor when they are sick or hurt.
- Every 47 seconds, a child is confirmed as abused or neglected.
- Nearly 1.7 million children live in homes in which there is a gun stored unsafely.
- There are more than 12.8 million poor children in our nation, who are at greater risk of injury and illness and many other problems.

2. Exploring the Message
Tell the students that they are about to hear a conversation between a prophet named Habakkuk and God. Tell them that Habakkuk lived thousands of years ago, and was upset by the unfairness he saw all around him: there was violence against those who were weak and helpless, judges and lawyers and courts were unjust, unfair, rich people were taking advantage of poor people... it seemed like the “bad guys” were always coming out ahead of the “good guys.”


Explain that some biblical experts believe God’s reply was directing Habakkuk to write out God’s vision of how the world is supposed to be, and then to run with the message to spread God’s vision far and wide to all the people. Prophets were considered messengers who ran to take God’s message to the world.

3. Responding to the Message
Ask if any of the students have ever been to a protest or a rally for a cause or seen one on television. Have them describe it and the ways that people got their message across. Supplement descriptions, if necessary, by mentioning that when a group protests an injustice, they often make and carry signs that say what is wrong and call for what is needed, and sometimes pass out flyers with information. Often, there are speakers who talk powerfully about the problems and needed action. Sometimes, there is a dramatic, symbolic, or visual action—perhaps lighting candles, wearing ribbons, or marching to a symbolic place.

Invite the students to plan a protest rally to raise awareness and spur action on problems facing children. They can stage their rally for the other congregation members at a pre-arranged time (for instance, after services or during the social hour). Or, if they are really motivated, they can plan to hold their rally for the community or school.

Have the students divide into groups to prepare. Small groups might include Protest Signs (written on poster board); Informational Flyers (they can use the index cards with statistics for information); Speaker (planning remarks themselves or brainstorming about who could be a powerful speaker); and Dramatic Actions. Circulate to provide information and guidance to the small groups as necessary. Have a representative from each small group report their plans to the whole class. (Note: Part of the next class session may be used to review plans. Remind students of the rally date and time.)
4. Closing

“Write the vision, make it plain: Care for children, say it again!” Have them chant it several times in various ways (softer to louder, one half saying the first part and the other saying the second part, and so forth).

Next, teach them the song “We Shall Overcome.” Tell them that during the Civil Rights Movement, when people were protesting segregation and injustice against black Americans, this song was sung at many, many protest rallies, marches, and church services.

1. We shall overcome,
   We shall overcome,
   We shall overcome someday
   Oh, deep in my heart,
   I do believe,
   We shall overcome someday.

2. We’ll walk hand in hand . . . today
3. God is on our side . . . today
4. We are not afraid . . . today
5. We shall live in peace . . . someday

Challenge the students to come up with their own protest chant or song (adding new lyrics to an old song, or writing a new song if they wish).

Finally, close in prayer, inviting students who wish to add their prayers for justice and an end to child poverty and other problems facing children.
High School Lesson Plan

Note: Instead of using this lesson plan, you may wish to combine the high school and adult classes for an intergenerational session on the Children’s Sabbath using the Children’s Sabbath World Cafe Conversation materials provided in the Action Section.

Theme: “Making Plain God’s Vision for Children/Talking with God”

Scriptural Passages: Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4

Lesson Objectives

Students will:
- Study a lament from Habakkuk
- Consider causes for lament today, especially regarding the plight of children
- Explore the concept of dialogue with God and write their own conversation with God
- Participate in an active response to the lesson which will help spread its message

Materials

- Portable CD player or other means to play the song
- CD or other recording of Tracy Chapman’s song “Why?”
- Bibles or copies of Habakkuk 1:1-2:4, one per student
- Flip chart paper and markers, and tape to post sheets of paper on the walls
- Copies of the handout “How Long, O Lord?” on page 20, one per student
- Paper and pens (enough for all students)
- Mural paper (long enough for all students to write on) and markers
- Materials for activity options under “Responding to the Message” (below)

Teacher Preparation

- Review the lesson and gather the needed materials. If desired, use a highlighter to make the suggested teacher lines easy to read during the lesson and/or adapt the suggested lines to suit your style.
- Make copies of handouts.
- Test operation of CD player and cue CD to song.
- Write a heading on the mural paper: “Write the Vision and Make It Plain.”
- Put supplies for each chosen activity under “Responding to the Message” in different areas or activity centers.

