children's defense fund

2026

NATIONAL OBSERVANCE OF CHILDREN'S SABBATHS® MANUAL



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ABOUT CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

ABOUT

The only national, multi-issue advocacy organization working at the intersection of child well-being and racial justice, Children's Defense Fund (CDF) advances the well-being of America's most diverse generation.

MISSON

Children's Defense Fund builds community
so young people grow up with dignity, hope, and joy.

VISION

Children's Defense Fund envisions a nation
committed to equity and justice where children and youth live with dignity, hope, and
joy.

VALUES

Justice
Equity
Compassion
Trust
Love

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WELCOME

FROM CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND PRESIDENT & CEO REV. DR. STARSKY WILSON



"Children are the ways that the world begins again and again...If you fasten upon that concept of their promise, you will have trouble finding anything more awesome, and more extraordinarily exhilarating, than the opportunity or/and the obligation to nurture a child into his or her own freedom."
-June Jordan (1978)

Beloved,

For more than 30 years, on the third weekend of October, Children's Defense Fund has invited partners, like you, to pause and honor the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® (NOCS). This annual experience unites diverse faith communities in worship, education, and advocacy focused on the well-being, protection, and needs of children.

A Children's Sabbaths observation is action-in-reflection that equips and activates congregations to advocate for children in their communities and beyond. Through Children's Sabbaths, communities of faith come together with the larger movement for child well-being.

We have prepared this manual to help you and your congregation move from worship to witness and from reflection to action on behalf of children.

Anyone in your faith community can help organize an observation. Clergy or laity, children and youth, volunteers or staff. Organizers use the tools in this guide and knowledge of your congregation to nurture children into freedom through faithful action.

This manual is meant to help you prepare a Children's Sabbaths observance that prioritizes child-centered advocacy, gathering, learning, and impact. It is meant to serve, not limit, you. The tools can be adapted to your context. Please explore this toolkit and plan with intention and care. Observe this time in ways that feel most meaningful for your congregation and community.

We hope you will be encouraged, supported, and challenged by these materials to join your voice with others across the nation, praising the Divine for our children and speaking up for the futures they deserve. Please feel free to reach out to the CDF's Leadership Development and Organizing team with any questions or suggestions on ways we can help.

For our children,
Rev. Dr. Starsky Wilson
President & CEO

THEME

Begin Again!

ROOTS, SACRED RHETORIC, & REVOLUTIONARY MOTHERING.

> *"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works."* | REVELATION 2:5 (KJV)

Begin Again! Roots, Sacred Rhetoric, & Revolutionary Mothering invites us to remember where we come from so we can faithfully shape where we are going. Inspired by Revelation 2:5 and the wisdom of June Jordan and James Baldwin, this year's theme calls us to reclaim our roots, tell the truth about our stories, and recommit ourselves to the sacred work of nurturing children and youth. We begin again by remembering, reflecting, and renewing our collective call to faithful witness on behalf of and in service to young people.

GROUNDING IDEAS

> *Children are the ways that the world begins again and again. If you fasten upon that concept of their promise, you will have trouble finding anything more awesome, and also more extraordinarily exhilarating, than the opportunity and the obligation to nurture a child into his or her own freedom."*

– JUNE JORDAN

in a 1978 address to the Child Welfare League of America, published in Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines

> *To do your first works over means to reexamine everything. Go back to where you started, or as far back as you can, examine all of it, travel your road again and tell the truth about it. Sing or shout or testify or keep it to yourself, but know whence you came.*

– JAMES BALDWIN

in *The Price of the Ticket*

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

SECTION OVERVIEW

What is Children's Sabbaths
Welcome, orient, and ground your community in this year's manual.

How to Use The Manual
Understand how everything fits together.

Organizing Tools
Find immediate ways to connect to impactful advocacy, engagement, and outreach. Review checklists, timelines, and planning resources. Amplify with your wider community using templates and flyers.

Centering Children's Voices
Lift children's stories, art, wisdom, and find consent-based, trauma-informed, womanist pathways to center children and young people in your advocacy.

Multi-faith Expressions
Explore and use full liturgies, sacred texts and messages, prayers, children's books, and reflections across faith traditions to ground your community.

"Through faith, we trust that God is with us in the struggle, calling us to create a world where children can grow up whole and free."

– Rev. Dr. Prathia Hall, Freedom Faith (2019)

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HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

Observed annually on the third weekend of October, the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® reflects a collective, intentional effort to center children's voices, needs, and concerns while inspiring faithful action so every child can thrive. More than a worship observance, a Children's Sabbath should be an action-organizing tool that equips and activates congregations to advocate for children in their communities and beyond.

Through Children's Sabbaths, Children's Defense Fund brings together places of worship with the larger movement for children. We have prepared this manual to help you and your congregation move from worship to witness and from reflection to action on behalf of children.

Anyone from your congregation or faith community can help organize a Children's Sabbath. Whether lay members, children and youth coordinators, justice and advocacy organizers, volunteers, or clergy, Children's Sabbaths Organizers ensure that worship meets advocacy in service of *nurturing children into freedom*. Organizing a Children's Sabbath is a meaningful and necessary contribution most faithfully done when shared and rooted in prayer, collaboration, and care.

This manual is meant to help you prepare a Children's Sabbaths observance that prioritizes child-centered advocacy, gathering, learning, and impact. It is a guide, meant to serve, rather than limit, you. The tools are malleable and can be adapted to your context. Explore the full manual and prioritize planning with intention and care. Ultimately, we invite you to observe Children's Sabbaths in the way that feels most meaningful for the young people in your congregation and community.

We hope you will be encouraged and challenged by these materials to join your voice with voices across the nation, praising the divine for our children and speaking out against the issues and injustices they face.

As you begin to organize your Children's Sabbaths, we leave you with this blessing:

Blessing for Children's Sabbaths Organizers

May your planning be a sacred act, your attention to detail an offering of care, and your labor a testimony to love.

May wisdom guide you from many sources from scriptures, to traditions, to communities, and to the voices of children themselves.

May the work you share remind you that you are not alone. Across faiths and communities, others are joining you in lifting up children, honoring their dignity, and nurturing them into freedom.

And may every step of your organizing become a seed of justice and compassion, for the flourishing of children and the future of hope we create together.

Contact us at:

Children's Defense Fund
ATTN: Faith Community Organizing
777 Sixth Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20001

faith-based@childrensdefense.org

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A CHILDREN'S SABBATH TYPICALLY HAS FOUR ELEMENTS:

1. **GATHER:** A service of worship or prayers during which the divine mandate to listen to, follow, nurture, and protect children calls us to act with an ecclesial urgency in responding to the needs of children today.

2. **IMPACT:** Follow-up actions use the inspiration, information, resources, revival, and motivation from the Children's Sabbaths weekend to lead members and places of worship into new, thoughtful, impactful, and effective efforts to improve the lives of children in the congregation, community, and nation throughout the year.

3. **ADVOCATE:** Activities that immediately engage communities in compassionate service to help and advocate for children and with action to seek justice (such as engaging and challenging elected officials).

4. L**EARN**: Intergenerational educational programs that center the needs of children today as well as the sociopolitical structures that hinder flourishing and keep children in need; explore the depth of the sacred texts, liberative teachings, and traditions that lead us to serve and seek justice for children; and develop specific, justice-oriented active responses to help children.

HOW TO USE THE MANUAL

Preparing with Intention

Organizing with intention is an act of love and justice, a way to *Begin Again* in our congregations and beyond. The following steps are offered to guide Children's Sabbaths Organizers as they prepare with care, attentiveness, and hope.

Before You Begin

- Spend time with the theme, *Begin Again*.
- Gather a small team of Children's Sabbaths Organizers prepared to assist with the four elements of a Children's Sabbath.
- Begin with prayer, reflection, or a grounding practice as you enter the work.

Planning with Care

- Ground your planning in the scriptures, sacred texts, and reflections on *Begin Again! Roots, Sacred Rhetoric, & Revolutionary Mothering*.
- Commit to at least one call to action to connect faith with justice.
- Center children's voices: Invite children to contribute prayers, art, or testimonies to the observance.
- Select liturgies, prayers, sermon starters, and sacred proclamations that resonate with your community's tradition.
- Use planning tools to assign responsibilities, set a timeline, and prepare with clarity.
- Share announcements, flyers, and posts to welcome your wider community.

HOW TO USE THE MANUAL

Practicing Accessibility & Inclusion

- Provide large-print and screen-reader-friendly bulletins.
- Ensure captions and transcripts for all videos.
- Mark accessible seating and restrooms.
- Use inclusive and affirming language throughout worship and materials.
- Create spaces for rest, quiet, and sensory needs as well as spaces for engaging senses, creativity, and activities beyond words.

The Day of Your Children's Sabbath

- Center children's voices and stories in worship, creating space for congregational and community leaders to listen, learn, and respond to the experiences, hopes, and needs shared by children.
- Clearly and prayerfully proclaim the theme of *Begin Again! Roots, Sacred Rhetoric, & Revolutionary Mothering*.
- Lead the chosen call to action with compassion and clarity.
- Close with a blessing or charge that sends the community forth to live out its commitments.

HOW TO USE THE MANUAL

After Your Children's Sabbath

- Gather your organizing team to reflect, give thanks, and note what was learned.
- Share stories, photos, or testimonies with the wider movement.
- Plan one or two follow-up steps so your community continues building beyond your Children's Sabbaths observance.
- Complete the Children's Sabbaths survey.
- Join our mailing list to stay informed about programs, events, calls to action, and next year's Children's Sabbaths resources.

ORGANIZING TOOLS

Issue Framing

Voting Rights Are Children's Rights

Vote for Children, Vote with Children

Read Aloud for Democracy

STRONG Support for Children Act

Black Census Project

General Organizing Tools

Trainings/Workshops

Closing Blessing

2026 Issue Framing

What's at Stake for Children

The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® begins with a simple but urgent question: what is happening in the lives of children right now, and how does our faith call us to respond to those realities?

In halls of power nationwide, decisions are being made that shape whether children have access to strong schools, quality healthcare, nutritious food, safe communities, economic stability, and mental health support. These are the politics that reach directly into the homes, schools, neighborhoods, and faith communities where children are.

In 2026, Children's Defense Fund is inviting faith communities to focus collective action around two urgent national priorities: voting rights and mental health and wellness. Together, these priorities demand that communities have the power to shape the decisions that affect their children and that power be wielded to ensure the well-being of all young people.

In this section, you will find practical resources and concrete actions to help your congregation or faith community engage both priorities during the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths*. We encourage you to listen closely to the children and families in your own community. National priorities help focus our collective action, but faithful organizing begins by listening to, centering, and affirming the voices of children in our immediate community.

VOTING RIGHTS ARE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Children cannot cast a ballot, but they live every day with the consequences of decisions made through our democracy.

This year's elections will determine leaders at the federal, state, and local levels who will make decisions about education, healthcare, food access, housing, public safety, economic opportunity, voting rights, and the resources available to children and families. Our voting must go beyond political parties, individual candidates, or ideological labels and center the needs of children and families.

For faith communities, this moment calls us to prepare, empower, and protect voters. This means helping eligible voters in your community register to vote or confirm their registration and know where and how to exercise their right to vote in person. It means helping people understand the relationship between their individual voice, the collective power of their community, and the public decisions affecting children. And it means remaining attentive to barriers that may prevent eligible voters from fully exercising their rights or that may interfere with election results being upheld and certified.

Voter engagement during Children's Sabbaths is an opportunity to strengthen a culture of civic participation and remind communities that their voice can be used to advocate for children.

In this section, you will find organizing guides to help voters prepare to engage the ballot box with children at the forefront of their minds.

Voter Action Guide for Congregations

Through voter mobilization, civic education, community organizing, and faith-rooted engagement, this resource offers a practical way for your congregation or faith community to help build informed, engaged, and empowered communities prepared to use their collective voice on behalf of children.

This guide is designed to help you take action now with your congregation.

The goal is simple:
Help your congregation and community check their voter registration and polling location, and take additional voter engagement actions as appropriate during National Observance of Children's Sabbaths Weekend.

Using this Resource
This guide is designed to be flexible. Faith leaders may choose to focus on one voter engagement action, several actions, or the full set of actions available through the voter engagement tool. While this guide prioritizes verifying voter registration status and identifying polling locations, leaders may also encourage participants to register to vote, sign up for election reminders, or explore absentee ballot options when appropriate. Each action can be conducted independently or combined with others throughout the remainder of the 2026 election season.

This action takes approximately 10-15 minutes and can be incorporated into worship services, Bible studies, ministry meetings, civic engagement events, or community gatherings.

VOTING RIGHTS ARE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

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BLACK CHURCH FREEDOM FUND

Why This Matters

The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® calls communities of faith to engage in **Gathering**, **Impacting**, **Advocating**, and **Learning**, moving from worship to witness and from reflection to action. Helping people verify their voter registration status and polling location is one small but meaningful step toward strengthening civic participation and building communities with the power to advocate for children and families.

At Children's Defense Fund Action, we envision a nation where marginalized children flourish, leaders prioritize their well-being, and communities have the power to help ensure every child thrives.

Together, Children's Defense Fund Action and Children's Defense Fund work to strengthen the conditions children and families need to grow with dignity, hope, and joy.

Decisions about education, healthcare, child poverty, community safety, and economic opportunities are made by elected leaders at every level of government. That is why we affirm that voting rights are children's rights.

When communities can fully exercise their voice, they are better equipped to advocate for strong schools, affordable healthcare, safe neighborhoods, economic opportunities, and public policies that support children and families. When communities lose representation or political power, children often experience the consequences first.

VOTING RIGHTS ARE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Voting rights are not a single action. They require preparation, participation, and follow-through. Helping people verify registration, know where they vote, register if needed, and stay informed about upcoming elections strengthens the ability of communities to advocate for children and families.

Before the Service

First Step: Access the CDF Action Voter Engagement Link and QR Code

Before leading this action, visit **https://www.vote.org/voter-registration-deadlines/** to review voter registration deadlines for your state. Children's Defense Fund Action has provided an official voter engagement link and QR code that can be used to support this action. The QR code will connect participants directly to the voter engagement tool, where they can verify voter registration status, identify polling locations, register to vote if needed, and access additional voter participation resources.

CDF Action Voter Engagement Link:

https://cdf-action-vote.vercel.app/

CDF Action Voter Engagement QR Code

Use the official CDF Action QR code for this activity. Display it during worship, include it in printed materials, project it on a screen, or share it electronically with participants.

Before your planned activity:

- Test the link and QR code on multiple devices.
- Confirm that the QR code opens the correct voter engagement page.
- Decide how the link and QR code will be displayed or distributed.
- Prepare printed copies for participants who may need them.
- Identify volunteers who can assist participants during the action.

TIP: Review and test the official CDF Action voter engagement link and QR code at least several days before your planned activity to ensure everything works properly.

What You Need

✓ Official CDF Action voter engagement QR Code and participation link
✓ Projector screen, monitor, bulletin insert, or printed handout displaying the QR code
✓ 10–15 minutes as part of your National Observance Children's Sabbaths Observance

Suggested Placement

The action works best:

- Following the sermon
- During announcements
- During a social justice moment
- During a civic engagement moment
- Before the closing prayer or benediction

Leader Tips for Success

- Use the official CDF Action QR code provided with this guide to ensure participants are directed to the correct voter engagement resource.
- Display the QR code before worship begins so attendees can see it as they arrive.
- Ask ushers, youth leaders, or ministry volunteers to be available to help participants who are less comfortable using smartphones.
- Encourage participants to remain patient and help one another complete the process.
- Consider inviting young adults or youth to assist older members with accessing the voter engagement tool.
- If internet access is limited, encourage participants to save the QR code and complete the action later that day.
- Ensure that you do this BEFORE the Benediction

Leading the Action

Sample Introduction (2 minutes)

Beloved community, as we observe the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths®, we are reminded that our concern for children must be reflected not only in what we believe, but also in what we do.

Children's Sabbaths calls communities of faith to move from worship to witness and from reflection to action through Gathering, Learning, Advocacy, and Impact. One way we can act is by strengthening civic participation in our congregation and community. Voting rights are children's rights because elected leaders at every level of government make decisions about schools, healthcare, community safety, economic opportunity, and many other conditions that shape the lives of children and families.

Say it with me: ***Voting rights are children's rights.***
One more time: ***Voting rights are children's rights.***

VOTING RIGHTS ARE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

This conviction moves beyond political leanings, party affiliations, or individual candidates. This is about our children, their well-being, and ensuring that communities have the power to advocate for the conditions every child needs to thrive.

Today, our congregation is joining Children's Defense Fund Action and partners across the country in encouraging civic participation and strengthening the power of communities to advocate for children and families.

This action is simple. We are going to take a few minutes together to check our voter registration status and polling location. Depending on individual needs, some participants may also choose to register to vote, sign up for election reminders, or explore absentee ballot options. Today's focus is making sure each person takes the next step that helps them prepare to participate.

This is not about supporting or opposing any candidate or political party. It is about participation, preparation, and ensuring that our community is ready to use its voice on behalf of children and families.

So, let us take a few moments together and participate in this action."

Step 1: Invite Participants to Get Their Phones

1. "Please take out your phone and open your camera app."
2. Pause.
3. Give participants a moment to get ready.

Step 2: Display the QR Code

1. Show the QR code on a screen or provide printed copies.
2. Say: "When you scan the QR code, it will take you directly to the voter engagement page."
3. Pause.
4. Ensure participants have successfully accessed the page.

Step 3: Walk Participants Through the Tool

1. Say: *"You should now see the voter engagement page. Begin by verifying your voter registration status and reviewing your information. Next, identify your polling location so you know where you will vote. If you discover that you are not registered, or need to update your registration information, follow the instructions provided through the tool. Participants may also choose to sign up for election reminders to stay informed about important election dates. Depending on state requirements and individual circumstances, some participants may also explore absentee ballot options through the tool."*
2. Pause.
3. Allow participants time to complete the process.
4. If anyone has trouble accessing the page, don't worry.
5. Raise your hand and someone will assist you.
6. If you do not have a smartphone, you can take a picture of the QR code to complete the action later or ask a family member or church volunteer for assistance.

Step 4: Encourage Reflection While They Complete the Process

1. As people work, you may say: "The ability to participate in our democracy is something many people struggled, marched, and sacrificed for."
2. "Today we honor that legacy by making sure we are prepared to use our voice."
3. "And we do this because the future of our children and communities matters."
4. "Throughout our history, people of faith have played a vital role in expanding access to democracy and protecting the dignity of every person."
5. "Today, we honor that legacy by preparing ourselves and helping others participate."

Step 5: Confirm Completion

1. After several minutes, ask: "How many people were able to confirm their voter registration status?"
2. Allow for a show of hands.
3. Then ask: "How many were also able to identify their polling location?"
4. Allow for a show of hands.
5. Then ask: "How many signed up for election reminders?"
6. Allow for a show of hands.
7. Then ask: "How many discovered additional actions they needed to take before Election Day?"
8. Celebrate participation.

Connecting This Action to a Larger Movement

(Sample Closing)

"Today's action is about more than checking voter registration.

It is about helping people participate in decisions that affect children, families, and communities.

Across the country, Children's Defense Fund Action is working with partners and faith communities to strengthen civic participation, encourage voter engagement, and ensure that communities have the power to advocate for children's well-being.

By participating today, our congregation or faith community becomes part of a broader effort to build informed, engaged, and empowered communities that can speak up for children and families.

Children's Sabbaths calls us not only to gather, learn, and advocate, but also to create lasting impact beyond this moment. Today's action is not the finish line. It is the starting point.

The goal is not simply to verify our own registration status. The goal is to build a culture of participation and engagement within our congregation and throughout our community."

Taking It Beyond the Worship Gathering

The voter engagement tool can support multiple actions throughout the 2026 election season.

VOTING RIGHTS ARE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Congregations may focus on voter registration and polling locations during one gathering, then revisit election reminders, registration, or absentee voting options at another. Leaders are encouraged to adapt the action to the needs of their congregation and community.

