



2019 Multifaith Children's Sabbath Service

Uniting Hearts and Voices to End Child Poverty

Music

Opening Procession of Religious Leaders and Children

Welcome

(Offer words that welcome participants, remind them of the purpose of gathering, and assure that all are welcome and respected.)

Gathering Words

(The gathering words could be read by three people, who lead the first unison lines of each section and then take turns reading the next three lines of each section. The last line is read in unison.)

We gather today

from many places
different traditions and
diverse experiences.

Our hearts are united

by concern for children, especially children without those things that all children need, care about the parents who work hard and struggle to make ends meet, and belief that our religious traditions call us to live with love and compassion.

Our voices are united

by determination to demand an end to child and family poverty, courage to share our own stories of struggle and injustice, and commitment to proclaim our religious traditions' call for justice and plenty for all.

We come to celebrate the Children's Sabbath.

Music might be included here

Words from Marian Wright Edelman, Founder and President Emerita of the Children's Defense Fund

(These could be read by four different leaders including youth)

It is a moral disgrace and profound economic threat that nearly 1 in 5 children are poor in the wealthiest nation on earth. Permitting more than 12.8 million of our children to live in poverty when we have the means to prevent it is unjust and unacceptable. There is no excuse for allowing needless child suffering in our land of tremendous affluence. It is wrong. And it is economically and socially dangerous.

Make no mistake—our nation's economic system and priorities are consciously sacrificing our children. Poverty drains child bodies and spirits. Inadequate nutrition, untreated illnesses, uncorrected vision problems and lead poisoning all sap children's health and energy for learning. Unsafe child care, inferior schools and dangerous neighborhoods kill ambition, self-confidence and



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hope. Untold human potential is lost when children fall behind in school, drop out or get caught in the criminal justice system. Every year we leave millions of children in poverty costs our nation about \$700 billion in lost productivity and increased health and crime costs. Acting to eliminate the terrible human and economic waste of child poverty and the blight on our nation's soul is our urgent task and opportunity.

We can end child poverty if we choose to fight rather than ignore it. We have the money. We have the power. We have the know-how. All of us have the moral, social and economic responsibility. But we lack the will and sense of injustice of enough faith, political, women, parent and media leaders to pierce the profound indifference to preventable and solvable child suffering; the poisonous politics of self-interest and greed; cruel ideological agendas which believe government should help the rich and powerful most and the poor and powerless least or not at all; and the political hypocrisy of leaders across all levels of government and parties who leave millions of children behind while pretending to do otherwise.

It is way past time for more just national choices to live up to our professed principles of equal justice and opportunity. We must change direction, recover a sense of urgency about saving our children, redefine the measure of American success and make sure principles of justice rather than power, money and militarism guide our feet and national priorities.

Prayer

O God, forgive and transform our rich nation

where small babies die of cold quite legally.

O God, forgive and transform our rich nation

where small children suffer from hunger quite legally.

O God, forgive and transform our rich nation

where toddlers and school children die from guns sold quite legally.

O God, forgive and transform our rich nation

that lets children be the poorest group of citizens quite legally.

O God, forgive and transform our rich nation

that lets the rich continue to get more at the expense of the poor quite legally.

O God, forgive and transform our rich nation

which thinks security rests in missiles and in bombs
rather than in mothers and in babies.

O God, forgive and transform our rich nation

for not giving You sufficient thanks by giving to others their daily bread.

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

(By Marian Wright Edelman)

Music or Liturgical Dance might be included here

A Prayer from Buddhist Tradition

May all beings everywhere plagued with sufferings of body and mind quickly be freed from their illnesses. May those frightened cease to be afraid, and may those bound be free. May the powerless find power and may people think of befriending one another. May those who find themselves in trackless, fearful wildernesses – the children, the aged, the unprotected – be guarded by beneficent celestials, and may they swiftly attain Buddhahood.

A Prayer from Hindu Tradition

May there be welfare to all beings;
May there be fullness and good and auspicious life to everyone;
May there be peace everywhere. . .
May all be full of happiness and abundance;
May everyone in the world enjoy complete health, free from diseases;
May all see and experience good things in their lives,
May not even a single person experience sorrow and misery.
Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

A Reading from Islamic Tradition

Goodness does not consist in turning your face towards East or West. The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets; who give away some of their wealth, however much they cherish it, to their relatives, to orphans, the needy, travelers and beggars, and to liberate those in bondage; those who keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; who keep pledges whenever they make them; who are steadfast in misfortune, adversity, and times of danger. These are the ones who are true, and it is they who are aware of God.

(Qur'an 2:177, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem translation)

A Sikh Kirtan or other music might be included here

A Reading from Baha'i Tradition

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no [one], and show all meekness to all [people]. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility. **(Baha'ullah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahauallah*, p. 346)**

A Prayer from Native American Tradition

O Great Spirit of our Ancestors, we raise the pipe to you, to your messengers the four winds, and to Mother Earth who provides for your children. Give us the wisdom to teach our children to love, to respect, to be kind to each other so that they may grow with peace in mind. Let us learn to share all the good things that you provide for us on this Earth.

Charge to the Gathered Community

(A leader might give a brief — perhaps five minutes — reflection on the call to justice across religious traditions and offer a charge or call to action to those gathered.)

Act of Commitment

(in response to the words of Marian Wright Edelman)

If we love America and love our children, you and I must build a powerful movement to end child poverty and transform the political and economic priorities in a nation that has ignored the cries of millions of poor children to stack the decks in favor of a few exceedingly rich and powerful billionaires and millionaires.

We will build that movement!

We must envision and realize an America where every child has enough—enough time, attention and stability from parents and other caring adults; and enough quality education, healthy food, stable shelter, accessible health care and other basics we who are more privileged want for our own children. God did not make two classes of children and we do so at our peril.

We will achieve that vision so every child has enough!

Let us keep our eyes on what children need to grow up healthy and contributing human beings. We must never allow ourselves to be sidetracked by shifting political winds or deterred by the endless stream of excuses attempting to justify indifference to and neglect of children. The great undertaking of saving our children will save America's soul and future in a world desperately in need of moral, political and economic leadership.

We will stay focused on what children need and demand our leaders do too!

Let's commit together to making this Children's Sabbath a galvanizing weekend that amplifies our united moral voices calling for an investment in children and end to child poverty. Let it unite our hearts in making the difference that we can make. And may its inspiration, information, and motivation sustain us in action throughout the year to do all we can.

We will keep our hearts and voices united to end child poverty!

A Blessing from Jewish Tradition

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְרַדּוֹף צְדָקָה.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu lirdof tzedek.



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We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who calls us to holiness through mitzvot, commanding us to pursue tzedek/justice.

A Prayer from Christian Tradition

May God bless you with discomfort
At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships
So that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger
At injustice, oppression and exploitation of people,
So that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears
To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, starvation and war
So that you may reach out your hand to comfort them
And to turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness
To believe that you can make a difference in the world,
So that you can do what others claim cannot be done. Amen. (Franciscan Benediction)

Closing Music: I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me