Overview

1. Opening and Introduction to the Message (5 minutes)
2. Exploring the Message (15 minutes)
3. Talking with God (10 minutes)
4. Activity (15 minutes)
5. Responding to the Message (15 minutes)
6. Closing (2 minutes)
1. Opening and Introduction to the Message
Greet the students and remind them that today is the Children’s Sabbath, a special day celebrated by churches and synagogues and other places of worship all across the country to focus attention on the problems facing children and to urge people to help solve the problems. We believe children are a gift from God and that God charges us with nurturing and protecting that gift.

Invite the students to listen to a song by Tracy Chapman that expresses her concern about problems in the world. Play the Tracy Chapman song “Why.” Read aloud or, if possible, photocopy the lyrics for the students to follow along.

Invite the students to talk about the song briefly—how does it make them feel? What is she trying to say?

Say it seems that people have forever been crying out about the suffering of children—from the time of the Hebrew prophets like Habakkuk (whom we will be studying today), to the lyrics written by Tracy Chapman more recently, to our own questions and concerns expressed in the Children’s Sabbath today.

2. Exploring the Message
Read aloud the first portion of the Habakkuk lesson, 1:1-1:4, letting the drama and emotion come through.

Ask the students what words they would use to describe Habakkuk’s tone or feelings. (Possible answers may include angry, blaming, frustrated, despairing.)

Point out that while the prophet is angry and blaming God, he is nonetheless directing his question to God. That is, he is not afraid to pour out his strong, negative feelings to God; he does not try to bury them or “pretty them up” or turn himself away from God. He recognizes that God is able to accept our strongest, angriest feelings and questions.

Have the class make a list of the problems facing children and families today about which they feel anger, frustration, fear, or despair. Record the ideas on newsprint.

Have they ever felt the emotions Habakkuk felt when they look at the world around them and the problems children and young people face? What emotions are most common or strongest for them when they think about children dealing with poverty, hunger, violence, and sickness?

Distribute the handout “How Long, O Lord?” to provide additional information about the problems children face. Have class members take turns reading from the handout. Afterward, allow a moment for the students to share any thoughts or feelings this has evoked.

3. Talking with God
Direct the students’ attention back to the Habakkuk text and point out that it is a conversation between Habakkuk and God. As just discussed, Habakkuk is speaking in 1:1-4, complaining about the political leaders, the courts, and the economy being unjust in his own society. Tell them that God replies in 1:5-11, announcing God’s judgment on the corrupt government: allowing it to fall at the hands of a foreign army, the Chaldeans. Habakkuk is the speaker in 1:12-17, the second time he addresses God, complaining about the “wicked”—who in this address are most likely the Chaldeans (even though we just learned that the Chaldean Empire was the instrument of God’s judgment!). God’s second reply to the prophet’s complaint begins with chapter 2, verse 1.
Ask for a volunteer to read 2:1-4. Then, ask the participants to paraphrase God’s response to the prophet. Add any clarifications or information needed. Ask the class how they understand 2:2. Tell them that there are at least two ways to understand it. The first is that the prophet should write the vision so plainly that even one who is running past it may read it—like a billboard on the highway that can be read by drivers today. The other interpretation is that the one who is running is the prophet or messenger bearing the message. The New International Version translation supports this interpretation: “… make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.” In other words, Habakkuk is told by God to write down God’s vision in order to carry it and announce it to the people.

Note that the prophet is engaging in dialogue with God. It is not a one-way conversation with him shouting questions into a void nor is it an instance of him waiting silently for directions. He is seeking and expects active, dynamic interaction with God—like we can today.

4. Activity
Have the students write a dialogue between a teenager and God, talking to God about the problems facing children today. Depending on the number of students in your class, you may do this as a large group, in several small groups, or with the students working in pairs. After the dialogue/s have been written, invite those who wish to act it out or simply read it aloud.

5. Responding to the Message
Depending on your class size, time, and resources, you may wish to offer one or more of the following activity options as a way of writing God’s vision and making it plain for others to see:

a. Create a mural
Invite the students to write, with markers on the prepared mural paper posted on the wall, what they believe is God’s vision for children and families and our world. Encourage them to write the vision in the present tense, as if it is already true and has already come to pass. For instance, one might write “In our world, every child has enough food to eat and clean water to drink,” or, “In our community, no teenager is killed by guns and everyone feels safe and loved.” Artistically inclined students may want to draw the vision. When they are done, allow a few minutes for people to view what others have written or drawn. You might arrange to display the mural in the congregation’s building where others may see the students’ vision.