Faith leaders may consider:

- Go to https://www.vote.org/voter-registration-deadlines/ and ensure that you know your voter registration and update deadlines
- Hosting a voter check station after worship or community gatherings through Election Day.
- Including the QR code in bulletins, newsletters, emails, and other communications.
- Sharing the QR code during study groups, youth gatherings, ministry meetings, and community events.
- Encouraging leaders and participants to invite family members, friends, and neighbors to take part.
- Creating a "Bring One Person" challenge in which each participant helps another person verify their registration status and polling location.
- Encouraging participants to sign up for election reminders so they stay informed about important voting deadlines and election dates.
- Hosting a voter registration update or registration event for individuals who discover that their registration information is inaccurate or incomplete.
- Providing additional opportunities for participants to revisit the voter engagement tool as Election Day approaches.

Your Commitment

As a faith leader committed to children and families, we invite you to commit to:

✓ Leading this action in your congregation
✓ Encouraging members to check their voter registration status
✓ Encouraging members to confirm their polling location
✓ Sharing the QR code with your broader community
✓ Joining CDF Action, Black Church Freedom Fund, and All Road Lead South in strengthening civic participation and community power

Remember, this action is not the end of the work. It is one step in building informed, engaged, and empowered communities that can advocate for children and families long after Hall-Proctor concludes.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is Children's Defense Fund Action involved in voter engagement?

Because the policies that shape children's lives are made by elected leaders. Helping communities participate in democracy is one way to strengthen advocacy on behalf of children.

Is this partisan activity?

No. This action does not support or oppose any candidate or political party. Its purpose is to help people verify their voter registration status and polling location.

Do people have to share how they vote?

No. Participation is entirely personal and private.

What if someone discovers they are not registered?

Encourage them to follow the information provided through the voter engagement tool and applicable state processes.

VOTE FOR CHILDREN, VOTE WITH CHILDREN

If you are a parent or caregiver who is eligible to vote, this guide is for you. As the 2026 midterm election approaches, children are encountering political discussions on television, social media, in classrooms, and in everyday conversations.

This guide walks through everything you need to know in four parts: why voting matters, how to get involved, what to do if you run into problems at the polls, and how to talk to your children about voting.

Why This Matters

The 2026 CDF Freedom Schools® National Day of Social Action invited scholars and parents to organize and take action in response to our issue theme: Are the children well? Within CDF's Children's Health and Healing policy zone, youth mental health was identified as a priority issue for *CDF Freedom Schools* and remains a concern in our community today.

In the spirit of keeping our eyes on the prize, children thrive when leaders prioritize their well-being and communities wield their power at the ballot box on their behalf. This work isn't limited to one day of action, the fight for our children's well-being is a commitment and must continue.

That is why CDF Action is building a community of families committed to preparing children for civic life and early participation. Together, we will train up the next generation of civic-minded adults who become child advocates.

The goal is simple:

Your guidance is key to helping your children navigate what they're hearing and seeing this election cycle. CDF encourages you to start here.

Visit our voter engage hub and verify your state's voter registration deadlines.

https://cdf-action-vote.vercel.app/

https://www.vote.org/voter-registration-deadlines/

children's defense fund action

Voter Action Guide for Parents & Caregivers

We need you!
In addition to voting, parents and caregivers play a critical role this midterm election, leading the charge with CDF to protect America's children.

"Free and fair elections don't defend themselves — people defend them."

We must uphold our moral obligation to protect our children and ensure a parent and caregiver presence at every polling site across the nation. You have a role leading up to November 3, 2026; take a moment to read and review how you can help protect the election. We have partners on standby who are ready to assist you in securing your role this election cycle.

You won't have to do this alone: bring another parent or caregiver with you.

Sign up to Protect the Election.
This is your opportunity to serve as a Poll Worker, Poll Watcher or Phone Banker; decide how you will serve.

Our partners at All Roads Leads to the South will connect you to the opportunity that fits. To sign up or learn more, visit http://freedomsummer2026.com.

Choose Your Role

Inside the Polling Place

Poll Worker

Staff the polling place on Election Day: check in voters, run equipment, keep the line moving. Usually, a paid position through your county or municipal election office.

Observing & Reporting

Poll Watcher

Observe at the polls, document problems, and get voters help when something goes wrong — intimidation, broken machines, wrongly turned-away voters.

From Anywhere

Phone Banker

Call voters to confirm registration, find their polling place, and make a plan to vote. No travel, no experience needed — do it from your couch.

What to Do If You Encounter Problems on Election Day

In the current political climate, the Election Protection Hotline, administered by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, is more important than ever.

You can get help with your questions about voter registration deadlines, requesting absentee or mail-in ballots, or how to vote in-person during early voting or on Election Day? **Call or text 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683)** to speak with a trained Election Protection volunteer.

Find out all you need to know about election protection in 2026.

Common Voting Problems

- Late-arriving absentee ballots
- Voting equipment issues
- Long lines at polling places
- Campaigning inside restricted areas
- Intimidation or harassment at the polls
- Poll worker misconduct
- Language assistance

How to Talk to Your Children About Voting

First, talk to your children about the upcoming election and create a safe space for conversation. Then, start here:

✓ **Children should know voting rights are children's rights** because elected leaders at every level of government make decisions about schools, healthcare, community safety, economic opportunity, and many other conditions that shape the lives of children and families.

✓ **Children should understand voting is a process of democracy.** Democracy is a way of running a government where the power belongs to the people, either by voting directly on decisions or by choosing representatives to make decisions for them.

To be eligible to vote in the U.S. you must be at least 18 years old (in some states you can vote as early as age 16) and registered to vote in your state.

Share a story with your children about when you registered to vote or a memorable voting experience.

✓ **Children need to know in the past, not everyone had the right to vote.** Over time, important amendments and laws were passed to expand voting rights:

- The 15th Amendment gave Black men the right to vote (1870)
- The 19th Amendment gave white women the right to vote (1920)
- The 26th Amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 (1971)
- The Voting Rights Act of 1965 banned race and unfair practices like literacy tests and poll taxes

Enjoy a game of voting trivia with your children. Correct answers are provided after each question.

1. How old do you have to be to vote in the United States? (18)
2. What do you call the place where people go to vote? (A polling place/polling station)
3. What is the name of the piece of paper (or machine) you use to make your voting choices? (A ballot)
4. What color are the "I Voted" stickers usually? (Varies, but often red, white, and blue)
5. How often do Americans vote for president? (Every 4 years)
6. What is it called when you vote before Election Day? (Early voting or absentee voting)
7. What is the day called when everyone votes for president? (Election Day)
8. What do we call a person who watches the election to make sure it's fair? (A poll watcher or election observer)
9. What amendment to the Constitution gave women the right to vote? (The 19th Amendment)
10. What year did the 19th Amendment pass? (1920)

- What amendment guaranteed that people could not be denied the right to vote because of race? (The 15th Amendment)
- What is it called when new voters sign up to be able to vote? (Voter registration)
- Can you name one job of a poll worker? (Greeting voters, checking registration, handing out ballots, helping with accessibility, etc.)
- What's the name for voting that happens in a state or city, rather than for president? (Local or state elections)
- True or False: You have to tell other people who you voted for. (False — your vote is private!)

Explain the Voting Process to Your Children

Print or download CDF's child friendly "Our Voting Day Adventure Map" to walk through this map with your children before you vote in person.

WORDS TO KNOW

Ballot: the paper or screen listing all the choices you can vote for

Election worker: a helper who checks voters in and answers questions

Polling place/location: the building where people go to vote

"I Voted" sticker: a little badge of honor for voters

BEFORE WE GO

Date & Time: _____
Our polling place: _____
✓ Bring ID, if our state requires it
✓ Bring our map along
✓ Talk about why voting is private & important

Our Voting Day Adventure



1. Pick a Day

We choose a day to go – some places let you vote early; others only on Election Day.



2. Find Our Place

Grown-ups look up exactly where our designated voting location is, so we know just where to go.



3. Go Inside

Walk in or enter together and say hello to the friendly election workers.



4. Check In

Parent or caregiver tells the worker their name and gives them their voter information so they can find them on the big voter list.



5. Get a Ballot

Parent or caregiver is handed a paper (or a screen) called a ballot to vote.



6. Fill out Ballot

In a private booth, parent or caregiver marks their choices. It's a secret – even from us!



7. Cast Vote

The ballot goes into a box or machine to get counted!



8. Sticker Time!

We did it! Everyone gets an "I Voted" sticker to show off for the rest of the day.

Read a Book

Engage your children in reading about democracy. Select books by grade level to help guide your conversation on voting.

Level I - Grades K-2

Title	*Author*
V is for Voting	Kate Farrell
Vote for Our Future	Margaret McNamara
Lillian's Right to Vote	Jonah Winter
The Walk	Winsome Bingham
Rock That Vote	Meg Fleming
If I Ran for President	Catherine Stier
Show Up and Vote	Ani Di Franco
The Night Before Election Day	Natasha Wing

Level II - Grade 3-5

Title	*Author*
The Walk	Winsome Bingham
The Day Gogo Went to Vote	Elinor Batezat Sisulu
Granddaddy's Turn: A Journey to the Ballot Box	Michael S. Bandy
See How they Run: Campaign Dreams, Election Schemes, and the Race to the White House	Susan E. Goodman
What's the Big Deal About Elections	Ruby Shamir
Class Act (Jada Jones)	Kelly Starling Lyons

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Level III - Grades 6-8

Title	Author
Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer: The Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement	Carole Boston Weatherford
See How they Run: Campaign Dreams, Election Schemes, and the Race to the White House	Susan E. Goodman
What's the Big Deal About Elections	Ruby Shamir
We Were the Fire: Birmingham 1963	Sheila P. Moses
Drawing the Vote: Illustrated Guide to Voting in America	Tommy Jenkins
Voting Matters- Understanding Your Power in Democracy	Sharon F. Holbert

Level IV - Grades 9-12

Title	Author
Lifting as we Climb: Black Women's Battle for the Ballot Box	Evette Dionne
Every Vote Matters: The Power of Your Voice, from Student Elections to the Supreme Court	Thomas and Natalie Jacobs
Voting Matters- Understanding Your Power in Democracy	Sharon F. Holbert
Votes of Confidence: A Young Person's Guide to American Elections	Jeff Fleischer
The Voting Booth	Brandy Colbert
One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression is Destorying Our Democracy	Carol Anderson

Post-Election Guide for Parents & Caregivers

How to Talk to Your Children After the Mid-Term Election

Voting is one of the most powerful ways we advocate for the next generation, but it doesn't end when the polls close. When you cast your ballot with your children's future in mind, you're making a promise to them, even if they don't fully understand it yet.

Our children don't need us to have all the answers about politics. They just need to know that whatever the results are their families are still safe, steady, and together.

The next step is just as important: showing up for them again once the results are in. However the election unfolds, your children will be watching how the adults around them respond, and that response teaches them far more than any speech or headline will. This guide is here to help you turn that moment, win or lose, into an opportunity to model resilience, curiosity, and care. Using the tips below, take a moment to refresh your post-election conversations with your children.

5 Ways to Talk to Your Children After the Election

1. Share the wins and discuss the losses.

Elections rarely go all one way. Take time to name the wins with your children: the candidates, ballot measures, or policies that reflect progress and the values your family cares about. Celebrating those moments, even small ones, helps children see that change is possible and that their voice, and their vote one day, can matter.

At the same time, be honest about the losses. You don't

have to pretend disappointment away or shield your children from it entirely. Naming a loss out loud and talking through what it means and what comes next teaches children that setbacks are part of the process, not the end of it. As a family, you can keep showing up for the values you care about: dignity, hope, and joy, as well as fairness, and making sure every child, including you and your own, are seen and valued.

Sample response: Some things we were hoping for happened, and some didn't. Let's talk about both. What's one result that made you feel hopeful? What's one result that felt disappointing? It's okay to feel both at the same time.

Three questions to invite conversation:

- What's one result from this election that made you feel hopeful or excited?
- What's something that didn't go the way we hoped? How does that feel?
- When something we care about doesn't win right away, what do you think we can still do?

2. Their feelings are valid, whatever they are.

Children don't process big news on a predictable timeline. One child might seem completely fine at breakfast and then break down at bedtime three days later. Another might have big feelings for an hour and then go back to normal. There's no right way for a child to react, and our job isn't to manage their emotions but to make room for them. Listen without rushing to fix anything, and let them know other children and grown-ups are working through similar feelings too. It also helps to name your own feelings, in age-appropriate ways,

and show them how you're taking care of yourself.

Sample response: It's okay to feel however you're feeling right now, even if it's confusing or you're not sure what it is. You don't need the right words right now. I'm feeling a lot too, and I'm here whenever you want to talk, or just sit together.

Three questions to invite conversation:

- How are you feeling about everything going on right now?
- Have you heard anyone at school talking about the election? What did that feel like for you?
- Is there a feeling you're having that's hard to put into words?

3. Reassure them that life goes on.

No matter the outcome, your household rhythm won't change tomorrow morning: breakfast, school, work, bedtime. Naming that out loud matters more than it might seem. When children are anxious, concrete reassurance about their day-to-day world helps ground them faster than abstract comfort does. Let them know they are safe, they are loved, and the people who take care of them aren't going anywhere.

Sample response: No matter what happened, tomorrow we're still going to have breakfast, you're still going to school, and I'm still going to be right here. Our family isn't going anywhere. You are safe, and you are loved.

Three questions to invite conversation:

- What's something you're looking forward to this week?
- Is there anything about tomorrow, or the next few days,

that's making you feel worried?
- What helps you feel safe when things around us feel uncertain?

4. Listening matters more than winning the argument.
One thing every election makes clear is that a lot of people feel unheard on all sides. We know that talking loudly to get your point across rarely changes anyone's mind, and children know this instinctively from arguments with siblings and friends. Therefore, model something different for them, for example: slow down, listen first, and try to understand rather than judge. You don't have to agree with someone to hear them out.

Ask your children what they think it looks like to really listen to someone they disagree with. You might be surprised by their answer.

Sample response: Some people are happy about the results, and some people are really upset, and both of those feelings make sense to the people having them. It's okay to disagree with someone and still care about how they feel. What do you think it looks like to really listen to someone, even when you see things differently?

Three questions to invite conversation:
- Do you know anyone who might feel differently about the election than we do?
- What do you think it might feel like when someone doesn't listen to you?
- What message would you want to tell the world about listening to the voices of children specifically on issues that mostly affect them?

5. Their voice matters. Let them use it.
This is a chance to show your children that caring about their community doesn't stop when the votes are counted. It's something that we practice every day. Depending on their age, that might mean writing a letter to a local leader, joining a school or community project, or simply talking through what they'd like to see change. Helping children find a small, concrete action rather than simply watching from the sidelines turns anxiety into agency and reminds them that they, too, have a role in building the world you're voting for.

Sample response: Voting is one way grown-ups speak up for what they care about, but it's not the only way. What's something you care about in our community? Let's think of one small thing we could do together, like writing a letter or joining a project, to help make it happen.

Three questions to invite conversation:

- If you could change one thing to help other kids or families, what would it be?
- What's one small thing we could do together this week to help with something you care about?
- If you were to share your message on social media or TV, what chant or song about how you and other children will save the world would you create?

children's defense fund action

Quick Sheet

After the Election

Whatever the results, your children are watching how you respond. Use these five conversation starters to help them feel safe, heard, and ready to keep caring about their community.



1. **Share the wins and discuss the losses.**
   Name the progress worth celebrating and be honest about the setbacks. Both are part of moving forward together.
   Ask: "What's one result that made you feel hopeful, and one that felt hard?"

2. **Their feelings are valid, whatever they are.**
   Children process big news on their own timeline. Listen without rushing to fix it, and name your own feelings too.
   Ask: "How are you feeling about everything going on right now?"

3. **Reassure them that life goes on.**
   Breakfast, school, and bedtime stay the same tomorrow. The work continues too, and so does your family's safety and love.
   Ask: "What's something you're looking forward to this week?"

4. **Listening matters more than winning the argument.**
   Slow down, listen first, and try to understand rather than judge, even when you disagree.
   Ask: "What do you think it looks like to really listen to someone?"

5. **Their voice matters too. Let them use it.**
   Help your child(ren) find one small, concrete way to act, like a letter, a project, or a conversation, so caring turns into agency.
   Ask: "What's one thing we could do together this week to help?"

Download the Post-Election Parent/Caregiver Quick Sheet

READ ALOUD FOR DEMOCRACY

This guide is meant to support parents, educators, faith leaders, child advocates, and community members in creating meaningful Read Aloud for Democracy (RAD) experiences that help children and young people see themselves as active participants in their communities and our democracy. Rooted in the CDF Freedom Schools® belief that children and young people have the power to make a difference, RAD uses the shared experience of reading aloud to spark curiosity, encourage critical thinking, elevate the issues that matter to children, and inspire hope, education, and action. Through stories and conversation, we invite children not only to listen, but to question, reflect, speak up, and imagine how they can help make their families, schools, communities, country, and world better.

According to Scholastic's 2014 report, Kids & Family Reading Report The Rise Of Read-Aloud, 85% of children ask questions during read-alouds by the time they're eight years old. This shows that reading aloud is a highly interactive partnership experience between themselves and an adult.

This toolkit will help you plan and host a Read Aloud for Democracy (RAD) *CDF Freedom Schools* event in your community! If you are a parent, faith leader, or child advocate interested in facilitating a RAD event in your community, this guide is for you.

Date
Your event should coincide with other RAD events taking place on October 17, 2026.

Location
Your event should be hosted at an early voting center, inviting parents and children to accompany their parent(s) to the voting center to vote following the read aloud activity. If walking distance to an early voting center is not available, consider hosting RAD during Children's Church or Sunday School, or a designated location that matters in your community.

RAD Tip from CDF Freedom Schools®: *Check your state and county's local laws for guidelines on if, when, and how to host events at a polling location. Call the election protection hotline at 1-866-OUR-VOTE (8683) if you desire legal assistance in confirming this information.*

Event Set-Up
When it comes to conducting your RAD, consider the following tips:

1. **Consider accessibility.** If you are reading in a public space, ensure you have the proper AV or bass in your voice to make sure the story can be heard.

RAD Tip from CDF Freedom Schools: *Consider having your group form a reading circle. Conducting a read aloud in a circle helps ensure the reader can move around and show the pictures to all those involved. It also ensures all listeners are on a level field and no one is more or less likely to hear the words or see the pictures over anyone else.*

2. **Ask the audience questions** throughout the story. Avoid asking questions that lead to "yes or no" answers. Instead, engage the young audience in higher-order thinking questions which require deep analysis, evaluation, and creation rather than simple recall. This will help connect the text to their lives and situations.

Example: Instead of asking "did the character do the right thing", ask "how would you have handled the situation" or "what may have made the character react in that way"?

RAD Tip from CDF Freedom Schools®: Use sticky notes to list out questions in relevant sections ahead of your read aloud.

3. **Allow the audience to ask questions** as you read. There should be natural pauses when reading aloud. Before reading, encourage the audience to ask questions in those pauses. Look up from the book and make eye contact to invite questions.

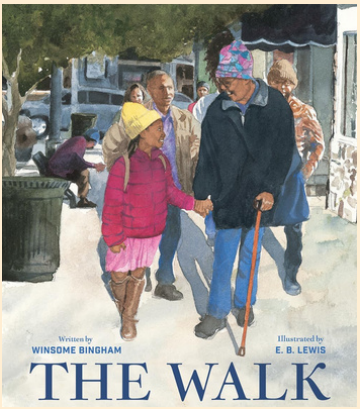
RAD Tip from CDF Freedom Schools: Allow the audience to converse in the pauses. If a question turns into a conversation, it is okay to entertain that curiosity and journey that you all are embarking on as a group. Once a reasonable amount of time has passed, commence your reading.

Event Schedule

Opening: Cheer, Chant, and Introduction

Lead your community in a "Read Aloud" cheer and chant. View Read Aloud: CDF Freedom Schools® Harambee, minutes 01:06-01:40 for an example. Conducting this chant and introducing your guest are essential in modeling how the village shows up for young people.

Main Activity: Read Aloud Facilitation



All RAD partners should visit their local library or Black-owned bookstore to acquire a copy of ***The Walk* by Winsome Bingham**. This is the book that we will read across the nation as a community.

Questions for Consideration:

1. What does the author mean when they say leaders are made through molding and modeling, not born?
2. What kind of conversations do you have with your families during meals? How is this similar or different from the main character?
3. Explain why the characters in the book may have held hands as they walked.
4. Share a time you had to make a choice. Based on that experience, what advice would you share with voters faced with a choice?
5. Express how you feel about the walk. What makes you feel the way you do?
6. What kind of issues might people have been speaking up and standing up for or against?
7. What issues should an elected official in your community speak up or stand up for?
8. What issue impacts children and should be on voters' minds as they vote this election?

