

Christian Worship Resources for the Children's Sabbath



Worship is at the heart of most Children's Sabbaths. It is in worship that we praise God who has blessed us with children and charged us with their care. It is in worship that we hear again the prophets and their warnings against injustice and their call to do justice. It is in worship that we renew our commitment to follow Jesus who said to welcome the children because in doing

so we welcome him and not just him but the one who sent him. As we go forth from worship in the power of the Holy Spirit, may we continue to praise God with our work to nurture and protect all children.

This section provides suggestions for Children's Sabbath worship services in churches, including ways to involve children and youths.

- New prayers, sermon notes, children's sermon, and other worship resources for this year's Children's Sabbath theme are posted separately on CDF's website.

Suggestions for the Worship Service on Children's Sabbath

- **Use the bulletin inserts** available for download at www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths.
- **Use prayers, litanies, and other worship resources developed for the Children's Sabbath.** Draw from the worship resources provided in this section. Also, download *the worship resources prepared specifically for this year's Children's Sabbath theme*, available on CDF's website.
- **Create your own materials on the theme** of children and justice.
- **Use readings from worship and prayer books** that include a social action theme.
- **Incorporate resources from your denomination that focus on children and child advocacy.** For example, the Presbyterian Church (USA) has a Vision Statement on ministry to children, The Episcopal Church has a Charter for Children, The United Methodist Church uses The Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty, and the Roman Catholic Church has the Bishops' statement "Putting Children and Families First: A Challenge for our Church, Nation and World." These could be used in place of a more traditional affirmation of faith, as an act of commitment, or incorporated in another way.
- **Select hymns and anthems that focus on children and our responsibilities to them.**
- **Focus the sermon or homily on children and our responsibility to act on their behalf.** If appropriate, draw on the Sermon Notes in the annual supplement tying the lectionary texts and other passages to the year's theme.
- **Include a commissioning service for those whose work or volunteer efforts are devoted to seeking justice for children.** Following the sermon, these professionals or volunteers (contacted in advance) may be invited to come forward for a brief service that recognizes their work as a form of ministry, with prayers for God's guidance in their work and prayers for the children whom they serve.
- **Include a commissioning service for those whose work or volunteer efforts are devoted to ending child poverty.** Following the sermon, these professionals or volunteers (contacted in advance) may be invited to come forward for a brief service that recognizes their work as a form of ministry, with prayers for God's guidance in their work and prayers for the children whom they serve.
- **Commission staff and board members of child-serving programs** affiliated with the congregation, and celebrate their work as part of the congregation's mission.
- **Include prayers for children who are in need.** Specifically name problems afflicting children in your community, as well as crises affecting children across our nation and throughout our world.

- **Invite a speaker from a program serving children to deliver a “minute for mission” during your announcement time or to speak at another point in the service.** Encourage the speaker to highlight opportunities for members to become involved themselves and to speak out for children.
- **Collect a special offering to benefit a program serving children or families,** such as a program serving children in poverty, an after-school program, mentoring and tutoring program, community health clinic, or Head Start program. Announce the offering in advance so that members will be prepared. Dedicate the offering during the service. The offering could be in the form of money or items such as children’s books, diapers or other needed items.
- **Invite on-site child care staff, administrators, parents and children to attend your Children’s Sabbath,** or invite the children, parents, staff and administration from neighborhood schools.

Involve Children and Youths

The Children’s Sabbath, unlike a traditional Youth Sunday or Children’s Day, is intended to involve adults in the planning and leadership of the day. As members of the congregation, adults must recognize the challenges facing children in our nation, and their collective responsibility to respond. However, the Children’s Sabbath is an important time to include children and youths in the planning and leadership of the worship service and all other events. For example, children and youths can:

- Have an overnight “lock in” at the church beforehand to learn about worship and plan their parts in the Children’s Sabbath.
- Design and paint the paraments (e.g., cloth draping the pulpit). Draw pictures for the bulletin cover.
- Assist and greet worshippers as they arrive or leave, light candles or collect the offering.
- Begin the Children’s Sabbath by entering in a procession. The children could carry a banner they made.
- Read prayers and scriptural passages and lead responsive readings. Write a prayer to be used in the service.
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- Present a short drama or liturgical dance as part of the service.
- Sing a special anthem, play an instrumental piece or perform a song in sign language.
- Remain throughout the entire service instead of departing for church school classes. If the children remain throughout, ensure that the worship service appropriately engages them.
- Have adults “adopt” children to sit with during the service.