b. Prepare a dialogue presentation
Have the students rehearse a dramatic presentation of one of the dialogues written earlier. The dialogue can then be videotaped in class to be shown to other classes or groups in the congregation, or it could be presented live to the congregation or a class or group within it at another time. (Have a video camera and blank tape on hand if it will be videotaped. If you will have them present it to another group, find out in advance when and to whom you may present it.)
c. Write a newsletter article or item for the congregation’s website
Using the information about children in need from the handout “How Long, O Lord?,” have the students draft a short article for the congregation’s newsletter or website that is geared to raise awareness about problems and motivate people to active responses. (Beforehand, check with the appropriate staff or committee person for guidelines on article length and when it could be placed in the newsletter or website.) Have an extra copy of a recent newsletter or posted on the website on hand or access to view the website so the students are clear about what they are writing for. Also provide paper and pens for drafting the article.

d. Make posters or a banner
Have the students make posters to be placed in the congregation’s buildings. Have them draw attention to the problems facing children, God’s vision for children’s well-being, and the need for faithful response. Have poster board, markers, and other craft supplies on hand for making the posters. If students will be making a banner to hang outside the congregation’s building (or somewhere within it), have a large piece of fabric or old sheet and fabric paints or markers. Remind them to “make it plain” and write the vision large. (In advance, check with the appropriate congregational staff for permission to hang the posters and/or banner.)

6. Closing
Gather the students back together and teach them this cheer to close the session:

“Write the vision and make it plain!
If you didn’t hear me, I’ll say it again!”

Have them repeat it several times. You might have them start chanting it softly, and then get louder each time they repeat it. (If students arrive early at the start of class, you may want to recruit several of them to learn the chant and teach it to the others.) You could also teach the following motions to accompany the cheer: writing “in the air” (write the vision); cup hands around mouth as if shouting (make it plain); cup hand behind ear (if you didn’t hear me); cup hands around mouth (I’ll say it again).
How Long, O Lord?

Each Day in America for All Children

Every 2 seconds a public school student is suspended.*
Every 31 seconds a child is arrested.
Every 41 seconds a child is born into poverty.
Every 47 seconds a child is confirmed as abused or neglected.
Every minute a baby is born without health insurance.
Every 9 seconds a high school student drops out.*
Every 2 minutes a child is born into extreme poverty.
Every 2 minutes a baby is born at low birthweight.
Every 2 minutes a baby is born to a teen mother.
Every 43 seconds a public school student is corporally punished.*
Every 5 minutes a child is arrested for a drug offense.
Every 9 minutes a child is arrested for a violent crime.
Every 23 minutes a baby dies before their first birthday.
Every 26 minutes a child or teen is injured or killed with a gun.
Every hour and 6 minutes a child or teen dies from an accident.
Every 2 hours and 48 minutes a child or teen is killed by a firearm.
Every 3 hours and 33 minutes a child or teen commits suicide.
Every 5 hours and 33 minutes a child is killed by abuse or neglect.
Every 11 hours and 8 minutes a mother dies from complications of childbirth or pregnancy.

*Based on 180 school days a year.
Children’s Sabbath Discussion Guide: Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution

The following Discussion Guide could be used with a high school group, an adult group, or an intergenerational group. It is focused around the last Sunday sermon that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., preached before his assassination fifty years ago. The challenges that he named remain urgent and timely. It is designed for an hour and a half.

- **Introduction:** Introduce yourself as the facilitator and, as time and numbers permit, have participants introduce themselves. Introduce the discussion as part of the 2018 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths titled “Realizing Dr. King’s Vision for Every Child: Lives of Hope, Not Despair,” and the Children’s Sabbath focus on ending child poverty, ending immigrant family separations, and ending gun violence. Offer brief background on Dr. King’s final Sunday sermon, “Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution.” Read aloud or play an audio recording of the beginning of Dr. King’s sermon (p. 23) (10 minutes)

- **Small Group Discussions:** Divide into four small groups to discuss the four “Challenges”: developing a world perspective; eradicating racism; ridding the nation and world of poverty; finding an alternative to war and bloodshed. (50 minutes)
  - **Group 1:** “First, we are challenged to develop a world perspective.” (p. 24)
  - **Group 2:** “We are challenged to eradicate the last vestiges of racial injustice from our nation.” (pages 25-26)
  - **Group 3:** “We are challenged to rid our nation and the world of poverty” (pages 27-29)
  - **Group 4:** “One other challenge that we face is simply that we must find an alternative to war and bloodshed” (page 30-31)