Follow-Up Activities (select at least one):

1. Use construction paper and markers to create signs highlighting issues that matter to children and young people in your community. Consider laminating for weather. Use rulers or stakes to attach your signs and line "the walk" to the early voting center (or other event location) with issues that matter to children and young people. Examples: Vote for Children's Mental Health. Vote for the Environment. Vote for School Safety. Vote for Playground Improvements. Vote for Youth Programming. Vote for Kids.
2. Use sidewalk chalk to highlight issues impacting children along "the walk" to the early voting center or location of your event.

The RAD guide was written by the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools® program team. The CDF Freedom Schools program is a research-based, multicultural literacy program that supports K-12 children and young people (known as "scholars" in the program) to excel and believe in their ability to make a difference in themselves as well as their families, schools, communities, country, and world with hope, education, and action. For more information on becoming a program sponsors, visit their website.

RAD Writer: Ciara Mackey-Hall, Senior Administrator of Curriculum and Program

STRONG SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN ACT

Our second national priority begins with another important question: Are the children well?

Children and young people experience trauma, chronic stress, violence, discrimination, instability, and unmet mental health needs that can affect their ability to learn, develop, build relationships, and flourish. Caring for children means responding not only after a crisis, but also creating communities and systems that support healing before challenges deepen.

The STRONG Support for Children Act of 2025 (H.R. 2957) would support the development and implementation of community-based, trauma-informed strategies designed to improve outcomes for children in areas experiencing significant childhood trauma and adverse experiences. The legislation recognizes that supporting children requires collaboration among communities and the institutions that surround them.

Faith communities understand this responsibility deeply. Our congregations and communities often serve as places of belonging, mentoring, care, refuge, and healing for young people and families. Advocacy for stronger trauma-informed and community-based supports allows us to connect that ministry of care with the public investments children also need.

In this section, you will find resources to learn more about the STRONG Support for Children Act and ways your congregation can advocate together.

STRONG SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN ACT

Tell Your Member of Congress to Support the STRONG Support for Children Act of 2025 (H.R. 2957)

Bill Overview
The STRONG Support for Children Act of 2025 is federal legislation designed to help communities better support children who have experienced trauma, adversity, or other significant challenges. The bill would provide funding for community-based,
trauma-informed programs that help children and families heal, thrive, and succeed.

Why Does This Matter?
Supporting children's mental health and emotional well-being is not only a public health issue—it is part of building a fairer, more
inclusive democracy where every young person has the opportunity to feel safe, be heard, and fully participate in society throughout their lives. Faith communities often witness the impact of these challenges firsthand. Congregations serve as places of support, healing, mentorship, and belonging for young people and families navigating hardship.

What Would the Bill Do?
The STRONG Support for Children Act would:

- Invest in community-based efforts to address childhood trauma;
- Support programs that help children and families access services before problems escalate;
- Encourage collaboration among schools, healthcare providers, community organizations, and other local partners; and

STRONG SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN ACT

- Promote evidence-based, trauma-informed approaches that help children build resilience and achieve positive outcomes.

Bill Tracker: Strong Support for Children Act of 2025

Bill Name: Services and Trauma-Informed Research of Outcomes in Neighborhood Grants (STRONG) for Support for Children Act 2025.

Bill Number: H.R. 2957

Sponsor: Ayanna Pressley

Policy Zone: Children's Health and Healing

CDF Position: Support

Priority Level: High

Current Status

Date	Activity
Apr 17, 2026	Bill introduced
Apr 17, 2026	Referred to House Energy and Commerce Committee
Current	Awaiting further Committee Action

Next Advocacy Goal

Secure additional House co-sponsors to support reintroduction.

STRONG SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN ACT

Click HERE or scan the QR code to take action!

Subject: Co-Sponsor H.R. 2957 and Protect Youth Mental Health Funding

Dear Representative [Insert Lawmaker Last Name],

My name is [your name] and I live [city, state]. I am writing to ask that you support the mental health and social wellness of all children by co-sponsoring the Services and Trauma-Informed Research of Outcomes in Neighborhood Grants (STRONG) for Support for Children Act of 2025 (H.R. 2957).

This bill is important to me because all children deserve to have health care homes for their bodies and minds so they can grow up with dignity, hope, and joy. The STRONG Support for Children Act (H.R. 2957) recognizes a simple but urgent truth: Children cannot fully learn, grow, participate in school and civic life, or thrive, when trauma goes unaddressed. Too many young people—especially Black and Brown children, and children from lower-income families—are carrying the effects of chronic stress, violence, discrimination, and unmet mental health needs without adequate care and resources. By investing in healing-centered, trauma-informed, and community-based approaches, this legislation acknowledges both the root causes and long-term impacts of childhood trauma while helping ensure children and families can access care in the communities where they live.

At a time when many families are struggling to access mental health care and other basic needs, Congress should strengthen—not reduce—investments in trauma-informed care and community-based services for children and families. Every young person deserves the opportunity to thrive, participate fully in their communities, and shape the future of our democracy. Please co-sponsor this important piece of legislation today.

Sincerely,
[Your name]

STRONG SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN ACT

What This Means to Faith Leaders
Faith leaders play a critical role in nurturing young people and strengthening families.

This legislation aligns with many values shared across faith traditions, including:

- Caring for children and underserved families;
- Supporting healing and restoration;
- Strengthening communities; and
- Promoting hope, dignity, and opportunity for children.

The bill seeks to create conditions in which young people can flourish and reach their full potential. Research consistently shows that many young people who become involved in the justice system have experienced significant trauma earlier in life. Investing in prevention and supportive services can help address challenges before they lead to deeper involvement with systems such as juvenile justice, child well-being, or emergency intervention services.

How You Can Engage
Faith leaders and congregations can:

- Learn more about the bill and its potential impact on children and families;
- Share information with congregation members and community partners;
- Contact their member of Congress and other elected officials to discuss the needs of children and youth in their communities;
- Participate in advocacy efforts that support healthy outcomes for young people; and
- Continue providing mentorship, support, and safe spaces for youth and families.

BLACK CENSUS PROJECT

We are at a pivotal time in history where we have an opportunity to decide what country we want to be. As attacks on Black communities by the federal government continue to intensify, we are once again reminded that silence has never protected us and our silence today will have reverberating impacts for the youngest among us.

That's why Children's Defense Fund has partnered with Black Futures Lab to share the Black Census Project – the largest anonymous survey of Black people in America. According to KFF, 14 percent of children in the United States are Black. That's nearly 10 million people under the age of 18 whose needs have been historically unmet or underresourced and who face disparities simply because of the color of their skin.

In this moment, Black people across this nation are rising up to build a future that values their humanity and brilliance, while continuing to lead the resistance with visions for this generation and the next. That future must center our children.

This National Observance of Children's Sabbaths®, CDF offers the Black Census Project as a potential action for predominantly Black congregations to take collectively and for all faith communities to share with Black parishioners.

BLACK CENSUS PROJECT

Take the Black Census
Click the link below or scan the QR code to take the Black Census today.
https://blkcns.us/childrensdefensefund

Who Should Complete the Black Census
✓ Identify as Black, African American, or as a person of African ancestry, African descent, or African heritage
✓ 18 years or older
✓ Reside in the United States or its territories

How to Share the Black Census Project
Share the Black Census Project with your faith community during a worship service or gathering or in your newsletter or other digital communication. Dedicate time to completing the Black Census in community with members and attendees.

All responses are kept fully anonymous, securely owned by Black Futures Lab, and never shared individually. Together, this information will help us cast a vision that advances our collective work to build lasting power for Black communities in this country.

GENERAL ORGANIZING TOOLS

Organizer's Planning Guide

Use This When: Kicking off planning; weekly check-ins; final confirmations.

***Customization Note**: Every Children's Sabbath will look different—this timeline is a flexible guide. Adjust weeks, swap steps, and remix tools to fit your tradition, capacity, and community context (even on a 2-4 week runway).*

8–10 Weeks Before

- ☐ Form your planning team (diverse in ages, roles, perspectives)
  Names/roles: _____
- ☐ Select a date and theme/advocacy focus
  Date: _____ Theme/Focus: _____
- ☐ Invite participation from children, youth, and families (voices in worship/art)
  Outreach plan: _____
- ☐ Connect with local orgs serving children (list 3–5)
  Partners to contact: _____

6 Weeks Before

- ☐ Confirm worship leaders, presenters, preachers, musicians, readers
  Confirmed: _____
- ☐ Begin promotion (newsletter, bulletin, social, web)
  Channels/dates: _____
- ☐ Review worship/advocacy resources; select which to use
  Selections: _____

3 Weeks Before

- ☐ Prepare pledge cards, bulletin inserts, advocacy materials
- ☐ Recruit volunteers (greeters, action tables, follow-up)
  Names/roles: _____
- ☐ Continue publicity; invite local leaders/media
  Who/when: _____

Organizer's Planning Guide (continued)

1 Week Before

- ☐ Walk-through with leaders + children/youth
  Date/time/location: _____
- ☐ Finalize advocacy opportunities (letters, petitions, visits)
  Which actions: _____
- ☐ Remind community (all channels)

Day of

- ☐ Arrive early; ground team with prayer/centering
- ☐ Set worship materials, action tables, childcare
- ☐ Share stories, elevate children's voices, gather commitments

1–2 Weeks After

- ☐ Count commitments/letters; log numbers
- ☐ Thank participants, especially children & volunteers
- ☐ Complete post-Sabbath survey and share with CDF
- ☐ Reflect + identify next advocacy steps

GENERAL ORGANIZING TOOLS

Gathering Your Organizing Team

First Steps for Children's Sabbaths Organizers

Every movement begins with a small, committed group. This activity helps organizers gather a team, choose a focus, and share personal stories that will shape their advocacy.

Who this activity is for: Children's Sabbaths Organizers, clergy, lay leaders, advocacy teams

Why we're doing it: To help organizers take the first concrete step toward planning their Children's Sabbath.

Steps

1. Gather your team (2-5 people)
2. Choose one action for Children's Sabbaths (letters? special action during worship? meeting?)
3. Tell your story—each person drafts a 3-5 sentence "why children matter to me" story

Facilitator Help:

- Keep the team small but committed (2-5 people is enough)
- Give each person 3–5 minutes to share their "why"
- Write commitments on chart paper or a whiteboard
- Set a date for your first concrete action before leaving



GENERAL ORGANIZING TOOLS

Gathering Your Organizing Team

Assigning Roles

Now that you've determined who your Children's Sabbaths Organizers are, it's important to share responsibility and match gifts/skills to needs.

Use This When: Assigning roles, confirming backups, and day-of coordination.

Role	Responsibilities	Suggested Leader(s)
Organizer/Coordinator	Oversees all planning, ensures timeline is followed	Pastor, lay leader, or organizer
Worship/Arts Coordinator	Works with clergy, faith leaders, artists, musicians, and children to shape service	Clergy, faith leader, music director
Children/Youth Coordinator	Engages children and youth in prayers, readings, or art	Teacher, youth leader, community artist
Action/Outreach Coordinator	Prepares pledge cards, letters, action tables	Justice/advocacy leader
Communications Coordinator	Handles announcements, flyers, social media	Media/communications volunteer
Radical Hospitality Coordinator	Ensures welcoming environment and logistics	Ushers, greeters, organizers
Documentarian	Documents stories, photos, and commitments	Documents stories, photos, and commitments

GENERAL ORGANIZING TOOLS

Choosing Your Action

Your Issue

Pick one call to action for your congregation or community to engage in during your Children's Sabbath.

Choosing one focus area helps your congregation or group channel its energy where it matters most. This activity helps you discern an issue and connect it to your community's context.

Who this activity is for: Organizers, advocacy teams, congregations

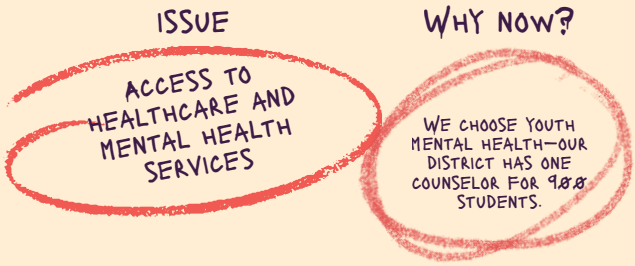
Why we're doing it: To focus energy and sharpen advocacy.

Steps

1. Review potential issues aloud.
2. Circle one focus for this quarter.
3. Write one sentence: *Why this issue matters here, now.*

Facilitator Help:

- Review the issue list out loud for clarity.
- Invite youth voices to guide or challenge the choice.
- Encourage participants to connect issues with lived experience.
- Use a consensus method (show of hands, dot voting) to choose one focus.



Building Your Advocacy Approach

Once your team has determined the issue, the next step is deciding how you will advocate. There are several approaches to consider when advocating for an issue, legislation, or policy change in a variety of ways, including:

- Contacting decision-makers
- Collecting pledge cards
- Storytelling
- Galvanizing support and engaging partners
- Posting to social media

Your action should guide your approach. Your organizing team should collaboratively determine the best approach to achieve your goal(s) and ensure the issue impacting young people that you've selected is addressed.

The following pages offer several activities and resources organizing teams can explore to build their advocacy approach.

GENERAL ORGANIZING TOOLS

Tell Your Story

Stories stir hearts and shape policy. This activity helps participants write a short testimony that captures the importance children's well-being, to use in advocacy letters, meetings, or worship. It can be used in most actions.

Who this activity is for: Youth, adults, small groups, worship leaders

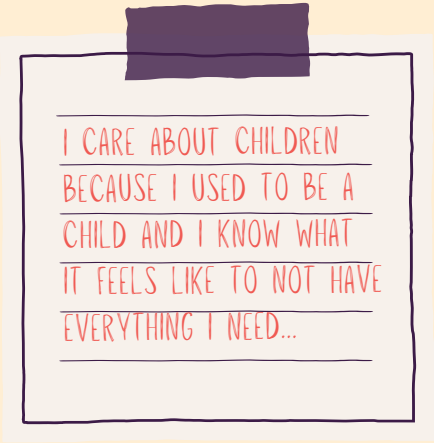
Why we're doing it: To move decision-makers with lived experience.

Steps

1. Ask: Why does child well-being matter to me?
2. Write 3–5 sentences with one detail.
3. Share in letters, worship, or meetings.

Facilitator Help:

- Provide 2–3 sentence starters ("I care about children because…").
- Encourage brevity (3–5 sentences max).
- Remind participants to avoid identifying details without consent.
- Collect stories for use in advocacy letters or meetings (again, with consent).
- Encourage youth to share in their own words.



GENERAL ORGANIZING TOOLS

Take Action Together

Writing Decision-makers

Activity: Advocacy letter lab

Who this activity is for: Organizers, youth groups, congregations, interfaith partners

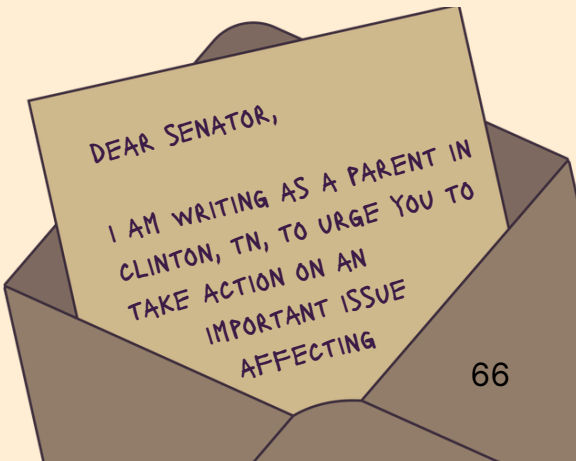
Why we're doing it: To engage decision-makers directly.

Steps

1. Pick a template (Policy, Organizational, Community, Personal)
2. Fill in blanks with your story and ask
3. Collect and send together

Facilitator Help:

- Provide a fact sheet with 2-3 statistics and one local story.
- Remind participants to keep letters to one page.
- Encourage use of personal stories (brief, heartfelt).
- Assign someone to collect, mail, or scan letters.
- Take a group photo (optional) and share on social media.



Template for Policy Advocacy

Purpose
Policymakers and neighbors listen when we speak from the heart. Share a short story of why children's well-being matters to you or your faith community.

Use When
You want a specific action from an elected official or nonelected policymaker.

***Replace bracketed fields with your details and add 1–2 local facts.*

Subject: Urgent Action Needed on [Issue]

Dear [Leader's Position and Last Name],

I am writing as a [constituent] and [role in your congregation or faith community] at [name of congregation or faith community] in [city/state or ZIP code] to urge you to take action on [issue]. This matter deeply affects our community by [briefly explain the impact, using 2–3 sentences with concrete examples].

We need leadership that prioritizes children. I respectfully ask that you [specific action—cosponsor a bill, allocate funding, oppose harmful legislation, etc.]. This action will [state positive outcome for the community and children].

Thank you for your commitment to serving our community. I look forward to your response and to seeing your leadership in [specific issue area].

Sincerely,
[Full Name]
[Address / City / State]
[Email / Phone]

Template for Organizational Advocacy

Purpose
Calls on organizations to embody their mission and values

Use When
You want a public statement, policy change, or program support from an institution.

*__**Replace bracketed fields with your details.__*

Subject: Request for Action on [Issue]

Dear [Organization/Leader's Name],

As someone who values the mission and work of [organization name], I am writing to call attention to [issue] and to ask for your leadership in addressing it.

This issue is critical because [brief description of impact, statistics, or a short personal story]. I believe [organization name] has both the influence and responsibility to [specific ask—e.g., release a public statement, change a policy, fund a program].

Taking this action would align with your stated commitment to [values/mission], and it would make a meaningful difference in the lives of [community/children/group].
I urge you to seriously consider this request and to share your plan of action with the community.

Sincerely,
[Full Name]
[Affiliation, if relevant]
[Contact Information]

Template for Community Advocacy

Purpose
Invites people to join collective action.

Use When
You want to gather support for an event, petition, or grassroots campaign.

***Replace bracketed fields with your details.*

Subject: Join Us in Advocating for [Issue]

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We are at an important moment in our community. [Describe issue briefly]. This impacts all of us because [share local example].

Together, we have the power to bring change. I invite you to join me in [specific action—attending a city council meeting, signing a petition, showing up at a rally]. By standing together, we send a clear message that [community value—justice, fairness, safety] matters here.

Please join us at [time/place/action step]. Let's make sure our voices are heard.

With gratitude,
[Your Name]
[Organization, if relevant]
[Contact Information]

Template for Personal Advocacy

Purpose
Advocates for fairness and dignity in a specific case.

Use When
You want to help a child or family access resources, fair treatment, or reconsideration of a decision.

***Replace bracketed fields with your details and add 1–2 local facts.*

Subject: Advocacy on Behalf of [Person's Name]

Dear [Decision-Maker's Name],

I am writing to advocate for [person's name] regarding [specific situation—employment, healthcare, housing, education]. It is crucial that [person's name] receives [fair treatment/resources/opportunity].

Currently, [briefly describe situation, impact, and urgency]. This is not only about one person—it is about ensuring that our community lives up to the principles of fairness and dignity.

I strongly urge you to [specific request—review the case, extend services, reconsider decision]. Doing so would uphold [justice, equity, human rights, etc.].

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing how you will act on this matter.

Respectfully,
[Your Name]
[Relationship to person/role, if relevant]
[Contact Information]

GENERAL ORGANIZING TOOLS

Take Action Together

Pledge Cards

Tools like pledge cards, bulletin inserts, and checklists help congregations move from worship into concrete action. This activity provides ready-to-use templates for your community.

Who this activity is for: Clergy, congregations, organizers is
Why we're doing it: To engage the entire congregation in advocacy.

Steps

1. Distribute pledge cards.
2. Insert bulletin prompts.
3. Use checklists for tracking.

Facilitator Help:

- Place pledge cards in bulletins or on pews.
- Set up a collection basket or return table.
- Announce from the pulpit how to return completed cards.
- Assign volunteers to tally pledges and track outcomes.
- Post results visibly to encourage accountability.



Follow up

Sharing Outcomes

Sharing outcomes keeps communities encouraged and committed. This activity ensures you celebrate wins, track impact, and set the next faithful step.