- **Process:** As a small group, read the highlighted section related to your challenge—marking up copies as you go, if desired. Then consider and respond to the following questions and others that arise from the group, recording responses to share back with the large group:

  **Questions for Response:**
  - Is there a word, phrase, or image here that speaks directly to you or resonates most strongly with you?
  - How far have we come?
  - Where are we now? In what ways does this still resonate?
  - Where do we go from here? What might be our next faithful steps?
• Dr. King began, “One of the great liabilities of life is that all too many people find themselves living amid a great period of social change and yet they fail to develop the new attitudes, the new mental responses that the new situation demands. They end up sleeping through a great revolution. ...Whenever anything new comes into history it brings with it new challenges...and new opportunities.” What are the most important new challenges and opportunities you see today? What new attitudes and new responses does the new situation demand?

• **Reporting back** from the small groups (5 minutes each)

• **Closing (10 minutes)**
  - Listen to last six minutes of Dr. King’s sermon (written text is on pages 32-33)
  - Invite final reflections from the group
  - **Closing song** (e.g. “We Shall Overcome”), prayer, or other ending. (One possibility is distributing a token that will recall Dr. King’s final words about “the stone of hope.” In advance, purchase smooth river stones from a craft store and write on each “hope” with a paint pen or permanent marker.)
Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution

Delivered at the National Cathedral, Washington, D.C., on 31 March 1968.

[For the audio recording, cue it to begin where the text starts, below, omitting for the sake of time Dr. King’s preceding remarks.]

I would like to use as a subject from which to preach this morning: “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution.” The text for the morning is found in the book of Revelation. There are two passages there that I would like to quote, in the [21st] chapter of that book: “Behold I make all things new; former things are passed away.”

I am sure that most of you have read that arresting little story from the pen of Washington Irving entitled “Rip Van Winkle.” The one thing that we usually remember about the story is that Rip Van Winkle slept twenty years. But there is another point in that little story that is almost completely overlooked. It was the sign in the end, from which Rip went up in the mountain for his long sleep.

When Rip Van Winkle went up into the mountain, the sign had a picture of King George the Third of England. When he came down twenty years later the sign had a picture of George Washington, the first president of the United States. When Rip Van Winkle looked up at the picture of George Washington—and looking at the picture he was amazed—he was completely lost. He knew not who he was.

And this reveals to us that the most striking thing about the story of Rip Van Winkle is not merely that Rip slept twenty years, but that he slept through a revolution. While he was peacefully snoring up in the mountain a revolution was taking place that at points would change the course of history—and Rip knew nothing about it. He was asleep. Yes, he slept through a revolution.

And one of the great liabilities of life is that all too many people find themselves living amid a great period of social change, and yet they fail to develop the new attitudes, the new mental responses, that the new situation demands. They end up sleeping through a revolution.

There can be no gainsaying of the fact that a great revolution is taking place in the world today. In a sense it is a triple revolution: that is, a technological revolution, with the impact of automation and cybernation; then there is a revolution in weaponry, with the emergence of atomic and nuclear weapons of warfare; then there is a human rights revolution, with the freedom explosion that is taking place all over the world. Yes, we do live in a period where changes are taking place. And there is still the voice crying through the vista of time saying, “Behold, I make all things new; former things are passed away.”

Now whenever anything new comes into history it brings with it new challenges and new opportunities. And I would like to deal with the challenges that we face today as a result of this triple revolution that is taking place in the world today.
First, we are challenged to develop a world perspective. No individual can live alone, no nation can live alone, and anyone who feels that he can live alone is sleeping through a revolution. The world in which we live is geographically one. The challenge that we face today is to make it one in terms of brotherhood.

Now it is true that the geographical oneness of this age has come into being to a large extent through modern man’s scientific ingenuity. Modern man through his scientific genius has been able to dwarf distance and place time in chains. And our jet planes have compressed into minutes distances that once took weeks and even months. All of this tells us that our world is a neighborhood.

Through our scientific and technological genius, we have made of this world a neighborhood and yet we have not had the ethical commitment to make of it a brotherhood. But somehow, and in some way, we have got to do this. We must all learn to live together as brothers or we will all perish together as fools. 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. 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. This is the way God’s universe is made; this is the way it is structured.

John Donne caught it years ago and placed it in graphic terms: “No man is an island entire of itself. Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.” And he goes on toward the end to say, “Any man’s death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind; therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” We must see this, believe this, and live by it if we are to remain awake through a great revolution.