Who this activity is for: Organizers, congregations, advocacy teams

Why we're doing it: To build momentum and honor efforts.

Steps

1. Share totals of letters/pledges.
2. Name one concrete impact.
3. Celebrate and set next action date.

Facilitator Help:

- Share totals of pledges, letters, or visits.
- Highlight one concrete impact story.
- Thank participants publicly.
- Celebrate with song, prayer, or testimony.
- Set and announce your "next action date."



Post-Sabbaths Reflection Worksheet

After your Children's Sabbath, it is vital to pause, reflect, and carry forward the commitments made. The Post-Sabbath Reflection worksheet is designed to help organizers capture participation numbers, advocacy actions, and powerful stories while the experience is still fresh.

This tool also invites leaders to think about sustainability. What did we learn? How were children's voices centered? What actions will we continue beyond this weekend?

Completing this worksheet strengthens your community's advocacy and contributes to the wider movement when results and stories are shared back with CDF. Reflection is itself an act of accountability and hope—ensuring that the spirit of Children's Sabbaths extends into lasting change.

Congregation/Organization/Group: _____
City/State: _____

Participation

- Number of worship participants: _____
- Number of children/youth involved: _____

Advocacy Actions Taken

- Letters sent (how many: _____)
- Petitions signed (how many: _____)
- Advocacy meeting planned (details: _____)
- Other: _____

Stories & Highlights

- What moments stood out?
- How did children's voices shape the day?

Next Steps

- How will we sustain this energy?
- What long-term advocacy will we commit to?

TRAININGS & WORKSHOPS

We invite you to take this training as an opportunity to gain resources and tools in your efforts to mobilize your congregations and community for children. Children's Sabbaths is truly a call to worship through action, especially in these times.

Virtual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths Trainings

DATE: Tuesday, September 15, 2026
TIME: 7:30 p.m.–8:30 p.m. EST
LOCATION: Virtual
REGISTER: https://childrensdefense-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/v7fK3XrzRzeGK3xACteBXA

DATE: Saturday, September 26, 2026
TIME: 11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. EST
LOCATION: Virtual
REGISTER: https://childrensdefense-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/aRVdrOZjS_KAoEPvMDeRVg

DATE: Tuesday, September 29, 2026
TIME: 8:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. EST
LOCATION: Virtual
REGISTER: https://childrensdefense-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/aRVdrOZjS_KAoEPvMDeRVg

Individual Coaching and Training Session

DATE: Ongoing
TIME: Schedule as needed
LOCATION: Virtual
REGISTER:
https://calendly.com/trevorbeauford/national-observance-of-children-s-sabbath-training

Registration Info

To register for virtual trainings, please visit the events page on Children's Defense Fund website or email *faith-based@childrensdefense.org.*

CLOSING BLESSING

May the experiences of our multitude of faith and community expressions be a thread among us.

May is be a silk ribbon.

May our efforts to be a part of each others faith expressions be strength on behalf of children.

May our collective power ring and echo.

May we continue to reach for each other and create new experiences with one another, as a community, for the freedom and future of all children.

CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Overview

How to Use This Section

Practicing Trauma-Informed Care with Children

A Womanist Ethic

Inner Child Work

Consent, Permissions, & Safeguarding

Pathways to Centering Children's Voices

Activities

Closing Blessing

CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Overview

Children's Sabbaths places children at the center where they should be. The observance goes beyond inviting children to simply speak or participate in worship; it calls adult faith leaders to faithfully listen first and then use our voices in preaching, praying, teaching, and advocacy to lift up what we have heard from the children and youth we serve. In this section, you'll find words, prayers, and reflections from children that can guide your ministry and advocacy work.

These voices are an invitation because when children speak, they remind us of possibility, honesty, and wonder. Listening deeply to children is an act of discipleship and justice work. It resists the silencing of young voices and challenges us to reimagine the world through their eyes. Worlds that begin again and again and again.

We also welcome the voices of each of the Sabbath organizing team's inner child—the tender, curious, playful parts of you that still long to feel seen, heard, and loved. Honoring children means honoring the child within us, remembering the truths we once knew before the world tried to quiet them. The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® lets both speak: the children in our midst, and the child within, together calling us into joy, freedom, and revolutionary care.

CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

How to Use This Section

- Begin planning by centering children's contributions — their stories, art, and ideas—as the seeds of the program.
- Host a listening session to hear directly from children and families.
- Use prompts to invite children in your own community to share reflections in worship, Sunday school, or intergenerational gatherings.
- Incorporate children's quotes into bulletins, slides, worship services, and sermons.
- Share children's artwork, prayers, or poems alongside their voices. Display them in gathering spaces or fellowship halls.
- Play recordings or videos of children's voices during worship or small group time.

- Begin planning by centering children's contributions — their stories, art, and ideas—as the seeds of the program.
- Encourage adults to reflect on what they hear from children: What challenges do their words raise? What joys do they reveal? What does their truth call us to examine?
- Carry children's voices beyond Children's Sabbaths by weaving them into ongoing worship, education, advocacy, and community life, throughout the year!

***Disclaimer: Adults working with children must remain mindful of their role as mandated reporters. If a child discloses abuse, neglect, or harm, you are legally and morally required to report it to the proper authorities in your state. Trauma-informed care strengthens these obligations by ensuring responses are compassionate, immediate, and protective of the child's safety.*

CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Practicing Trauma-Informed Care with Children

Trauma-informed care is essential when engaging children in faith spaces. Social work practice reminds us that trauma can profoundly shape how children think, feel, and interact with the world. Trauma-informed approaches emphasize safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment. When communities adopt these practices, they help children feel secure and respected, which allows their voices to emerge more fully.

Why this matters

- Many children carry experiences of trauma—whether through systemic racism, poverty, family stress, or community violence.
- Trauma affects brain development, emotional regulation, and the ability to trust adults.
- **Without trauma-informed care, faith spaces risk re-traumatizing children rather than supporting their healing.**

How to be trauma-informed in faith settings

According to SAMHSA, a trauma-informed approach is guided by six key principles:

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and Transparency
- Peer Support
- Collaboration and Mutuality
- Empowerment, Voice, and Choice
- Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

In faith settings, that can show up a myriad of ways. Create physical and emotional environments that feel secure. Be consistent and clear about what will happen in gatherings. Allow children to decide if and how they participate. Respect "no" as a sacred boundary. Involve children in decision-making and affirm their strengths and leadership.

Resources for Further Learning

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2014). SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. Rockville, MD.
- Bath, H. & Seita, J. (2018). The Three Pillars of Trauma-Informed Care. Reclaiming Children and Youth, 27(2).
- Harris, M. & Fallot, R. (2001). Using Trauma Theory to Design Service Systems. Jossey-Bass.

CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

A Womanist Ethic

Alice Walker's definition of womanist calls us to audacity, courage, and a commitment to survival and wholeness of entire communities, including children. Theological womanism unmutes silenced voices and dismantles barriers that hinder flourishing. Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon reminds us that womanism requires urgent attention to moving from death to life, studying past errors so that trauma is not repeated.

With care and freedom, the **National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® is designed in a trauma-informed way through a womanist lens**. This toolkit equips you to do the same.

Re-Imagining a Trauma-Informed Approach: A Womanist Model

Thema Bryant-Davis and colleagues (Pepperdine University) advance a model rooted in womanist psychology, centering the voices and lived experiences of Black women and children. Traditional trauma-informed models often fail to account for the distinctiveness of Black women's trauma and cultural differences, unintentionally perpetuating cycles of harm.

As you imagine and design the Children's Sabbaths, ask:

- Whose voice is missing?
- Who are you freeing?
- Who are you centering?
- Who are you leaving behind?

Content should encourage paths to wellness, wholeness, and freedom. Trauma-informed content responsibly integrates care and awareness of trauma, seeking to heal rather than trigger or retraumatize. When children offer prayers or art, be mindful that creative expression may surface difficult emotions. Trauma-informed practices equip leaders to respond with compassion and care.

CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Inner Child Work

Welcoming the voices of children also invites us to welcome the voice of the inner child within ourselves. Inner child work is a therapeutic and spiritual practice that helps adults reconnect with the parts of themselves that are playful, vulnerable, wounded, or full of wonder. When adults engage in inner child work, they can listen to children with more empathy, patience, and authenticity.

Why this matters:

- Social work and psychology highlight that unhealed childhood wounds can shape adult behavior and relationships (Miller, 1997; Bradshaw, 1990).
- Engaging the inner child helps adults resist silencing children, because they can recall what it felt like to be silenced.
- Faith communities that embrace inner child work invite all people into healing and liberation.

Practices:

- Journaling, art, or storytelling about childhood joys and struggles.
- Prayer or meditation with the inner child.
- Play—coloring, singing, dancing—as acts of healing.
- Sharing reflections in intergenerational groups.

Resources:

1. Bradshaw, J. (1990). Homecoming: Reclaiming and Healing Your Inner Child. Bantam.
2. Miller, A. (1997). The Drama of the Gifted Child. Basic Books.
3. hooks, b. (2000). All About Love. Harper Perennial.

CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Consent, Permissions, & Safeguarding

When inviting children to share their voices in any form—art, writing, video, audio, or live testimony—it is essential to obtain consent from parents, guardians, or caregivers, and assent from the children themselves. This ensures respect, safety, and legal protection for all involved.

Best Practices:

- Use written consent forms explaining how contributions may be used.
- Always seek child assent with age-appropriate explanations.
- Clarify that participation is voluntary and consent can be withdrawn.
- Protect privacy by avoiding identifying details without explicit permission.
- Follow local safeguarding laws and policies.

Language Notes:

- Use parent, guardian, or caregiver to acknowledge diverse family structures.
- Refer to participation as a choice.
- Use "assent" for children and "consent" for adults.

CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Pathways to Centering Children's Voices

In Worship

- Incorporate children's quotes into liturgy.
- Invite children to offer prayers or reflections.
- Share recordings or videos.
- Allow the issue of children to guide our liturgy.

In Education

- Use prompts in classes.
- Display art and writings.
- Invite children to co-lead.

In Community

- Plan your Children's Sabbaths with children's input.
- Host intergenerational reflections.
- Form a children's advisory group.

In Reflection

- Who is God?
- What makes you laugh?
- What does joy taste like?
- What if you could be the leader of everything?

CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Activities

Draw Your Inner Child

Purpose: To reconnect with your own childhood experiences so you can approach children with empathy instead of dismissal. Healing your own inner child helps you listen better to the children in your care.

Who this activity is for: Organizers, adults, and leaders.

1. On the blank page, draw yourself as a child. This can be a stick figure, doodle, or symbol—it doesn't need to be artistic.
2. Around the drawing, write words that describe what your inner child felt (e.g., playful, shy, wounded, curious).
3. Add what your inner child needs today (e.g., love, patience, affirmation).

Facilitator Help:

- Normalize all types of drawing.
- Close with a grounding practice (deep breath, prayer, or blessing).
- Invite sharing only if participants feel comfortable.

CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Activities

Joy Collage

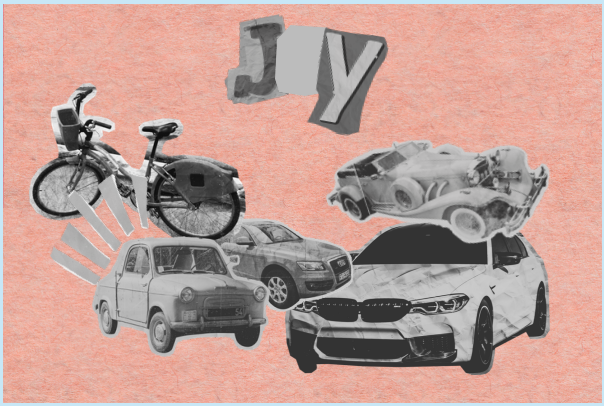
Children often express themselves best through art, play, and imagination. These activities allow them to share their voices in ways that are creative, joyful, and healing. Each one can be displayed or shared in worship to show children that their gifts are valued.

Who it's for: Children (guided by adults)

1. Give magazines, scissors, and glue.
2. Ask: "What brings you joy?"
3. Create a collage and host a gallery walk.

Facilitator Help:

- Let children lead.
- Emphasize that there are no "wrong" answers or drawings.
- Always affirm children's contributions and display/share their work respectfully.



CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Activities

Key Steps Listening Guide

Curating listening sessions requires a womanist trauma-informed approach: creating sacred, culturally humble, and empathic spaces where children's voices are welcomed and celebrated.

Who it's for: Organizers + Children

1. **Greet**: Welcome children by name and invite them to honor their families and ancestors.
2. **Ground**: Begin with breath, music, or movement to help children feel centered.
3. **Ask**: Use open-ended questions that encourage creativity and honesty. Design questions that invite children to share their experiences, perspectives, hopes, and concerns in their own words.
4. **Create**: Provide art supplies or other creative materials for expression beyond words.
5. **Respect**: Honor boundaries, validate all feelings, and affirm children's choices.
6. **Close**: End with gratitude, celebration, and joy—through clapping, singing, or dancing together.

Facilitator Help:

- Take notes in real time or appoint a recorder.
- Always close with joy so children leave feeling uplifted.
- Share back with the community: "This is what we heard, and here's how we'll respond."

Example

During a listening session, children are asked: "What makes you feel safe?"

One child says, "When my teacher listens."

The group writes this down and later commits to listening circles in classrooms.

Our Commitments

Children's Sabbaths is only the beginning. Carrying voices forward ensures children's contributions shape worship, advocacy, and community life throughout the year. This models accountability.

Who it's for: Organizers/leaders

1. Write one concrete action for Worship, one for Advocacy, and one for Community Life.
2. Assign a person or team responsible for each.
3. Set a date to revisit progress.

Facilitator Help:

- Post commitments publicly (bulletin board, newsletter).
- Revisit them quarterly.
- Involve children in tracking progress.



CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Activities

My Affirmations

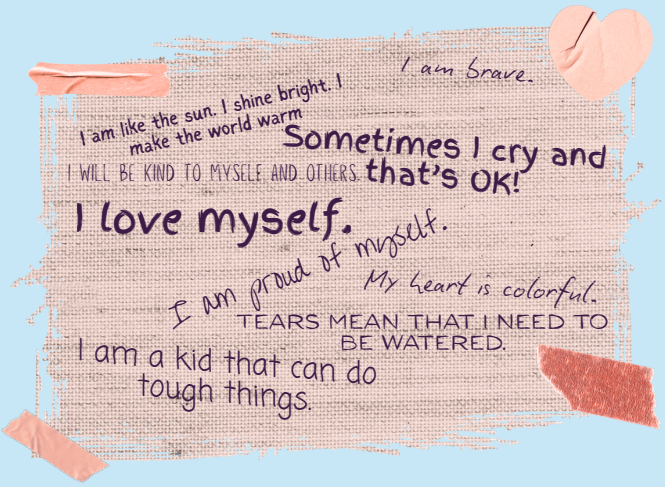
Words shape how we see ourselves and what we believe is possible. Affirmations and creative writing help children replace negative self-talk with dignity and hope, while poems and prayers give them language to dream of freedom.

Who it's for: Children & intergenerational groups

1. **Read** sample affirmations aloud (e.g., "I am important. I am loved. My heart is colorful.").
2. **Choose** one that speaks to you, or write your own.
3. **Decorate** your affirmation with colors or stickers.

Facilitator Help:

- Affirm every child's (or participants) words.
- Create a collective "affirmation wall" or poem.
- Remind children (or participants): "*Your words matter.*"



CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

More Activities

The World Through Your Eyes
Invite children to imagine a just and joyful world. Provide paper, markers, or clay, and ask, "If you could design the world in one way, what would you change?" Encourage expression through drawing, painting, or building. Display their creations during worship or post them on a "Children's Sabbaths Vision Wall."

Prayer Wall
Encourage children to share prayers and gratitude. Post large sheets of paper or set up a board. Provide sticky notes or index cards where children can write or draw prayers. Incorporate some into worship prayers and invite adults to add prayers alongside children's.

Story Circle
Honor oral traditions and storytelling. Gather children in a circle. Invite each to share a memory, story, or hope while adults listen with reverence. Record or write down stories and reflect them back to the community, making children's voices a visible part of communal memory.

Listening Walk
Teach mindfulness and attention to God's creation. Walk outside with children and invite them to notice sounds, smells, and sights. Gather afterwards to reflect: "What did you hear, see, or feel?" Create a group poem, litany, or prayer from what was noticed.

CENTERING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Closing Blessing

May the words of children root us in wonder.
May their laughter open us to return to our first works.
May their questions call us into justice.
May their dreams guide us closer to worlds that begin again.
May the words of children root us in wonder.
May their laughter open us to joy.
May their questions call us into justice.
May their dreams guide us closer to beginning again and again and again.

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Overview

How to Use This Section

Multi-faith
Sermon Starters

Multi-faith Prayers

Multi-faith
Childrens Books

Movement Poems
& Songs

Psalms

Order of Worship

Activities

Closing Blessings

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Overview

Every faith tradition speaks with urgency and tenderness about the dignity of children and the responsibility to protect them. In this section, you will find interfaith and denominational prayers, blessings, rituals, reflections, and sacred texts drawn from Sikhism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, and the Bahá'í Faith.

These resources are meant for worship and study—and also for collaboration. Children's Sabbaths weekend is an opportunity for communities of faith to come together, weaving their distinct languages and practices into a shared call for justice, compassion, joy, and a call to action on behalf of all children. These expressions are here to help you both integrate multifaith prayers and texts into your own observance and create collaborative spaces where communities learn, pray, and act together.

Use these resources in ways that deepen both your tradition's practices and your connections with others:

- Use prayers and blessings from diverse traditions in services, vigils, or family gatherings.
- Read and reflect on sacred texts across traditions, noticing what resonates and what challenges.
- Adapt rituals and reflections for interfaith services, youth groups, or community observances.
- Invite leaders and children from various faith communities to co-lead, ensuring that your Children's Sabbaths becomes a visible expression of shared commitment.

These practices help communities experience not only their own faith's witness but also the richness of many traditions in dialogue.

Multi-faith Sermon Starters | Christian

Justice for Our Children is Holy and Biblical

Prepared by: Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais

Psalm 99: 1-9 NRSVUE

Praise to God for His Holiness
1 The Lord is king; let the peoples tremble!
He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!
2 The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples.
3 Let them praise your great and awesome name. Holy is he!
4 Mighty King, lover of justice, you have established equity;
you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.
5 Extol the Lord our God; worship at his footstool.
Holy is he!
6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel also was among those who called on his name. They cried to the Lord, and he answered them.
7 He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; they kept his decrees and the statutes that he gave them.
8 O Lord our God, you answered them;
you were a forgiving God to them but an avenger of their wrongdoings.
9 Extol the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain, for the Lord our God is holy.

Justice for Our Children is Holy and Biblical (continued)

Background

Biblical scholars have identified six psalms categorized as Enthronement Psalms: 47, 93, 95, 96, 97, and 99. These psalms have a repetition of words that amplify God is holy, God reigns, and God is sovereign. These psalms center the rulership of God as king and announce God's active presence and reign in the world. Historically, these psalms were part of celebratory events such as festivals where God—in God's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence—was revered and praised. In ancient Israel, the Israelites understood and worshipped God as the Holy One. The reign and power of God was not confined to Israel; the proclamation is that God is ruler of all the nations and the cosmos. It is why the psalmist could declare in Psalm 24 that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. There is no higher power, no king or person greater than, no political or authority figure who is equal to, comes close to, or above God.

Key Verses

For the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, consider building your message around verses 1 and 4. The psalm opens with this declaration: *The LORD is king; let the peoples tremble*. The psalmist acknowledges Yahweh's unmatched power. Strong's Concordance notes that tremble means deeply moved, stirred, standing in awe of and even wroth. Biblically, the word "wroth" underscores the seriousness of sin—that is—anything that is in direct conflict with God's holiness and justice. When tremble is understood as wroth, it is a reminder of the consequences of injustice. This verse also suggests that as a nation of people, we should be disturbed and troubled by the things that trouble God. Our level of wroth should be to the point that we become agitated that some of the people who are in positions of power think of themselves as high and lifted up, all the while passing policies that threaten the well-being of the most vulnerable among us.