Questions for Response:

- Is there a word, phrase, or image here that speaks directly to you or resonates most strongly with you?
- How far have we come?
- Where are we now? In what ways does this still resonate?
- Where do we go from here? What might be our next faithful steps?
- Dr. King began, “One of the great liabilities of life is that all too many people find themselves living amid a great period of social change and yet they fail to develop the new attitudes, the new mental responses that the new situation demands. They end up sleeping through a great revolution. ...Whenever anything new comes into history it brings with it new challenges...and new opportunities.” What are the most important new challenges and opportunities you see today? What new attitudes and new responses does the new situation demand?
Secondly, we are challenged to eradicate the last vestiges of racial injustice from our nation. I must say this morning that racial injustice is still the black man’s burden and the white man’s shame.

It is an unhappy truth that racism is a way of life for the vast majority of white Americans, spoken and unspoken, acknowledged and denied, subtle and sometimes not so subtle—the disease of racism permeates and poisons a whole body politic. And I can see nothing more urgent than for America to work passionately and unrelentingly—to get rid of the disease of racism.

Something positive must be done. Everyone must share in the guilt as individuals and as institutions. The government must certainly share the guilt; individuals must share the guilt; even the church must share the guilt.

We must face the sad fact that at eleven o’clock on Sunday morning when we stand to sing “In Christ there is no East or West,” we stand in the most segregated hour of America.

The hour has come for everybody, for all institutions of the public sector and the private sector to work to get rid of racism. And now if we are to do it we must honestly admit certain things and get rid of certain myths that have constantly been disseminated all over our nation.

One is the myth of time. It is the notion that only time can solve the problem of racial injustice. And there are those who often sincerely say to the Negro and his allies in the white community, “Why don’t you slow up? Stop pushing things so fast. Only time can solve the problem. And if you will just be nice and patient and continue to pray, in a hundred or two hundred years the problem will work itself out.”

There is an answer to that myth. It is that time is neutral. It can be used either constructively or destructively. And I am sorry to say this morning that I am absolutely convinced that the forces of ill will in our nation, the extreme rightists of our nation—the people on the wrong side—have used time much more effectively than the forces of goodwill. And it may well be that we will have to repent in this generation. Not merely for the vitriolic words and the violent actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around and say, “Wait on time.”

Somewhere we must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals who are willing to be co-workers with God. And without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the primitive forces of social stagnation. So we must help time and realize that the time is always ripe to do right.

Now there is another myth that still gets around: it is a kind of over reliance on the bootstrap philosophy. There are those who still feel that if the Negro is to rise out of poverty, if the Negro is to rise out of the slum conditions, if he is to rise out of discrimination and segregation, he must do it all by himself. And so they say the Negro must lift himself by his own bootstraps.

They never stop to realize that no other ethnic group has been a slave on American soil. The people who say this never stop to realize that the nation made the black man’s color a stigma. But beyond this they never stop to realize the debt that they owe a people who were kept in slavery two hundred and forty-four years.
In 1863 the Negro was told that he was free as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation being signed by Abraham Lincoln. But he was not given any land to make that freedom meaningful. It was something like keeping a person in prison for a number of years and suddenly discovering that that person is not guilty of the crime for which he was convicted. And you just go up to him and say, “Now you are free,” but you don’t give him any bus fare to get to town. You don’t give him any money to get some clothes to put on his back or to get on his feet again in life.

Every court of jurisprudence would rise up against this, and yet this is the very thing that our nation did to the black man. It simply said, “You’re free,” and it left him there penniless, illiterate, not knowing what to do. And the irony of it all is that at the same time the nation failed to do anything for the black man, though an act of Congress it was giving away millions of acres of land in the West and the Midwest. Which meant that it was willing to undergird its white peasants from Europe with an economic floor.

But not only did it give the land, it built land-grant colleges to teach them how to farm. Not only that, it provided county agents to further their expertise in farming; not only that, as the years unfolded it provided low interest rates so that they could mechanize their farms. And to this day thousands of these very persons are receiving millions of dollars in federal subsidies every year not to farm. And these are so often the very people who tell Negroes that they must lift themselves by their own bootstraps. It’s all right to tell a man to lift himself by his own bootstraps, but it is a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps.

We must come to see that the roots of racism are very deep in our country, and there must be something positive and massive in order to get rid of all the effects of racism and the tragedies of racial injustice.

Questions for Response:

- Is there a word, phrase, or image here that speaks directly to you or resonates most strongly with you?
- How far have we come?
- Where are we now? In what ways does this still resonate?
- Where do we go from here? What might be our next faithful steps?
- Dr. King began, “One of the great liabilities of life is that all too many people find themselves living amid a great period of social change and yet they fail to develop the new attitudes, the new mental responses that the new situation demands. They end up sleeping through a great revolution. ...Whenever anything new comes into history it brings with it new challenges...and new opportunities.” What are the most important new challenges and opportunities you see today? What new attitudes and new responses does the new situation demand?
There is another thing closely related to racism that I would like to mention as another challenge. **We are challenged to rid our nation and the world of poverty.**

Not only do we see poverty abroad, I would remind you that in our own nation there are about forty million people who are poverty-stricken. I have seen them here and there. I have seen them in the ghettos of the North; I have seen them in the rural areas of the South; I have seen them in Appalachia. I have just been in the process of touring many areas of our country and I must confess that in some situations I have literally found myself crying.

I was in Marks, Mississippi, the other day, which is in Whitman County, the poorest county in the United States. I tell you, I saw hundreds of little black boys and black girls walking the streets with no shoes to wear. I saw their mothers and their fathers trying to carry on a little Head Start program, but they had no money. The federal government hadn’t funded them, but they were trying to carry on. They raised a little money here and there; trying to get a little food to feed the children; trying to teach them a little something.

And I saw mothers and fathers who said to me not only were they unemployed, they didn’t get any kind of income—no old-age pension, no welfare check, no anything. I said, “How do you live?” And they say, “Well, we go around, go around to the neighbors and ask them for a little something. When the berry season comes, we pick berries. When the rabbit season comes, we hunt and catch a few rabbits. And that’s about it.”

And I was in Newark and Harlem just this week. And I walked into the homes of welfare mothers. I saw them in conditions—no, not with wall-to-wall carpet, but wall-to-wall rats and roaches. I stood in an apartment and this welfare mother said to me, “The landlord will not repair this place. I’ve been here two years and he hasn’t made a single repair.” She pointed out her little boy who was a victim of lead poisoning, she pointed out the walls with all the ceiling falling through. She showed me the holes where the rats came in. She said night after night we have to stay awake to keep the rats and the roaches from getting to the children. I said, “How much do you pay for this apartment?” She said, “a hundred and twenty-five dollars.”

I looked, and I thought, and said to myself, “It isn’t worth sixty dollars.” Poor people are forced to pay more for less. Living in conditions day in and day out where the whole area is constantly drained without being replenished. It becomes a kind of domestic colony. And the tragedy is, so often these forty million people are invisible because America is so affluent, so rich. Because our expressways carry us away from the ghetto, we don’t see the poor.

Jesus told a parable one day, and he reminded us that a man went to hell because he didn’t see the poor. His name was Dives. He was a rich man. And there was a man by the name of Lazarus who was a poor man, but not only was he poor, he was sick. Sores were all over his body, and he was so weak that he could hardly move. But he managed to get to the gate of Dives every day, wanting just to have the crumbs that would fall from his table. And Dives did nothing about it. And the parable ends saying, “Dives went to hell, and there were a fixed gulf now between Lazarus and Dives.”

There is nothing in that parable that said Dives went to hell because he was rich. Jesus never made a universal indictment against all wealth. It is true that one day a rich young ruler came to him, and he advised him to sell all, but in that instance Jesus was prescribing individual
surgery and not setting forth a universal diagnosis. And if you will look at that parable with all of its symbolism, you will remember that a conversation took place between heaven and hell, and on the other end of that long-distance call between heaven and hell was Abraham in heaven talking to Dives in hell.

Now Abraham was a very rich man. If you go back to the Old Testament, you see that he was the richest man of his day, so it was not a rich man in hell talking with a poor man in heaven; it was a little millionaire in hell talking with a multimillionaire in heaven. Dives didn’t go to hell because he was rich; Dives didn’t realize that his wealth was his opportunity. It was his opportunity to bridge the gulf that separated him from his brother Lazarus. Dives went to hell because he passed by Lazarus every day and he never really saw him. He went to hell because he allowed his brother to become invisible. Dives went to hell because he maximized the minimum and minimized the maximum. Indeed, Dives went to hell because he sought to be a conscientious objector in the war against poverty.

And this can happen to America, the richest nation in the world—and nothing’s wrong with that—this is America’s opportunity to help bridge the gulf between the haves and the have-nots. The question is whether America will do it. There is nothing new about poverty. What is new is that we now have the techniques and the resources to get rid of poverty. The real question is whether we have the will.