Justice for Our Children is Holy and Biblical (continued)

Ragaz, the Hebrew word for trembling in verse 1 also suggests that the shaking of the nations becomes an eschatological sign that God's kin-dom is breaking in with a righteous rule. Think of all the places where we need that breaking to happen right now. Just this year alone we have witnessed the gutting of the Voting Rights Acts, redistricting of maps along political lines that will further disenfranchise our children, and the removal of financial support that would enable children to pursue higher education.

Verse 4 is a descriptive and telling attribute of who this Holy God is. God is powerful, strong, mighty and an impenetrable force. Mighty is a title that God wears. This strength is holy, joyful and dependable. God is a lover of justice and has established equity. Don't skip over this nor ignore the significance of what this means in such a chaotic time where inequities and injustices are running rampant in every American community. The Hebrew word here for equity is mê·šā·rîm, and it means righteousness, untainted by partiality and moral conduct free from crooked motives. God has made justice. Hence, justice is of God, from God and is a holy and righteous thing. Anything that stands in opposition to it is an injustice and is unholy. Poverty, bullying, food insecurity, unstable housing, healthcare denial and mass deportation of our immigrant neighbors are unholy acts.

Justice for Our Children is Holy and Biblical (continued)

Opening Starter: If you are a fan of Marvel or DC Comics franchises, then you know that every movie has a villain and a superhero. The villain is someone who engages in, orchestrates, and upholds immoral and unethical acts at all costs. The villain is obsessed with whatever unique superpower he or she possesses and uses it to circumvent justice. There is nothing holy or righteous or justice-driven about what the villain does. In fact, at the core of the havoc that the villain wreaks is a sense of using power not for the common good, but for bad. This person believes they have full authority over whoever they encounter. The villain in the movie uses his power for selfish gain. There are times when this unjust power is multiplied in ways that cause catastrophic damage to everyone—not just the adults, but to children, too. For people who are already living in the margins, this kind of injustice is magnified in ways that might very well take months and years to recover from. Villains cause chaos, and they don't care who is impacted by it. Villains rob children of school lunches and healthcare, and they create policies that make it harder for children to have access to mental health resources, and a robust education that includes the truth about American history. Villains in positions of leadership are making decisions that traumatize families who are just trying to make ends meet and do the best they can to take care of their children.

Villains. They are not the only main characters in the Marvel or DC Comics movies. For every villain, there is a superhero, usually an ordinary person in the everyday life of the community who possesses extraordinary power. The power to speak up, the power to mobilize the community to take action and stand for what is right because injustice agitates and disturbs ordinary people like you and me. Villains expect us to tremble before them, to be fearful, to give in to their bullying and to think of them as a king. They expect us to see them as someone to be honored and to bow down to. But that is not what we are called to do as followers, disciples, or believers of the Mighty God.

Justice for Our Children is Holy and Biblical (continued)

In our preaching text, the psalmist tells us that God, the LORD, is king. God is great in Zion and is exalted—that is, high and lifted up—above all the people. The psalmist offers a declaration in verse 4 that deserves our attention: *Mighty King, lover of justice, you have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob*. God loves justice. This is a biblical declaration that is right here in Psalm 99. So often, we hear about people debating whether we should talk about justice or injustices in the church, synagogue, mosque, or any place where people of faith are gathered for worship services/celebrations. Scripture gives us commands where we are to do justice. The prophet Isaiah is clear with these words: *"Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow (Isaiah 1:17)*." Amos 5:24 invites justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. The New Living Translation says it this way: *"...instead I want to see a mighty flood of justice."* Justice is biblical, and God confronts the places, people, and positions of power that try to thwart justice. We are supposed to talk about the areas in our communities where justice is not felt. If we are amplifying God's word and talking about what God requires of us (as the prophet Micah says in Micah 6:8 "He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?"), then that means talking about things that are just and unjust and to do it through a faith lens, according to God's holy word.

Beloved, justice is not political—it is biblical. God is a God of justice; a lover of justice. The psalmist goes on to say that it is God who has established equity. Let's pause here, too. Things that are counter to equity, that are in direct opposition to equity, that disenfranchise people based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, familial background, and geographic location, are not of God. Villainous acts are a direct violation. Villainous acts aim to dismantle justice. Villainous acts are in direct conflict with what God—the Mighty King, the lover of justice, has established.

Justice for Our Children is Holy and Biblical (continued)

And for nations and countries that do subscribe to monarchies and have kings and queens, this word from Proverbs 29:4 is an edict: "*A just king gives stability to his nation, but one who demands bribes destroys it*." We have witnessed what happens when a leader in a position of power in this country espouses "kingship" for selfish gain rather than providing equity and stability in places where inequities, political leanings and instability are running rampant.

So, where does that leave us on this weekend of National Observance of Children's Sabbaths? What are the villainous acts that are harming our children, our schools, and our community and how might we respond to them in a way that is holy, righteous and in line with the equity that God has established? What are the holy and biblical justice ways to respond to the families who are frightened and impacted by ICE? What about the children who, because of their race and socio-economic status, are targeted by the prison industrial complex system for the school-to-prison pipeline? How do we advocate for people to have the freedom to speak their native and cultural language, and not be punished for it? As redistricting maps are being drawn in various states across the country to further disenfranchise people of color along political lines, how might we collectively use the power of our voices and advocate for policies that promote equity?

Closing Illustration: Superheroes use their superpower to work for the common good. Today, decide how you are going to use your superpower to help our children. They need heroes who will speak up at city council meetings, who will vote with their interests at heart, who will partner with schools to dismantle policies that penalize students for their cultural hairstyles or tribal regalia. Justice for our children is holy and biblical, and as people of faith, we are called to participate in what God sees as equitable and just. Let us strategize and mobilize how God is calling us to employ actions of holy ambition that support justice; because justice is biblical.

Justice for Our Children is Holy and Biblical (continued)

Resources

- Lectionary Texts. https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/calendar/2025-26/?season=all
- Biblehub. Strong's Lexicon. https://biblehub.com/nlt/psalms/99.htm
- Michael Genhart and John Parra. Spanish is the Language of My Family. Neal Porter Books, 2023.
- Working Preacher (provided by Luther Seminary) https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/transfiguration-of-our-lord-3/commentary-on-psalm-99-3
- Jewish Reading of Psalm 99. https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16320/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-99.htm
- Bahai Faith Messages of the Universal House of Justice. https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/

A Prophecy for Cyrus
Prepared by: Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais
Author: Rabbi Jack Abramowitz
Source: Orthodox Union Torah

Yeshayahu 45: 1-7

G-d now speaks to Cyrus, who is called an anointed one. While the Hebrew word for an anointed person is moshiach, not everyone refers to what we would call in English the Messiah. (The Talmud in Megillah, page 12a, interprets the verse to say that G-d spoke to Moshiach about Cyrus.)

G-d gave Cyrus (or, from the perspective of Isaiah, will give Cyrus) the ability to flatten other nations and break the strength of kings. The gates of Babylonia will open wide before him. G-d will go before Cyrus, straightening the path that lies ahead of him, breaking copper doors and iron bars. G-d will give Cyrus the hidden treasures of Babylonia so that Cyrus will know that it is G-d Who is directing him. For the sake of Israel, G-d calls to Cyrus, whom He knows, even though Cyrus has not yet been born. G-d will strengthen him, even though Cyrus does not yet know Who He is. People will know from one end of the world to the other that G-d is the only One. He creates light and darkness, good and evil, not like the Zoroastrian belief in two opposing gods.

The skies will rain righteousness and salvation will grow from the ground; this is from G-d. A person who questions G-d's ways is like a lump of clay that questions the potter about how he makes a jug.

A Prophecy for Cyrus (continued)

G-d says that we can ask Him about the signs we see in the Heavens and on Earth, but not to question Him about Israel; He has already prepared salvation for them. G-d made Earth and planted man upon it. He aroused Cyrus to do His will; Cyrus will rebuild Jerusalem and return the exiles, not for ransom, but to do G-d's will.

The wealth of Egypt and other nations will be given to Israel. These nations will come before you in chains and say that only in Israel is there a true G-d Who has power to save. They will be ashamed, including the master craftsmen of idols. (This section may refer to the Assyrians in the time of Chizkiyahu, rather than to the Babylonians in the time of Cyrus.) Israel will have eternal salvation and they will never be disgraced. This is the word of G-d, Who made Heaven and Earth.

G-d did not give the Torah in secret. He didn't tell us to seek Him for no reason. G-d tells the survivors of the nations to assemble and to bring their idols. Go ahead and confer—see if any of their idols predicted the fates of Assyria and Babylonia. Only G-d is a living G-d; there is no other. Turn to Him and be saved.

A Prophecy for Cyrus (continued)

G-d swore by Himself and righteousness came from Him, not to be retracted, to accept all who return to Him. Every person in the world will ultimately recognize only G-d. Even so, Israel will maintain their unique relationship with G-d. Those who were G-d's "opponents" will be ashamed of it, while Israel will "shep nachas" (feel pride) for recognizing G-d before it was universal among the nations.

Things to Consider: (Resource: Biblehub.org) The prophet Yeshayahu specifically names bronze or copper doors and iron bars. He says that G-d will break these into pieces. In ancient Near Eastern cities, bronze gates were strong, fortified entrances, often guarded and impenetrable. Breaking them down signifies G-d's power to overcome human defenses and fortifications. Iron was used to reinforce gates and doors, adding strength and security. Cutting through them shows that no human-made barrier can withstand G-d's purposes.

A Prophecy for Cyrus (continued)

These gates and bars can also be symbols of power, privilege and political authority that act as barriers to works of justice. What are the walls that we are trying to scale toward justice? When we think of G-d's Sovereignty, what are the iron bars (systems, grandfathered clauses that disadvantage the poor, city and town ordinances that disenfranchise and redline communities occupied by People of Color and poor whites) that we need to join G-d in breaking? As you visualize these strong doors and bars, what does the impact look like for the children in our sphere of influence? Doors that are shutting them out of quality education. Doors that are blocking their entrance to safe drinking water and healthcare. Iron bars that keep them trapped in poverty. Iron bars that hold their families in low-paying jobs without a livable wage.

G-d asserts G-d's power, authority and sovereignty in verse 6 and directs it toward the powerbrokers of injustice. G-d says "so that they may know me, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is no one besides me; I am the L-RD and there is no other." This is G-d announcing that regardless of the day or time, liberation from the bronze doors and iron bars is coming. And that's good news today.

Multi-faith Sermon Starters | Sikh

A Homily, Pledge and Call to Action for Nourishing Every Child

Prepared by: Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais

During this time of the year, many people begin to focus their attention on feasts, gathering with family and friends, and enjoying the holidays with tables filled with special foods. Whether it is the recipes of cultural dishes handed down from family members or traditional "American" foods that line the menus of many homes, food becomes a priority in the fall season. Food should be a priority for every person, every day. Access to healthy, affordable food is something that many of us take for granted, but there are more than 50 million people right here in the United States who are food insecure. It means that their situation is such that they do not know where, when, or how they will get food. It is more than being hungry—it is being unsure and uncertain.

Of the 50 million people who are uncertain about their regular access to food, nearly 14 million are children. Children should never bear the responsibility of locating and accessing food. Food is a basic human right that far too often becomes a struggle. When the Giver of all sustenance created food, it was intended for everyone. There was no shortage of food; it was in abundance. The same is still true today. In America, there is no shortage of healthy food. It is still in abundance. The issue is that it is not accessible to everyone. Some families cannot afford sustainable food because their household economic situation is that they do not make a livable wage. Some families live in communities where there is no grocery store. Some families who had been relying on SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits, no longer receive them because the funding has been cut.

Multi-faith Sermon Starters | Sikh

A Homily, Pledge and Call to Action for Nourishing Every Child (continued)

On this National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, let us consider the ways the Giver of all Sustenance is asking us to ensure that all children are well-nourished. Children need healthy meals to grow and develop properly, to do well in school, and to succeed in life. Feeding America is an organization of food banks and partners that not only works to ensure that healthy food is available at low or no cost to the most underserved communities but also does work to advocate for a brighter future for everybody. Every body needs food. Feeding America has tools to help us see exactly where in our state, which counties and neighborhoods are hit the hardest by food insecurity. As a response to children dealing with food insecurity, we can trace where the most disenfranchised among us are by using the Mapping the Meal Gap tool and then making a pledge to advocate for healthy food, grocery stores, funding for school meal programs, and community meals so that no child is undernourished. (Note: use the tool to collect data about your county as well as identify food banks and other resources in your area that your faith community can partner with to respond to food insecurity as a call to action).

A Homily, Pledge and Call to Action for Nourishing Every Child (continued)

A Pledge to Address Food Insecurity

Ik Onkar, Satnam, Waheguru
O Divine Light,
You are the Giver of all sustenance.
Today, we pledge in Your Name
to see every child as our own,
to serve with open hands and open hearts,
to share our bread without pride,
and to feed the hungry without delay.
May no child cry from hunger,
may no plate be left empty,
and may our seva be pure,
guided by Your Hukam and filled with Your grace.
Waheguru, bless us with the strength
to turn compassion into action,
so that every child may grow in health,
in dignity, and in joy.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh.

Multi-faith Sermon Starters | Sikh

A Homily, Pledge and Call to Action for Nourishing Every Child (continued)

Call to Action
Sikh Perspective on Children and Hunger

1. **Core Beliefs**

- **Oneness of Humanity (Ik Onkar)**: All children, regardless of background, are equally precious and deserving of nourishment. Let this guide your focus for the call to action that you will take. Gather and collect 100 letters written by members of your community—to your senator or representative—describing the real-lived experiences of families dealing with food insecurity and other hardships. At least 25 of these letters should be handwritten by children detailing their favorite foods, favorite meals at school, and in their own words, describing what would happen if their school no longer offered breakfast, lunch, or snacks. Ask your elected officials to vote for a future that these children deserve. Ask them to restore SNAP benefits and to allocate funding in the budget to make school meals free and available in your district.
- **Seva (Selfless Service)**: Feeding the hungry, especially children, is a sacred duty. Another call to action that you can take is to partner with local food pantries and partner organizations that provide food at low or no cost to families in need. If you do not have a food policy council in your area, this is an opportunity to start one. Here are some examples: San Antonio Food Policy Council in Texas; Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council; and a map of food policy councils in the US.

2. **Scriptural Guidance**

- **Guru Granth Sahib emphasizes compassion, equality, and care for the vulnerable.**
- **Hunger is seen not only as a physical issue but also as a moral call to action.**

A Homily, Pledge and Call to Action for Nourishing Every Child (continued)

3. **Historical Practices**

- **Langar (Community Kitchen)**: Established by Guru Nanak, it provides free meals to all, with special care for children and the poor.
- Sikh history includes countless examples of Gurus and Sikhs feeding orphans and the destitute during famines and wars.

4. **Modern Applications**

- Sikh organizations run food drives, school meal programs, and disaster relief efforts worldwide.
- Emphasis on dignity: food is served equally, without discrimination or hierarchy.

5. **Moral Responsibility**

- Hunger among children is viewed as a collective failure of humanity. Sikhs are encouraged to act locally and globally to ensure every child has access to nutritious food. What organizations can you partner with to host a town hall meeting to discuss child hunger, the need for pathways to access fresh, healthy food and why this is important for the wellbeing of your community. Some people to include in the town hall meeting are representatives from a local food bank, an afterschool care program, a pediatrician and of course, a faith leader.

Multi-faith Sermon Starters | Hopi

An Adaptation of "We are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: A Hopi Elder Speaks"
Prepared by: Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais

You have been telling people that this is the Eleventh Hour, now you must go back and tell the people that this is the Hour. And there are things to be considered...
Where are you living?
How are the children?
What are you doing?
What are your relationships?
Are you in right relation?
Where is your water?
What do the children need from us?

Know your garden.
It is time to speak your truth.
Our children are waiting for us.
Create your community.
Be good to each other.
And do not look outside yourself for your leader.
The Spirit is calling on you.
You are the one we have been waiting for.

Then he clasped his hands together, smiled, and said, "This could be a good time! There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. The shore of comfort. The shore of convenience. The shore of fear.

An Adaptation of "We are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: A Hopi Elder Speaks" (continued)

They will feel they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly. We do not have time to be indecisive. Our children need us. The future of Mother Earth needs us. Know the river has its destination. The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above the water. This is our clarion calling that our Creator God has selected us for. Now, on this National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, is a good time to answer with a willing yes.

And I say, see who is in there with you and celebrate. We are bound together to do this work of honoring what the Creator has entrusted to us. At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey come to a halt. The time of the lone wolf is over. This is about the work of "us" and "we." Gather yourselves! Banish the word 'struggle' from your attitude and your vocabulary. All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.

Arise! Every minute that passes is captured in the past. Set your faces and minds toward the future. This is a good time! You can hear the voices of the children echoing in the wind. Voices that have spoken hunger. Voices that have spoken displacement from their homes. Voices that have spoken suffering. Voices that have cried because of the injustices. Let us come together collectively. The Creator is calling us by name from the rising of the sun and the setting in the west. We have much work to do for the sake of our children.

We are the ones we've been waiting for.
--Hopi Elders' Prophecy

Resource: https://couragerenewal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/We-are-the-Ones-We-Have-Been-Waiting-For.pdf

**This work has been adapted from the Hopi Elders and revised for the 2026 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths®.*

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Multi-faith Sermon Starters | Christian

We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting for

Prepared by: Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais

Isaiah 45:1-7 New Living Translation

45 This is what the Lord says to Cyrus, his anointed one,
whose right hand he will empower. Before him, mighty kings will be paralyzed with fear.
Their fortress gates will be opened, never to shut again.
2 This is what the Lord says: "I will go before you, Cyrus, and level the mountains.
I will smash down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron.
3 And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness—
secret riches.
I will do this so you may know that I am the Lord,
the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name.
4 "And why have I called you for this work?
Why did I call you by name when you did not know me?
It is for the sake of Jacob my servant, Israel my chosen one.
5 I am the Lord; there is no other God. I have equipped you for battle,
though you don't even know me, 6 so all the world from east to west
will know there is no other God. I am the Lord, and there is no other.
7 I create the light and make the darkness. I send good times and bad times.
I, the Lord, am the one who does these things.

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Multi-faith Sermon Starters | Christian

We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting for

Prepared by: Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais

Background: This is the call story of Cyrus II of Persia. He is chosen by God. The Hebrew word for chosen is "bachir" and it means persons or groups that God has selected or singled out for Himself for a special purpose. The word therefore carries a dual sense: privilege conferred by divine favor and responsibility to embody God's redemptive intention. Throughout its occurrences, בָּחִיר underscores the unbreakable link between God's sovereign election and the outworking of His covenant promises. Cyrus is called by God and anointed for the assignment of conquering Babylon and liberating the Israelites who are in exile and scattered across the diaspora. This "calling" begins the journey of the displaced Israelites returning to their homeland of Jerusalem. At the onset, the LORD (Yahweh) announces that he has grasped Cyrus's right hand so that this anointed one can subdue the nations and strip the kings of their robes. The significance of the right hand is that the right side is considered the stronger side of a person, and it is where Divine Power is extended from God. God tells Cyrus that he will before him and level the mountains. In other words, God will make a way for the Israelites to return from being displaced, removing any barriers that might make their journey challenging and uphill. God makes a series of declarations with "I will" statements to assure Cyrus that he is not going alone. God is not only with him but is always steps ahead of him.

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Multi-faith Sermon Starters | Christian

We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting for

Prepared by: Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais

Key Verses: Pay special attention to verses 1-2. When God calls us to specific assignments, God equips us and goes ahead of us. Like Cyrus, we can be an unlikely person that God will anoint and appoint for a specific purpose. As you frame your sermon, consider the mountains in your community, city and state that need to be leveled. What are the issues, policies, ordinances, laws, and barriers that are in place that need to be torn down and leveled? Families are being displaced by gentrification and deportation. Children are separated from their families. Some neighborhoods are in zones marked with environmental hazards like lead smelters, AI data centers, unclean water, subpar, under-resourced and low-performing schools with infrastructure issues, and some neighborhoods do not have access to city utilities because they are in areas considered "unincorporated."

Notice also the repetition of God saying, "I call you by name." We see this in verses 3 and 4. In some translations, especially the NRSVUE, verse 4 says, "*I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me*." Surname in this context is a designation of honor. We already know that Cyrus is anointed by God; now God extends that with an honor of my shepherd. When God says though Cyrus did not know him, scholars believe this suggests that even before Cyrus was born, God had already planned and purposed this honor and assignment upon him (akin to Jeremiah's calling). Consider also that names are important to God. A person's birth name carries significance and honor, regardless of what culture they are from. Disregarding a person's name, saying it is too hard, or opting to call them by a shorter version or nickname, is dishonoring them and God. Children, especially those from Black, Brown, and Indigenous cultures, often have names that are multi-syllables, that are often critiqued and criticized by some people because of the spelling or pronunciation.

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Multi-faith Sermon Starters | Christian

We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting for

Prepared by: Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais

Opening Starter: It started with a broken swing. Amaya noticed it first—one of the two swings on the playground hung limp, its chain snapped, the seat lying in the dirt like a forgotten toy. She told the recess monitor, who nodded and said, "We'll see about fixing it." But weeks passed, and the swing stayed broken. At first, it was just a small disappointment. But then the basketball hoop lost its net. The slide's ladder wobbled dangerously. The playground, their kingdom, was falling apart.

Amaya, who was only in fourth grade but had the stubbornness and determination of someone much older, decided enough was enough. She gathered her friends under the big oak tree during lunch. "If we want them to fix it, we have to show them it matters," she said, her voice trembling with both nerves and excitement. Amaya stepped up and in that moment, she knew that she was called to make a difference.

They made signs out of construction paper: Fix Our Playground, We Deserve Safe Swings, Kids Need To Play. They used markers until their fingers were stained with rainbow smudges. Even the shy kids joined in, their eyes bright with the thrill of doing something together. The next Friday, instead of running to the jungle gym, the students lined up along the fence, holding their signs high. They chanted—not loudly at first, but soon their voices rose in unison, echoing across the blacktop. Teachers peeked out of classroom windows. The principal came outside, eyebrows raised. "What's going on here?" she asked. Amaya stepped forward, her heart pounding. "We love our playground. But it's broken, and it's not safe. We want it fixed."

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Multi-faith Sermon Starters | Christian

We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting for

Prepared by: Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais

The principal looked at the sea of determined faces—kindergartners clutching signs twice their size, fifth graders standing tall—and something in her expression softened. "All right," she said. "Let's talk."

By the next month, the swing was repaired, the slide ladder reinforced, and a brand-new basketball net hung from the hoop. The students celebrated with the loudest recess the school had ever heard.

Amaya learned something that day: even small voices can shake the ground—if they speak together. And every time she swung high into the sky, she thought about how people can make a difference if they choose to. She smiled, looked at her friends, reflected on how long they had been waiting for their playground to be fixed, and thought to herself, "We did it. We are the ones we were waiting for."

Some of you may have heard this phrase—we are the ones we have been waiting for—and recognize it as a line in June Jordan's poem. In fact, it is the final verse in the "Poem for South African Women," that she wrote and presented at The United Nations in 1978 to commemorate the 40,000 women and children who decades earlier on August 9, 1956, presented themselves in bodily protest against the "passbook" that they were legally required to carry as they moved throughout the region, akin to "papers" that Black people had to show during the days of enslavement in America.

In times of unrest, injustices, and experiences where children are impacted—because you do know that it is not just the adults whose lives are affected by unsafe spaces, poverty, homelessness, bullying and violence—who are the people that God is calling and anointing to stand in the gap? That responsibility must be shouldered by people who care.

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Multi-faith Sermon Starters | Christian

We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting for

Prepared by: Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais

People like those of us who are gathered here today. People who are unnerved by the startling conditions of migrant children held at ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) detention centers and treated like criminals. People who believe that all children are created in God's image and deserving of access to healthcare, safe playgrounds, and healthy food to eat. Today, on this National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, as we give our attention to the ways that we can activate justice, what if we are the ones we have been waiting for?

What if we are like Cyrus, an unlikely person that God anointed and called by name to do justice work? The prophet Isaiah tells us that God selected and chose Cyrus of Persia to conquer Babylon and set the scene for the journey of the exiles back to their homeland of Jerusalem. We also see in the preaching text that God makes a series of "I will" statements beginning with verse 2: *I will go before you and level the mountains*. This is good news because it means that the mountains of unjust policies that separate children from their parents; the mountains of SNAP benefit applications that have been denied, leaving working families food insecure; the mountains of traumatic experiences like bullying, unstable housing, and violence that children are witnesses to, are ones that we don't have to tackle by ourselves. God will go before us. This means that this work we are called to do is holy work.

Closing Illustration: Amaya decided that enough is enough. She and the other elementary school students were tired of waiting for someone else to fix what was broken. We can take a page from Amaya's "playbook" and decide today that we are tired of waiting for someone else to fix what is broken in our systems. Why? Because we are the ones we have been waiting for.

MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

Mother Earth

Mother Earth, hear your child,

As I sit here on your lap of grass,
I listen to the echoes of your voice In my brother, the Wind,
As he blows from all corners and directions.

The soft and gentle raindrops are the tears you cry for your children.

Teach me the Lessons you offer:
To nurture my children, as you nurture yours,
To learn the Lessons of the Four Kingdoms, that make up this World of Physical Things, and
To learn to walk the path chosen so long ago.

Mother Earth, hear your child,
Be a bond between the Worlds of Earth and Spirit.
Let the Winds echo the Knowledge of the Grandfathers.

Who await, unseen, yet visible if I only turn my eyes to their World.

Let me hear their Voices, in the Winds that Blow to the East.

From the East: I seek the Lessons of Childhood:
To see with the trusting innocence of a small one,
The Lessons of Spirit,
Given in Love by our Creator.

From the South: to Learn the Ways of Questioning:
The Fire and Independence of adolescence,
The Truths, and how they help us Grow along this Path.

From the West: where the Grandfathers teach us
Acceptance of Responsibility
That come during the years of Marriage and Family.
That my own children grow Strong, and True.

From the North: where the Elders,
Who by their long lives
Have learned and stored Wisdom and Knowledge.
And Learned to Walk in Balance and Harmony with our Mother, the Earth.

MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

Mother Earth (cont'd.)

Mother Earth, hear your child.
Hold my hand as I walk my path in this world.
Guide me to the Lessons I seek,
Bring me closer to Our Creator,
Until I return to the Western Direction,
To once again Enter the World of Spirit,
Where the Sacred Fire Awaits,
And I rejoin the Council of the Elders,
In the Presence of the One Who-Created-All.

–KiiskeeN'tum - She Who Remembers

Prayers led by Children

Creator God,
The people who love me work hard to take care of me.
But sometimes we don't have enough to eat.
Sometimes we are cold.
Sometimes we have nowhere to go.
Bless the people who love me.
Help them to take care of me.
Bless us with your gifts of abundance.
Amen.

Dear God,
In your image you made me.
You created me to thrive and to be well.
Sometimes I am bullied and made fun of
For being different.
There are times when I am scared
And I don't want to get anyone in trouble
For how I am treated.
I pray that I will be loved and protected.
Amen.

*The following prayers are adapted from The Presbyterian Church USA Mission Agency

MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

Prayer for Children without Health Coverage

Gracious God,

For all of the uninsured children who need medical care, we pray.
For fevers that need tending.
For treatments that go undone.
For healing that will not happen because there is not enough money to pay for it.
For all of the parents who worry at night, frantic that their children will grow sicker when treatment is available but unaffordable, we pray.
For all of the parents who run doctor to doctor hoping someone will help, but find little solace.
For all of the parents who mount up bills in desperation, and who are quickly overwhelmed with debt.
For a nation who tolerates such neglect, dear God, have mercy upon us.

Prayer for Access to Health Coverage

God of the abundant life,

Our hearts ache for the children who die for the want of something as simple as a clean cup of water.

We ponder the infant mortality rate of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous babies, who have a higher death rate, and of babies who die before they have even reached their fifth birthday,

Young children who never have a chance at learning or loving or making a difference in this world.

We who do have access to abundant life—we are the ones who could change the course of their destiny.

Forgive us our indifference, convict our unwillingness to engage the systems that hold the health of children hostage, and grant us the vision to discern your will for the health and wholeness of these little ones.

Amen.

MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

Prayer to Stand up for Justice

Righteous God,
Open my eyes.
Help me to see what you cannot ignore.
Help me to understand what my choices mean for children who are depending on adults to do what is life-giving.
Righteous God, open my lips.
Help me to speak so that others, too, may see.
Help me to understand how connected my life is to the lives of thousands of children who endure experiences that kids should never have to.
Righteous God, open my heart.
Help me to live differently so that what I know is made visible.
Help me to act in faith, believing that your Spirit may move in ways I cannot yet understand, but will bring your kingdom of righteousness to life on earth.

Amen.

Prayer to Stand up for Justice

Creator and Sustainer,
Behind closed doors, children suffer silently.
Their bodies are small and their keepers are strong.
When they tell their stories, their voices are seldom heard.
In denial, we hide our faces from the despair of their daily lives.
Great God, grant us clarity and compassion.
Allow us to listen without judgment.
Make us fearless and willing to speak up.
Provide us with the resources to make a difference.
Shine your light into dark, hidden corners and heal the hearts of the broken.
We pray for this with a commitment to be advocates for children.

Amen.

Prayer for Children Who Are Neglected and Abused

Creator and Sustainer,
Behind closed doors, children suffer silently.
Their bodies are small and their keepers are strong.
When they tell their stories, their voices are seldom heard.
In denial, we hide our faces from the despair of their daily lives.
Great God, grant us clarity and compassion.
Allow us to listen without judgment.
Make us fearless and willing to speak up.
Provide us with the resources to make a difference.
Shine your light into dark, hidden corners and heal the hearts of the broken.
We pray for this with a commitment to be advocates for children.

Amen.

Prayer for Children and Public Education

Teacher God,
Today we remember children who are struggling to learn.
Provide for their need through a parent, a caregiver, a mentor, or friend.
Open our hearts to a sense of call to be such a person for children in our midst.
Help us remember children who get the wrong kind of education.
Education that takes away their innocence and wounds their spirit.
Education from circumstances that harm them.
Protect children with safe, loving, and nurturing environments that would help them to thrive.
Help us rise up to advocate for educational programs and after-school activities that give life and help children thrive in adulthood.
We pray today for governments and systems to provide equitable education so that all children, regardless of ethnicity, family background, or income status, can learn and reach their highest potential.
Remind us that sometimes these powers put profits over children, and we have a responsibility to speak up for children.
Help us to discern how to best educate children, providing tools and resources to equalize education for boys and girls, inner city and suburbs, for all God's children.
Help us to honor unique gifts and the many ways children learn and grow in knowledge and wisdom.
Teach us to use the power of our voice to bring about change.

Amen.

MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

For Jewish and Muslim Interfaith Gatherings

Faith Reunion

Children of Abraham,
Daughters and sons of Ishmael and Isaac,
We are family,
Cousins and kin,
Separated only by time and history.
Let this moment be a celebration.
Let this moment be a holy convocation.
Let this be a moment of blessed reunion,
Some of us proclaim: Allāhu akbar (اللّٰه أكبر).
Some of us proclaim: Adonai, Hu Ha'Elohim (יי הוא האלוהים).
All of us yearn for holiness and light.
Each of us prays for kindness and grace.
Together we will build a world of justice and peace.
One G-d,
Voice of Creation,
Whisper of Eternity,
Source and Shelter,
Let our voices resound in the heartbeat of our peoples.
Let our hopes resound in the pulse of our longings.
Bless those who are here.
Bless those who stayed away.
Bless the doubter and the cynic.
Bless the hopeful and the optimist,
That one day
All peoples embrace each other,
With Your love.

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MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

FOR CHILDREN AND THOSE WHO CARE FOR THEM

God who is love; we pray in thanksgiving for the ways you nurture us.
We pray for children everywhere, and for the grown-ups who care for them.
That they, with open hearts, continue to look, listen and feel for ways to grow, learn, share and give.

A PRAYER FOR EDUCATION

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom:
Enlighten by your Holy Spirit those who teach and those who learn, that, rejoicing in the knowledge of your truth, they may worship you and serve you from generation to generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

– Book of Common Prayer, pg. 261

A PRAYER FOR SHARING IN GOD'S LOVE

God who is always with us, we pray that our children may have healthy food to eat, beautiful music that inspires them, Godly relationships that nurture them.
We pray for our children to have a joyous time playing with friends and safe spaces where they will not be harmed.
Thank you for entrusting children to our care.
May we steward them well, protect them, love them, and ensure that they have access to everything they need to fulfill your plan and purpose for their lives.
Help us to care for our children and each other, and inspire us to continue to share in your love. Amen.

– adapted from Emily Keniston and The Rev. Katie Holicky

MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

Jewish Prayer for Peace and Well-being

Grant, O God, that our children will lie down in peace, and You will raise them up, our Guardian, to life renewed.
Spread over them the shelter of Your peace.
Guide them and us with Your good counsel; for Your Name's sake, be our help.
Shield and shelter our children beneath the shadow of Your wings.
Defend our children against enemies, illness, war, famine and sorrow.
Distance us from wrongdoing.
For You, God, watch over us and deliver us.
For You, God, are gracious and merciful.
Guard our going and coming, to life and to peace evermore.

She-ma yisrael, adonai eloheinu, adonai echad Hear O'Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One

Psalm 23

God is my shepherd; I shall not want. God causes me to lie down in green pastures;
God leads me beside still waters.
God restores my soul; God leads me in paths of righteousness for The Holy One's name's sake. Even as I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You set a table before me in the presence of my adversaries;
You anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows.
May only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of Adonai forever.

MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

Baha’i Faith Prayer for Children

O Lord, my God! These are our children...
O Lord, my God! These are our children that have sprung from the loins of some of Thy servants to whom Thou hast granted a distinguished station in the Tablets of Thine irrevocable decree in the Books of Thy behest.

I beseech Thee by Thy name, whereby everyone is enabled to attain the object of his desire, to grant that these children may become more mature souls amongst Thy servants; cause them to shine forth through the power of Thy name, enable them to utter Thy praise, to set their face towards Thee and to draw nigh unto Thee.
Verily it is Thou Who hast, from everlasting, been powerful to do as Thou willest and Who wilt, to eternity, remain potent to do as Thou pleasest.
There is none other God but Thee, the Exalted, the August, the Subduer, the Mighty, the All-Compelling.

Bahá’u’lláh

A Baha'i Prayer for Peace Over Our Children

May we be generous toward our children.
May we be fair in thy judgment and guarded in thy speech.
Be a lamp unto our children who walk in unsafe places and guide them to safety.
Be eyes to the ones who are blind to policies that negatively impact our children and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.
Be a breath of life to the body of humankind, a dew to the soil of the human heart, and a fruit upon the tree of humility.

MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

A Buddhist Prayer for Our Children's Well-being

May all small beings, children everywhere, who are plagued with sufferings of body and mind quickly be freed from their illnesses.
May those children who are frightened cease to be afraid, and may those children and families bound by unjust systems 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 Christian Prayer for Doing Good Works on Behalf of Our Children

"*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do*."
Ephesians 2:10

Holy God, thank You that You have created us to do good works.
Remind us every day that we have a responsibility to do good work on behalf of our children.
The good work of making sure they do not go hungry.
The good work of making sure they have a safe place to live and play.
The good work of ensuring that they have access to a good education, healthcare, and the joys of childhood.
God, we cannot do this alone, for this is work that must be done in community—in the community of legislative halls, in the community of schools, and in the community of boardrooms and courthouses.

MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

A Hindu Prayer for Peace for Our Children

Oh God, lead us from the unreal to the Real.
Oh God, lead us from darkness to light. Oh God, lead us from death to immortality.
Shanti, Shanti, Shanti unto all.
Oh Lord God almighty, may there be peace in celestial regions.
May there be peace on earth.
May the waters be appeasing.
May herbs be wholesome, and may trees and plants bring peace to all.
May all beneficent beings bring peace to us.
May the Vedic Law propagate peace all through the world.
May all things be a source of peace to us, especially to our children.
And may thy peace itself bestow peace on all and may that peace come to our children also.

An Islamic Prayer for Peace

In the Name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful:
Praise be to the Lord of the Universe who has created children and made us into tribes and nations that we may know each other, not that we may despise each other.
If the enemy inclines towards peace, do thou also incline towards peace, and trust in God, for the Lord is one that hears and knows all things.
The Lord keeps a watchful eye over our children.
May we do the same.
And the servants of God Most Gracious are those who care for our children, their wellbeing and their livelihood.

MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

A Hindu Prayer for Peace for Our Children

Oh God, lead us from the unreal to the Real.
Oh God, lead us from darkness to light. Oh God, lead us from death to immortality.
Shanti, Shanti, Shanti unto all.
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May we do the same.
And the servants of God Most Gracious are those who care for our children, their wellbeing and their livelihood.

MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

A Jain Prayer for Love for Our Children

Peace and Universal Love is the essence of the Gospel preached by all the Enlightened Ones.
The Lord has preached that equanimity is the Dharma.
Our children are deserving of love, care and good health.
Children are not a hindrance; they are a gift given to us by The Lord.
Let us remember to love them well, to see the Divine in them and to create a space where they can grow in knowledge, love and wisdom.
May we protect them and make their way safe.

A Jewish Prayer of Thankfulness for Our Children

Come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord, that we may walk the paths of the Most High.
We shall sing of the goodness of God and thank God for children, for they are a reward and an inheritance from God.

A Native African Prayer for Peace

Almighty God, the Great Thumb we cannot evade to tie any knot, the Roaring Thunder that splits mighty trees, the all-seeing Lord on high who sees even the footprints of an antelope on a rock mass here on Earth, you are the one who does not hesitate to respond to our call.
You are the cornerstone of peace.
Hear us when we call to You on behalf of the children.
Before they can grow to become Mighty Oaks they must first be nurtured as Little Acorns.
Let us be nurturers of our children as we lift them up into your capable hands.

MULTI-FAITH PRAYERS

A Native American Prayer for Peace for Our Children

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.

A Shinto Prayer for Our Children's Sake

Although the people living across the ocean surrounding us, I believe, are all our brothers and sisters, why are there constant troubles in this world?
Why do winds and waves rise in the ocean surrounding us?
I only earnestly wish that the wind will soon puff away all the clouds which are hanging over the tops of the mountains for our children's sake.

A Sikh Prayer for Our Children's Future

God judges us according to our deeds, not the coat that we wear.
Truth is above everything, but higher still is truthful living.
Know that we attain God when we love, including loving our children, and preparing a future for them.
We cannot say we do good deeds if we leave our children vulnerable and exposed to hunger, illiteracy, and poverty.

A Zoroastrian Prayer for Peace

We pray to God to eradicate all the misery in the world, that understanding triumphs over ignorance, that generosity triumphs over contempt, and that truth triumphs over falsehood.

MULTI-FAITH CHILDREN'S BOOKS RESOURCES FOR ACTIVITIES, ACTION & ADVOCACY



Spanish is the Language of My Family
written by Michael Genhart and illustrated by John Parra
(Neal Porter Books, New York, 2023)

Summary: Manolo signs up for his school's Spanish Spelling Bee. His abuela helps him learn the words and shares that there was a time when she and friends were punished for speaking their language. This is an empowering intergenerational story of family ties, cultural pride, healing and accepting that people should always be allowed to speak in their cultural language.



***Many Things* at Once**
written by Veera Hiranandani and illustrated by Nadia Alam
(Random House Studio, New York, 2025)

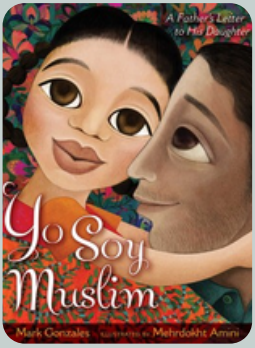
Summary: This book tells the story of a young girl who learns to embrace her Jewish and Hindu family culture and religion. She celebrates her heritage and what it means to be many things at once.



Beautiful Hands
written and illustrated by Kathyrn Otoshi; written by Bret Baumgarten
(Blue Dot Press, Novato, CA, 2015)

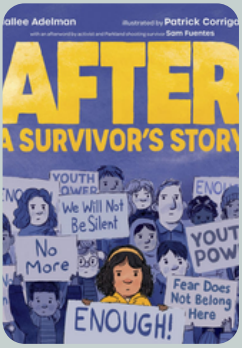
Summary: This book encourages children to know that little hands can do many wonderful things: plant ideas, lift spirits, and stretch imaginations. It motivates children to use their hands for the common and to reach for their dreams.