In a few weeks some of us are coming to Washington to see if the will is still alive or if it is alive in this nation. We are coming to Washington in a Poor People’s Campaign. Yes, we are going to bring the tired, the poor, the huddled masses. We are going to bring those who have known long years of hurt and neglect. We are going to bring those who have come to feel that life is a long and desolate corridor with no exit signs. We are going to bring children and adults and old people, people who have never seen a doctor or a dentist in their lives.

We are not coming to engage in any histrionic gesture. We are not coming to tear up Washington. We are coming to demand that the government address will itself to the problem of poverty. We read one day, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” But if a man doesn’t have a job or an income, he has neither life nor liberty nor the possibility for the pursuit of happiness. He merely exists.

We are coming to ask America to be true to the huge promissory note that it signed years ago. And we are coming to engage in dramatic nonviolent action, to call attention to the gulf between promise and fulfillment; to make the invisible visible.

Why do we do it this way? We do it this way because it is our experience that the nation doesn’t move around questions of genuine equality for the poor and for black people until it is confronted massively, dramatically in terms of direct action.

Great documents are here to tell us something should be done. We met here some years ago in the White House conference on civil rights. And we came out with the same recommendations that we will be demanding in our campaign here, but nothing has
been done. The President’s commission on technology, automation and economic progress recommended these things some time ago. Nothing has been done. Even the urban coalition made up of mayors of most of the cities of our country and the leading businessmen have said these things should be done. Nothing has been done. The Kerner Commission came out with its report just a few days ago and then made specific recommendations. Nothing has been done.

And I submit that nothing will be done until people of goodwill put their bodies and their souls in motion. And it will be the kind of soul force brought into being as a result of this confrontation that I believe will make the difference.

Yes, it will be a Poor People’s Campaign. This is the question facing America. Ultimately a great nation is a compassionate nation. America has not met its obligations and its responsibilities to the poor.

One day we will have to stand before the God of history and we will talk in terms of things we’ve done. Yes, we will be able to say we built gargantuan bridges to span the seas, we built gigantic buildings to kiss the skies. Yes, we made our submarines to penetrate oceanic depths. We brought into being many other things with our scientific and technological power. It seems that I can hear the God of history saying, “That was not enough! But I was hungry, and ye fed me not. I was naked, and ye clothed me not. I was devoid of a decent sanitary house to live in, and ye provided no shelter for me. And consequently, you cannot enter the kingdom of greatness. If ye do it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye do it unto me.” That’s the question facing America today.

**Questions for Response:**

- Is there a word, phrase, or image here that speaks directly to you or resonates most strongly with you?
- How far have we come?
- Where are we now? In what ways does this still resonate?
- Where do we go from here? What might be our next faithful steps?
- Dr. King began, “One of the great liabilities of life is that all too many people find themselves living amid a great period of social change and yet they fail to develop the new attitudes, the new mental responses that the new situation demands. They end up sleeping through a great revolution. ...Whenever anything new comes into history it brings with it new challenges...and new opportunities.” What are the most important new challenges and opportunities you see today? What new attitudes and new responses does the new situation demand?
I want to say one other challenge that we face is simply that we must find an alternative to war and bloodshed. Anyone who feels, and there are still a lot of people who feel that way, that war can solve the social problems facing mankind is sleeping through a great revolution. President Kennedy said on one occasion, “Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind.” The world must hear this. I pray God that America will hear this before it is too late, because today we’re fighting a war.

I am convinced that it is one of the most unjust wars that has ever been fought in the history of the world. Our involvement in the war in Vietnam has torn up the Geneva Accord. It has strengthened the military-industrial complex; it has strengthened the forces of reaction in our nation. It has put us against the self-determination of a vast majority of the Vietnamese people, and put us in the position of protecting a corrupt regime that is stacked against the poor.

It has played havoc with our domestic destinies. This day we are spending five hundred thousand dollars to kill every Vietcong soldier. Every time we kill one we spend about five hundred thousand dollars while we spend only fifty-three dollars a year for every person characterized as poverty-stricken in the so-called poverty program, which is not even a good skirmish against poverty.

Not only that, it has put us in a position of appearing to the world as an arrogant nation. And here we are ten thousand miles away from home fighting for the so-called freedom of the Vietnamese people when we have not even put our own house in order. And we force young black men and young white men to fight and kill in brutal solidarity. Yet when they come back home they can’t hardly live on the same block together.