MULTI-FAITH CHILDREN'S BOOKS RESOURCES FOR ACTIVITIES, ACTION & ADVOCACY



***Yo Soy Muslim*: A Father's Letter to His Daughter**
written by Mark Gonzales and illustrated by Mehrdokht Amini (Salaam Reads, New York, 2017)

Summary: A little girl learns that because of who she is—her heritage and culture—some people will not smile at her. Her father encourages her to let them know that she is Muslim, speaks Spanish, Arabic, and that she speaks the language of dreams. This story is a celebration of social harmony and multicultural identities that highlights the diversity of the Muslim community and Indigenous identity. When others speak words of harm against her, the little girl's father reminds her that she is wondrous, a descendant of brilliance, and an ancestor in training.



After: A Survivor's Story
written by Hallee Adelman and illustrated by Patrick Corrigan
(Albert Whitman and Company, 2025)

Summary: Unfortunately, violence has become commonplace in American society. Children live through the trauma of school shootings and other acts of horror. This book explores "the horrible day" and the effects of gun violence through the eyes of a child whose life has been forever changed.

MULTI-FAITH CHILDREN'S BOOKS RESOURCES FOR ACTIVITIES, ACTION & ADVOCACY



Barefoot Skateboarders
written by Rina Singh and illustrated by Sophie Casson (Orca Book Publishers, 2024)

Summary: In the tiny village of Janwaar in Madhya Pradesh, India, gets a new skatepark. It inspires the local children to learn how to skateboard, which becomes a way to dismantle barriers and unite their community.



If You Could Be Anything
written by Jennifer Britton and illustrated by Briana Corr Scott (Nimbus Publishing, Nova Scotia, 2022)

Summary: Children are asked: So, if you could be anything, what would you be? This unlocks the imagination of children and allows them to consider a world where the possibilities are within reach for them—and us.



My Body Can
written by Laura Gehl and illustrated by Alexandra Colombo (Apples and Honey Press, 2025)

Summary: Readers go on a journey with seven friends throughout the Jewish year. They learn how to embrace and appreciate their own bodies and the various body types and mobility of their friends.

MULTI-FAITH CHILDREN'S BOOKS RESOURCES FOR ACTIVITIES, ACTION & ADVOCACY



Different: A Great Thing to Be
written by Heather Avis and illustrated by Sarah Mensinga
(Waterbrook Publishing, 2021)

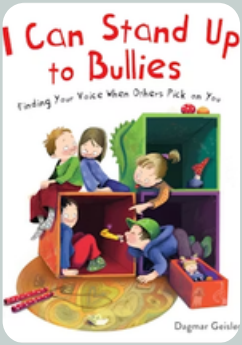
Summary: In a world that treats "different" as bad, this story introduces readers to Macy. She is small for her age, doesn't talk much, and when she does, she takes her time. Macy knows what it is like to be told: "You don't belong here because you are different." She is proud of who she is and encourages readers to accept that being different is a gift that brings light to the dark places in the world.



What Will My Story Be?
written and illustrated by Nidhi Chanani
(Viking Publishing, 2021)

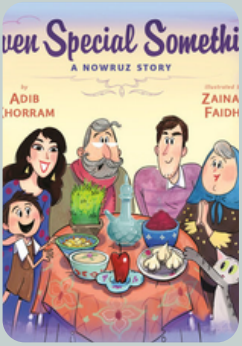
Summary: This story highlights how children are inspired by the stories that their older relatives tell. As children listen, they begin to imagine what their story will be. Their imagination takes shape and, in this story, the young girl's three aunts create space and support their niece in what she imagines. Together, their stories breathe and have the power to inspire change.

MULTI-FAITH CHILDREN'S BOOKS RESOURCES FOR ACTIVITIES, ACTION & ADVOCACY



I Can Stand Up to Bullies: Finding Your Voice When Others Pick On You
written and illustrated by Dagmar Geisler (Sky Pony Press, New York, 2021)

Summary: If you've been looking for a resource that helps children to understand bullying—what it is, who it is, and what to do if they or someone they know is a bully or is being bullied, then this is the book. In this story, children discuss the various things that cause them to be upset, including being bullied. The main point is that bullying is never okay. Readers learn how to navigate this real-lived experience that no one is exempt from.



Seven Special Somethings: A Nowruz Story
written by Adib Khorram and illustrated by Zainab Faidhi (Dial Books for Young Readers, New York, 2021)

Summary: Every culture has unique celebrations that honor its heritage. In this book, Kian celebrates Nowruz, the Persian New Year. This is a wonderful way to introduce children to other cultures and to learn about the importance of the sofreh haft-seen and what the seven symbols mean. Diversity is a good thing...even though it gets a bad rap these days.

MULTI-FAITH CHILDREN'S BOOKS RESOURCES FOR ACTIVITIES, ACTION & ADVOCACY

Book Activities for Consideration

- Have an afternoon read-a-thon where the older children read to the younger ones.
- Ask the younger ones to act out some of the scenes.

This is a great way for adults to ask children how they see themselves in the story and if their real-lived experience mirrors the characters.

- Another activity is to ask children to present a book report. What is the main thing they want the adults to understand about each story? As adults listen, they should hear it through the lens of a child, identify the injustice, and name ways that this plays out in their communities.

From an advocacy standpoint, adults should consider collectively what policy changes need to happen so they can help children flourish with dignity, hope and joy. What can you do collectively to address bullying? How can you ensure collectively that children are not penalized at school for speaking their native language? What might a citizens council policy look like that promotes diversity and respect of cultures that are non-English as their first language?

Click on the link in the title to see the cover and details of each book. Check with your local library. With your library card, you can access Libby and these resources**...**

MOVEMENT POEMS & SONGS

Freedom Chant:
"Together We Shine"

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

Who this activity is for: Organizers, children, youth, elders, and the full congregation.

Why we're doing it: To give children a joyful, empowering way to lead worship and to embody the truth of Gwendolyn Brooks' words: *"We are each other's harvest; we are each other's business; we are each other's magnitude and bond."*

The Chant:
Together We Shine
(Led by children & youth, answered by the congregation/group)

Children & Youth:
All together
That's how we work.

Everyone:
All together
That's how we love.

Children & Youth:
All together
That's right right right.

All Together:
All together
We are the light light light.

Steps

1. Children & youth begin the chant. Their voices carry the first line to set the tone.
2. Adults respond, affirming children's place and power in community.
3. Elders add their voices, giving resonance and strength.
4. Everyone joins together on the last refrain: *"We are the light, light, light."*

Freedom Chant:
"Turn on the Light""

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

Inspired by:

> *The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.*
> **Ida B. Wells**

For Kids

Turn on the light
It looks a little dark.

Turn on the light
see my heart
heart heart.

Turn on the light
tell the truth, truth, truth.

Turn on the light
let's move, move, move.

MOVEMENT POEMS & SONGS

Freedom Chant:
"We Belong"

written by: ash love , MSW, MDiv

Inspired by:

> *Each child belongs to all of us and they will bring us a tomorrow in direct relation to the responsibility we have shown to them.*
> **Maya Angelou**

For Kids (children and youth)
We belong
Yes, we do!

We are the future
the future
our voices matter too!

(elders to children and youth)
You belong
Yes, you do!

All the children and the youth!

You are the future
the future
your voices matter too.

For Adults (adults to children and youth)
You belong,
Yes, you do!

All the children and the youth.

You are the future
the future
your voices matter too!

(everyone)
We belong
Yes, we do!

We are the future
the future
our voices matter too!

Freedom Chant:
"We Take Action"

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

Inspired by:

> *Action, like a sacrament, is the visible form of an invisible spirit, an outward manifestation of an inward power.*
> **bell hooks**

For Kids

ACT!
We take action.
ACT!
We take action.

For our friends
and our family.

ACT!
We take action.
ACT!
We take action.

For freedom and
for justice.

ACT!
We take action.
ACT!
We take action.

Because of love
love love.

Freedom Chant:
"For Liberation"

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

Inspired by:

> *When I liberate myself, I liberate others. If you don't speak out ain't nobody going to speak out for you.*
> **Fannie Lou Hamer**

All across the nation
We gotta speak against
hatred.

All across the nation
We gotta fight for liberation.

All across the nation
We speak out
Stand tall
and fight for liberation.

Poem
“Love is the Ethic”

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

Love is the ethic that builds
bridges
across bulldozed dreams.
It is the covenant written
on the doorsteps of policy
and prayer.
It shows up with open arms
and steady feet—
saying with its whole self,
You will not pass
until the children can.

Poem
"Dance with Love"

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

Dance with love
in sunshine
and purple mirrors—
where justice reflects
and children rise.

Let love guide
each dance.

Poem
"Done"

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

We are done with survival.
We are done with the bare minimum.
We speak the language of gardens now,
of sun-drenched play and full bellies,
of test scores that do not measure joy,
and schools that preach freedom
in every hallway.

Poem
"Done"

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

We are done with survival.
We are done with the bare minimum.
We speak the language of gardens now,
of sun-drenched play and full bellies,
of test scores that do not measure joy,
and schools that preach freedom
in every hallway.

Poem
“Little Dragonfly”

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

Fly, dragonfly, fly—
from the block
to the mountain.

Wings born in water,
reaching for sun.

Let every child,
let them soar.
Soar, soar.

Poem
"Strong People"

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

The strength of a people
is not measured in profit or
power,
but in the laughter of its
children.
In neighborhoods where joy
is rare,
we plant it like seeds.
We water it with justice.
We wait for giggles to bloom.

Poem
“Measure & Sermon”

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

Speak, children,
of dreams and wonder—

of skies that listen,
of fields that laugh with you.

Let your joy be loud
as church tambourines.

You are the measure
of a well community.
You are the sermon
we should be preaching.

Poem
"Shield & Sanctuary"
written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

Let the church be more than
a steeple//
let it be a shield.
Let the school be more than a
system//
let it be sanctuary.
Let every block
be a borderless harbor
where no child
must prove they are worthy.

Poem
"Safe Place"

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

Pink, purple, green,
blue, and yellow—
chalk lines, swing sets,
laughter that echoes.

Let parks be peace,
fields wide and clear,
every child knowing:
you are safe here.

Poem
“Not, Is”

written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

A child is not a project.
Not a number in a file.
A child is the breath of God
made visible.
The future wrapped in love.
The next psalm
still learning its rhythm.

Poem
"Writing Policy for the Child"
written by: ash love, MSW, MDiv

All over me
is love//
woven through policy,
threaded in law,
a table prepared
for every child.

Not justice imagined,
but justice lived//
care written into
the cloth of us.

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Psalms

Fill-in-the-Blank Psalm Activity Instructions

This activity invites children and youth to step into the ancient practice of psalm-making by adding their own voices, experiences, and imagination. The templates provided give a structure for prayer, but the power comes from the words that children bring.

How to Use

- In Worship: Provide printed psalm templates in bulletins or worship packets. Invite children (and adults) to fill them in during a quiet moment. Completed psalms may be read aloud, displayed, or woven into the service.
- In Classes or Small Groups: Gather children in circles or classrooms. Read the psalm aloud and pause for the group to suggest words together, creating a shared psalm of the day.
- Intergenerational Settings: Pair children with adults to complete the psalms side by side. Invite each generation to learn from the other's perspective.
- Community Displays: Collect the finished psalms and place them on a wall, altar table, or digital slideshow so that the whole community sees the children's prayers as central to worship.

Facilitator Help

- Encourage children to answer with feelings, pictures in their minds, or everyday experiences.
- Remind the community that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. Each psalm is a sacred expression of a child's truth.
- Adapt the activity to your faith tradition—whether sung aloud, spoken in call-and-response, chanted, or shared in silence.

Fill-in-the-Blank Psalm Activity

created by: Rev. Vahisha Hasan

Example

1 God blesses people who love all the animals

And blesses people who won't say mean things

And has friends that share their dinosaur toys

2 but God's goodness makes us feel happy

and we hold that in our heart all day and all night.

3 We feel special like it's our birthday

Then we can have ice cream and cake

And we will be great everyday.

Fill-in-the-Blank Psalm Activity
The Way to Happiness
created by: Rev. Vahisha Hasan

1 God blesses people who _____

And blesses people who won't _____

And has friends that _____

2 but God's goodness makes us feel _____

and we hold that in our heart all day and all night.

3 We feel special like _____

Then we can have _____

And we will be great everyday.

Fill-in-the-Blank Psalm Activity
A Morning Prayer
created by: Rev. Vahisha Hasan

1 There are a lot of mean people God.
Many of them tease
2 me and say _____
And say "God cannot rescue you"

3 but God wants me to be safe and _____
and gives me achievement and
_____
and great esteem.

4 I pray to God, and God hears me
from God's sacred space.

5 I sleep and wake up feeling _____
because God protects me.

6 So many people are not kind or
_____
but I am not afraid.

7 Come and rescue me God
Take away their meanness and whatever is hurting them,

8 Because you protect
and bless your people.

Fill-in-the-Blank Psalm Activity
An Evening Prayer
created by: Rev. Vahisha Hasan

1 You are my God and my protector
Please answer my prayer

I had a rough day because

_____

but you are with me.
Now be kind and hear me
as I pray.

8 I can lie down
and sleep soundly
Because you, God,
will keep me safe.

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Sample Order of Worship

Order of Worship - Sample
Children's Sabbaths Celebration

Welcome

Invocation (consider having one of the children to pray this)*: Lord God, I praise You that You are fully in control of all things. Thank You that You have made us fearfully and wonderfully. I celebrate that all children—myself included, are made in Your image. Today, I pray You will protect every child from all hurt, harm and danger. Keep us healthy and help us to thrive and flourish. I thank You that You know every hair on our head and everything that we dream of doing and becoming. May we always be in Beloved Community. Watch over me and all children in every area of our lives and keep us safe I pray, Amen.*

Call to Celebration:
Leader: Praise the Lord!
People: Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise God in the heights!

Leader: Praise Him, all his angels;
People: Praise Him, everyone!

Leader: Praise God for the children!
People: Children are an inheritance from our Mighty God.

Leader: Today as we celebrate our children, we speak words of affirmation over them.
People: Let our acts of love, kindness, care and demonstration of doing good deeds for the wellbeing of God's precious children be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord.

All: As we enter Your gates, we come with a renewed desire to praise Your Holy name and to celebrate You from everlasting to everlasting. You are good and You are worthy to be praised. Receive our worship! To God be the glory. ***Amen****.*

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Sample Order of Worship

Order of Worship - Sample
Children's Sabbaths Celebration

Hymn "Welcome" by Mark Miller and Laurie Zelman
Let's walk together for a while and ask where we begin//to build a world where love can grow and hope and enter in//to be the hands of healing and to plant the seeds of peace, Singing welcome, welcome to this place. // You're invited to come and know God's grace. All are welcome, the love of God to share//'cause all of us are welcome here//all are welcome in this place.

Scripture Reading

Centering Moment*: God, we pause to center ourselves in Your presence. Guard our hearts and our minds from intrusions and interruptions as we continue to worship and praise Your Holy name. Let our breath join in rhythm with your breath. Let our heart align with your heart. For every child who is here today and every child that we are connected to, let them feel your unfailing love. With each breath that we breathe in, we ask God that You will give us the courage to center the needs of children and respond to them in ways that are life-giving and that help them to flourish. We think on these things as we breathe in the power and presence of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Sample Order of Worship

Order of Worship - Sample
Children's Sabbaths Celebration

Song "Get On Board, Little Children"

Chorus:
Get on board, little children
Get on board
Get on board, little children
There's room for many a-more

verses:
The gospel train's a-coming
I hear it just at hand
I hear the wheels a-rumbling
And rolling through the land

I hear that train a-coming
She's coming round the curve
She's loosened all her steam and brakes
Straining every nerve

The fare is cheap and all can go
The rich and poor are there
No second class aboard this train
No difference in the fare

Sermon

Children's Sabbaths Call to Action

Benediction

Full Service Order
Instructions

This outline provides a full worship service shaped entirely around Children's Sabbaths, from gathering to sending.

Who this activity is for: Clergy, worship planners, intergenerational worship teams, organizers

Why we're doing it: To help communities dedicate an entire service to centering children, justice, and *Beloved Community*.

Steps (adapt as needed)

1. Gathering: Prelude, Call to Worship (include children), Hymn/Freedom Chant, Opening Prayer.
2. Word: Scripture, Responsive Litany, Sermon/Starter, Testimonies.
3. Response: Prayers of the People, Confession & Assurance, Offering, Music/Dance/Drama by children.
4. Sending: Closing Hymn, Blessing for Children, Benediction.

Facilitator Help:

- Give children visible leadership roles in each section.
- Encourage creativity in the "Response" (art, drama, dance).
- Use local languages, chants, or songs that reflect your community.

Full Service Order
Example

Children's Sabbaths Service
at the Atlanta Mosque
Atlanta, GA

Gathering

- Prelude or instrumental music by the Children's Sabbaths choir
- Call to Worship by Kyle (age 18)
- Freedom Chant by Children's Sabbaths choir
- Opening Prayer by Dr. Yvette

Word

- Reading of Sacred Text by Carlos (age 12)
- Responsive Litany by Travis (age 14)

Response

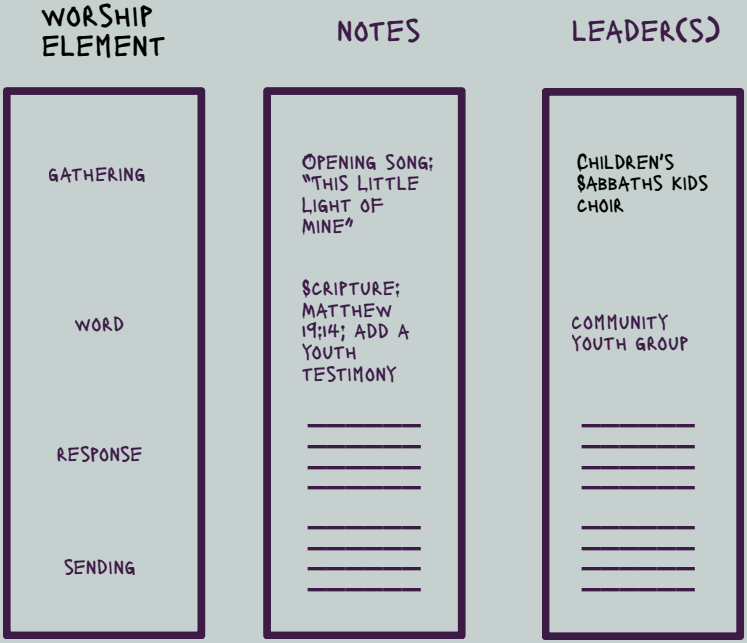
- Prayers of the People (include prayers written for Children's Sabbaths)
- Confession & Assurance of Grace
- Offering and/or special Children's Collection
- Music, Dance, or Drama by the Children's Sabbaths Arts Ensemble

Sending

- Closing Blessing led by Hasan Jr. (age 6)
- Blessing for the Children and Congregation by Min. Tamara
- Postlude

Full Service Order
Workbook

Use this template to plan a complete Children's Sabbaths service, from gathering to sending, with children in visible leadership roles.



Reflection question: Where did children's voices shine? What could we strengthen next time?

_____
_____
_____.

INTERWOVEN WORSHIP
Instructions

Not every community can replace its whole liturgy. This approach offers ways to interweave Children's Sabbaths elements into your regular service.

Who this activity is for: Congregations that want to keep their usual order but honor Children's Sabbaths.

Why we're doing it: To honor Children's Sabbaths while maintaining familiar worship flow.

Steps

1. Use a Children's Sabbaths Call to Worship.
2. Insert a Children's Sabbaths Litany in Prayers of the People.
3. Add a Poem/Prayer for Children during reflection.
4. Invite a child/youth to read scripture.
5. Offer a Sermon Starter or testimony alongside the sermon.
6. End with a Blessing for Children.

Facilitator Help:

- Choose 1-3 elements to highlight rather than trying to do everything.
- Let children's voices appear at more than one moment.
- Ensure additions flow naturally within your liturgy.

INTERWOVEN WORSHIP
Workbook

This worksheet helps you adapt your regular service by weaving in Children's Sabbaths elements like litanies, prayers, or children’s voices.