The judgment of God is upon us today. And we could go right down the line and see that something must be done—and something must be done quickly. We have alienated ourselves from other nations so we end up morally and politically isolated in the world. There is not a single major ally of the United States of America that would dare send a troop to Vietnam, and so the only friends that we have now are a few client-nations like Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea, and a few others.

This is where we are. “Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind,” and the best way to start is to put an end to war in Vietnam, because if it continues, we will inevitably come to the point of confronting China which could lead the whole world to nuclear annihilation.

It is no longer a choice, my friends, between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence. And the alternative to disarmament, the alternative to a greater suspension of nuclear tests, the alternative to strengthening the United Nations and thereby disarming the whole world, may well be a civilization plunged into the abyss of annihilation, and our earthly habitat would be transformed into an inferno that even the mind of Dante could not imagine.

This is why I felt the need of raising my voice against that war and working wherever I can to arouse the conscience of our nation on it. I remember so well when I first took a stand against the war in Vietnam. The critics took me on and they had their say in the most negative and sometimes most vicious way.
Questions for Response:

- Is there a word, phrase, or image here that speaks directly to you or resonates most strongly with you?
- How far have we come?
- Where are we now? In what ways does this still resonate?
- Where do we go from here? What might be our next faithful steps?
- Dr. King began, “One of the great liabilities of life is that all too many people find themselves living amid a great period of social change and yet they fail to develop the new attitudes, the new mental responses that the new situation demands. They end up sleeping through a great revolution. ...Whenever anything new comes into history it brings with it new challenges...and new opportunities.” What are the most important new challenges and opportunities you see today? What new attitudes and new responses does the new situation demand?
Sermon’s Closing:

One day a newsman came to me and said, “Dr. King, don’t you think you’re going to have to stop, now, opposing the war and move more in line with the administration’s policy? As I understand it, it has hurt the budget of your organization, and people who once respected you have lost respect for you. Don’t you feel that you’ve really got to change your position?” I looked at him and I had to say, “Sir, I’m sorry you don’t know me. I’m not a consensus leader. I do not determine what is right and wrong by looking at the budget of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. I’ve not taken a sort of Gallup Poll of the majority opinion.” Ultimately a genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus.

On some positions, cowardice asks the question, is it expedient? And then expedience comes along and asks the question, is it politic? Vanity asks the question, is it popular? Conscience asks the question, is it right?

There comes a time when one must take the position that is neither safe nor politic nor popular, but he must do it because conscience tells him it is right. I believe today that there is a need for all people of goodwill to come with a massive act of conscience and say in the words of the old Negro spiritual, “We ain’t goin’ study war no more.” This is the challenge facing modern man.

Let me close by saying that we have difficult days ahead in the struggle for justice and peace, but I will not yield to a politic of despair. I’m going to maintain hope as we come to Washington in this campaign. The cards are stacked against us. This time we will really confront a Goliath. God grant that we will be that David of truth set out against the Goliath of injustice, the Goliath of neglect, the Goliath of refusing to deal with the problems, and go on with the determination to make America the truly great America that it is called to be.

I say to you that our goal is freedom, and I believe we are going to get there because however much she strays away from it, the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be as a people, our destiny is tied up in the destiny of America.

Before the Pilgrim fathers landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before Jefferson etched across the pages of history the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence, we were here. Before the beautiful words of the “Star Spangled Banner” were written, we were here.

For more than two centuries our forebears labored here without wages. They made cotton king, and they built the homes of their masters in the midst of the most humiliating and oppressive conditions. And yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to grow and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery couldn’t stop us, the opposition that we now face will surely fail.

We’re going to win our freedom because both the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of the almighty God are embodied in our echoing demands. And so, however dark it is, however deep the angry feelings are, and the violent explosions are, I can still sing “We Shall Overcome.”
We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.
We shall overcome because Carlyle is right—"No lie can live forever."
We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right—"Truth, crushed to earth, will rise again."
We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell is right—as we were singing earlier today,

   Truth forever on the scaffold,
   Wrong forever on the throne.
   Yet that scaffold sways the future.
   And behind the dim unknown standeth God,
   Within the shadow keeping watch above his own.

With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair the stone of hope.
With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.

Thank God for John, who centuries ago out on a lonely, obscure island called Patmos caught vision of a new Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God, who heard a voice saying, "Behold, I make all things new; former things are passed away."

God grant that we will be participants in this newness and this magnificent development. If we will but do it, we will bring about a new day of justice and brotherhood and peace. And that day the morning stars will sing together and the sons of God will shout for joy. God bless you.