Which 3 parts of our service can we adapt?

- ☐ Call to Worship
- ☐ Litany
- ☐ Scripture Reading
- ☐ Poem/Prayer
- ☐ Blessing

Notes

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____.

INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE
Instructions

This participatory service engages children, youth, and adults together as leaders.

Who this activity is for: Organizers, clergy, worship planners, intergenerational choirs

Why we're doing it: To show that children are full participants in shaping and leading worship**.**

Steps

1. Gathering: Intergenerational choir; children lead Call to Worship; children write/open with prayer.
2. Word: Shared scripture readings (child/youth/adult/elder); dramatic presentation or storytelling; Responsive Litany led by children.
3. Response: Bless children's artwork; Prayers of the People led by children + adults; Offering collected by children.
4. Sending: Freedom Chant; Benediction.

Facilitator Help:

- Balance leadership across ages.
- Rehearse with children so they feel prepared.
- Use symbolic gestures (children blessing adults, adults blessing children).

INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE
Workbook

Use this planning chart to assign worship roles across ages—children, youth, adults, and elders—so everyone leads together.

Worship Part	Child	Youth	Adult	Elder
Gathering	LEAD CALL TO WORSHIP	SING WITH CHOIR	PLAY PIANO	OFFER WELCOME
Word	READ PSALMS	SHARE TESTIMONY	READ SACRED TEXT	REFLECT ON SACRED TEXT
Response	COLLECT OFFERING	READ PRAYER	OFFER BLESSING	BLESS ARTWORK
Sending	FREEDOM CHANT	LEAD DANCE	JOIN CHORUS	BENEDICTION

Worship Part	Child	Youth	Adult	Elder
Gathering				
Word				
Response				
Sending				

CREATIVE WORSHIP RESOURCES
Instructions

Worship takes many forms across traditions—song, movement, art, storytelling, silence. Children's Sabbaths is a time to expand creativity in worship.

Who this activity is for: Worship leaders, artists, musicians, children's ministry

Why we're doing it: To engage multiple senses and lift up children's voices through creative expression.

Categories

1. Art: Visual prayers, murals, banners, tradition-specific symbols.
2. Music: Justice songs, intergenerational choirs, drumming, call-and-response.
3. Drama/Storytelling: Sacred stories, testimonies, spoken word.
4. Embodied Practices: Processions, dance, meditation, collective blessing.

Facilitator Help:

- Choose practices that reflect your tradition.
- Provide art/music supplies in advance.
- Highlight children's contributions visibly.

COMMUNITY MURAL
Instructions

Goal
Invite children, youth, and adults to create a shared mural that reflects what Freedom looks and feels like. This mural becomes both art and prayer—a visual witness of hope, justice, and joy for children.

Time Needed: 30-40 minutes

Materials
- Large roll of butcher paper or several poster boards taped together
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils, paints
- Tape to hang the mural in a visible place
- Optional: fabric scraps, collage magazines, stickers, stencils
- A large header across the top: *Nurturing Children Into Freedom*

Organizer's Intro Script (adapt to your faith tradition)
Today we are building Freedom on paper. Think of what it means for children to be safe, loved, and free. What does it look like when every child has enough food, joy, and protection? Draw or write your vision here. Together, our art will show what Freedom looks like in our congregation and in our world.

Step-by-Step
1. Place the mural paper where everyone can reach. Write the theme at the top.
2. Invite participants of all ages to add drawings, words, or symbols.
3. After 25 minutes, gather around the mural. Ask 2-3 participants to share what they added.

Accessibility Adaptations
- Provide clipboards, table space, or small canvases that can be taped to the larger mural later.
- Offer verbal prompts or stickers for those who prefer not to draw.
- Use adaptive grips or thicker markers for children with motor challenges.
- Invite written or spoken contributions from those who may not want to illustrate.

Reader's Theatre
Instructions

Reader's Theater is a simple way to let sacred stories, poems, or testimonies come alive. When children, youth, and adults each take a part, the whole community experiences Freedom spoken through many voices.

Who this is activity for: Children, youth, adults, elders—a mix of voices across generations.

Why we're doing it: To bring the vision of Beloved Community to life through intergenerational storytelling.

Time Needed: 30-40 minutes

Materials

- Short text (poem, psalm, testimony) printed in large font
- Role sheets labeled clearly (Child, Youth, Adult, Elder, Chorus)
- Optional: microphones, scarves, candles, or simple props

Steps

1. Select a short text (one of the poems, a psalm, or a child's testimony).
2. Assign roles: Child, Youth, Adult, Elder, and Chorus (congregation or small group).
3. Each role reads one part of the text. The Chorus joins on a repeated line, such as:
4. "This is Freedom"
5. Encourage expressive reading, gestures, or simple movements.
6. Close with all voices reading together the final line.

Facilitator Help

- Print scripts with role names in bold.
- Rehearse so children feel confident.
- Use simple props (candles, scarves) if desired.
- Invite gestures or motions (hands raised, clapping, walking forward).

Crafting Your Sermon
Instructions

Sermon starters are seeds, not full sermons. They weave together story, scripture, analysis, and a call to action—just enough to spark the imagination of preachers and communities. In this activity, participants will study an example, name its parts, and then practice sketching their own sermon starter.

Who this is for: Preachers, worship leaders, educators, and small group leaders.

Why we're doing it: To give leaders tools to preach or teach in ways that center children's realities and Beloved Community.

Time Needed: 60-90 minutes

Materials: Bible or sacred text, printed sermon starter example, notebook or workbook page, pens/markers, optional commentary/statistics handouts.

Crafting Your Sermon
Instructions

Steps

1.Read Together (15 min)
- Read aloud Rev. Dr. Yvette Blair-Lavallais's sermon starter "When Will Things Get Better?" (Job 38:1-7).
- Invite participants to listen for what moves them.

2. Break Down the Parts (15 min)

3. Highlight the "anatomy":
- Opening Story/Illustration
- Naming the Question
- Scriptural Connection
- Contemporary Connection
- Theological Claim
- Call to Action

4. Workbook Prompts (20 min)
- In small groups or alone, use prompts to jot down:
  - What story would you open with?
  - What questions are children asking in your community?
  - Which scripture speaks to that question?
  - What resource or stat grounds your message?
  - What good news do you want to declare?
  - What call to action could you invite?

5. Practice Writing (20-30 min)
- Using the "Sermon Starter Template" worksheet, sketch your own mini-starter.
- Keep it to a page or less—just the bones.

6. Share & Reflect (10-15 min)
- Invite 1-2 participants to share what they wrote.
- Reflect together: What did you notice about your process? How did focusing on children shift your sermon?

Crafting Your Sermon
Instructions

Facilitator Help

- Remind participants this is not about perfection but about process.
- Encourage voices from multiple traditions—there's no single way to do this.
- If participants are not preachers, frame it as devotional reflection or community teaching.
- Offer permission to write in everyday language—children's lives need honesty, not jargon.

Closing Reflection

End with a communal prayer. Example below:

God of the Word, bless our voices and our silences. May every story we tell lift up the children you love. May our sermons be not only words but acts of care, courage, and Beloved Community. ***Amen****.*

Crafting Your Sermon
Example

1. Opening Story or Illustration

What story, image, or everyday moment will draw people in?

One Sunday, I watched a child draw during worship. While the preacher spoke, she sketched a house with a big sun and children holding hands. When I asked what it was, she said, "It's church, but outside." That picture was in itself a sermon — children already know what Beloved Community looks like.

2. The Question

What question are children (or your community) asking?

What would happen if we built the kind of world our children keep drawing, singing, and imagining? When will adults stop pushing them to the side and start letting them lead us?

3. Scripture Connection

What text grounds this message in your sacred tradition?

Matthew 19:14: "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." (NRSV). Jesus makes it clear — children are not distractions from God's vision; they are the doorway into it.

Crafting Your Sermon
Example

4. Contemporary Connection

What present-day truth or resource helps illuminate this text? (e.g., statistic, book, child's testimony, current event)

Children in our communities face barriers — food insecurity, unsafe schools, housing instability. And yet, even with all this, they create joy: in sidewalk chalk, in TikTok dances, in laughter between friends. Trauma is real, but so is their resilience and their vision. Our task is not to silence or sideline them, but to listen and follow.

5. Theological Claim / Good News

What truth about God / Spirit / Love do you want to proclaim?

God is not waiting in the clouds. God rejoices, right here, whenever children are welcomed, honored, and protected. The good news is this: God has already placed the blueprint in our care. If we let the children come — into our decision-making, our leadership, our justice work — then we will glimpse liberation in real time. Because children, are the closest thing to God.

6. Call to Action

What is the one step the community can take this week for children?

- Invite children to speak or lead part of worship.
- Listen to their hopes and fears in small groups.
- Take collective action for policies that protect children's housing, health, and safety.

Crafting Your Sermon
Workbook

1. Opening Story or Illustration

What story, image, or everyday moment will draw people in?

2. The Question

What question are children (or your community) asking?

3. Scripture Connection

What text grounds this message in your sacred tradition?

Crafting Your Sermon
Workbook

4. Contemporary Connection

What present-day truth or resource helps illuminate this text? (e.g., statistic, book, child's testimony, current event)

5. Theological Claim / Good News

What truth about God / Spirit / Love do you want to proclaim?

6. Call to Action

What is the one step the community can take this week for children?

Community Procession or Circle
Activity

Processions are practices across many traditions. This one centers children by letting them lead and then exchanging blessings across generations.

Who this activity is for: Children, youth, adults, elders—a mix of voices across generations.

Why we're doing it: To move together as one body and bless each other across generations.

Time Needed: 15-30 minutes

Materials

- Candles, flowers, or banners (adaptable to your tradition)
- Drums or soft background music (optional)
- Accessible space for walking or seated blessing

Steps

1. Form the community into a circle or procession line.
2. Children lead the walk, carrying candles, flowers, or signs.
3. Adults and elders follow, singing or chanting softly.
4. Gather together: adults extend hands in blessing over children.
5. Children return the blessing to adults with words, gestures, or song.
6. End with all saying together:
7. "This is what freedom looks like. Amen."

Facilitator Help

- Provide symbols (candles, flowers, banners) that are safe and meaningful in your context.
- Use music or drumming to guide the pace.
- Adapt for accessibility: seated participants can still bless with words or gestures.
- Use inclusive language: "Holy One," "Source of Life," or silence.

Multi-faith Discussions
Instructions

Who this activity is for: Organizers, facilitators, interfaith groups

Why we're doing it: To bring people of diverse traditions into dialogue around how their faith calls them to honor and protect children.

Steps

1. Opening: Begin with silence, blessing, or song. State the purpose.
2. Sacred Texts: Invite children/youth to read provided excerpts.
3. Reflection: Ask: "What values echo across traditions? What new insights do you hear?"
4. Collaborative Action: Identify one way to act together.
5. Closing: End with a blessing, prayer, or shared statement.

Facilitator Help:

- Invite multiple traditions into leadership.
- Encourage children/youth as readers.
- Keep time balanced so each voice is honored.

Shared Commitment Statements

Purpose

Shared commitments are short statements that can be spoken aloud at the end of a service, discussion, or gathering. They give people a chance to affirm together what they have learned and what they will do next.

These models can be read as written, spoken responsively, or rewritten in your community's own words.

The goal is to leave participants united around a common purpose: justice, protection, and love for children.

- We commit, across our many traditions, to honor every child as sacred and to work together for their flourishing.
- As people of faith, we pledge to stand in solidarity for children's justice, moving beyond comfort toward action.
- May our many voices form one chorus of care, one call for justice, and one promise of love for every child.
- Together, we affirm that protecting and cherishing children is not only the work of our faiths but the work of our shared humanity.

Shared Commitment Statements
Activity

Shared commitments give a community one voice at the end of a gathering. They are short, powerful statements that unite people of different traditions around the shared work of honoring and advocating for children.

Who this activity is for: Worship leaders, organizers, interfaith gatherings

Why we're doing it: To close a multifaith gathering with shared purpose.

Steps

1. Choose one of the sample commitment statements.
2. Speak it aloud together, responsively or in unison.
3. Option: Rewrite in your community's own words.

Facilitator Help:

- Print commitments in bulletins or project on a screen.
- Invite youth to lead the responsive reading.
- Encourage rewriting commitments to reflect local voices.

Multi-faith Service
Purpose

This sample order of service offers one way to bring multiple faith communities together during a Children's Sabbaths. It provides a balanced flow of gathering, prayer, sacred texts, reflection, and sending forth. You can adapt this outline by inviting leaders from different traditions to lead the portions that best fit their practice, or by weaving in local customs, songs, or rituals. The structure is a guide—make it your own.

Service Flow

1. Gathering: Opening song or chant; welcome and framing.
2. Sacred Texts & Prayers: Readings from multiple traditions, followed by short prayers or blessings.
3. Reflections: Youth or leaders share brief insights; facilitator highlights common themes.
4. Commitment to Action: Joint prayer of commitment; announcement of one collaborative project or action.
5. Sending: Closing blessing including voices from several traditions; shared song of peace or justice.

Multi-faith Service
Activity

This outline provides a framework for designing a joint service where leaders, children, and communities from different faith traditions pray, sing, and reflect together. It is a guide—not a script—and should be adapted to honor the customs of each tradition.
Who this activity is for: Worship planners, clergy, lay leaders

Why we're doing it: To guide worship planners in braiding together voices from different traditions in one Children's Sabbaths service.

Steps

1. Gathering: Opening song/chant, welcome, and framing.
2. Sacred Texts & Prayers: Readings from multiple traditions, with short prayers.
3. Reflections: Youth/leaders share insights; facilitator names themes.
4. Commitment to Action: Joint prayer of commitment + action announcement.
5. Sending: Closing blessing and shared song.

Facilitator Help:

- Rotate leadership roles across traditions.
- Involve youth in each section.
- Adapt rituals to respect diverse customs.

Making Children Leaders
Purpose

Children and youth are not only the focus of Children's Sabbaths—they are also leaders and teachers in it. This section offers ideas for engaging them directly in worship, prayer, and action. These activities give children and youth meaningful roles, invite their creativity, and help them experience interfaith collaboration firsthand. Use these ideas to create space for their voices to shape your observance.

- Invite children/youth to read sacred texts aloud.
- Encourage them to write original prayers or poems to share.
- Host an interfaith art or storytelling project on Beloved Community.
- Let youth lead symbolic rituals such as candle-lighting or blessing peers.

Making Children Leaders
Activity

Children and youth are not only the focus of Children's Sabbaths—they are also leaders. This activity offers practical ways to place their creativity and leadership at the center of a multifaith observance.

Who this activity is for: Children, youth leaders, organizers

Why we're doing it: To move children and youth from being the focus of Children's Sabbaths to being active leaders within it.

Steps

1. Invite youth to read sacred texts.
2. Encourage them to write and share prayers or poems.
3. Host an interfaith art or storytelling project.
4. Let youth lead symbolic rituals (candles, blessings).

Facilitator Help:

- Give youth clear roles and affirm their leadership.
- Provide rehearsal time to build confidence.
- Display youth-created art prominently in worship.

Community Reflections
Purpose

Your Children's Sabbaths can extend beyond worship into everyday conversation. These questions are designed for families, small groups, or entire congregations to reflect together.

- Which sacred text spoke most deeply to you and why?
- How does your tradition encourage care for children?
- What is one way we can act together for children in our community?
- What can we learn from another tradition’s teaching that we could put into practice?

Community Reflections
Activity

Children's Sabbaths doesn't end with worship. These questions extend the conversation into daily life, giving families and communities simple ways to reflect together on children, faith, and justice.

Who this activity is for: Families, small groups, entire congregations

Why we're doing it: To extend the Sabbath beyond worship into daily conversations about children, faith, and justice.

Steps

1. Gather as a family, small group, or congregation.
2. Read one question aloud at a time.
3. Invite everyone, including children, to respond.

Facilitator Help:

- Create safe space for honest sharing.
- Encourage children's answers, even if simple.
- End by writing down one action idea to carry forward.

More Art
Activities

1. Prayer Postcards

A message of hope, one card at a time.

Kids and adults decorate and write postcards naming one way they imagine Freedom.

Postcards can be mailed to policymakers, children's orgs, or displayed in worship.

2. Symbols of Our Tradition Collage

Every symbol tells a story of belonging.

Participants draw or cut/paste symbols from their tradition that embody *Freedom* (candles, water, circles, flowers).

Each person contributes to a collective collage.

More Music
Activities

1. Intergenerational Choir

All ages, one choir.

Children, youth, and adults rehearse together. Kids can lead a verse or rhythm.

2. Freedom Chant Cards

Short songs, big voices.

Create and use simple chants (love, justice, peace, joy) with matching motions. Kids lead; all join.

More Drama & Storytelling
Activities

1. My 90-Second Story

Children's voices, unfiltered.

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials: Index cards, pens, optional microphone
Invite children and youth to share a very short story: "Once I felt safe when…" or "Freedom looks like…" Their testimonies can be read aloud, recorded, or acted out by peers.

2. Story Traditions Re-Imagined

Ancient stories, new voices.

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials: A simple story text, slips of paper with repeated refrain, optional percussion instruments.

Retell a folktale, parable, midrash, or ancestral story with a refrain like "This is Freedom" Children add their own lines, gestures, or sounds.

MULTI-FAITH EXPRESSIONS & WORSHIP RESOURCES

Closing Blessing

May the experiences of our multitude of faith and community expressions be a thread among us.
May is be a silk ribbon.
May our efforts to be a part of each others faith expressions be strength on behalf of children.
May our collective power ring and echo.
May we continue to reach for each other and create new experiences with one another, as a community, for the freedom and future of all children.

SABBATH'S CODA

Overview

Coda

Commitment Card

Post-Sabbath Survey

A Closing Chant/Litany

SABBATH'S CODA

Overview

The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® is a living movement, rooted in faith and sustained by justice, calling us to embody love for every child every day of the year. As we close this year's observance, let us remember that our collective selves, in our worship, our advocacy, and our commitments, ripple outward. And that ripple shapes schools, neighborhoods, laws, and futures.

Rev. Dr. Starsky Wilson, in his *2025 Beloved Community: A Vision for Child Advocacy* speech, charged us with this reminder:

"We are reminded of the responsibility and obligation we hold to create this nurturing environment, where children not only survive but flourish. As a community, it is our duty to ensure that each child has access to nourishing meals, healthcare for both body and mind, and the freedom to live joyfully and securely. We must cherish and protect our sanctuaries—spaces where harm has stopped, places held in God's bosom. As prophetic leaders on the Farm, may we locate our interpretation so that our Divine inspirations may fuel the imagination of our children, of the kids, young and old..."

And so, we close this year's call with Dr. Wilson's mandate: to take what has been sown in love and faith formation and translate it into sustained action.

What Comes Next

- Invite your congregation, small group, or faith community to commit to at least one action that will continue beyond the weekend.
- Share stories, photos, testimonies, and prayers from your observance with the hashtag #ChildrensSabbaths2026.
- Keep journeying with Children's Defense Fund and local partners throughout the year. Sign up for updates, participate in campaigns, connect with a Children's Defense Fund statewide organizer, and join advocacy efforts that ensure every child a fair chance.
- Join us next year for the Prathia Hall-Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry and receive hands-on training, tools, and resources for planning your next Children's Sabbath as well as ways to deepen your ministry's commitment to children.

SABBATH'S CODA

Inspired by: Marian Wright Edelman

The Children's Sabbaths weekend may come to a close, but the call to witness and nurture does not end. What was prayed in whispers, spoken in sermons, sung in song, and carried in children's laughter now becomes seed. Every prayer offered, every child lifted by name, every candle burning with hope is planted in the soil of justice.

Dr. Starsky Wilson reminds us: "We must cherish and protect our sanctuaries—spaces where harm has stopped, places held in God's bosom." These sanctuaries are found within and outside our faith communities, as well as beyond them. Inside, they are the mosques, synagogues, temples, and churches where children are welcomed, safe, and affirmed. Outside, they are classrooms where children learn without fear, homes where families are nourished and secure, parks where children play freely, courtrooms where fairness prevails, and streets where young people walk in safety.

Our charge is to create sanctuary everywhere—not only within walls of worship but in the everyday spaces where children live and grow. Sanctuary is wherever harm has ceased and life can flourish, wherever the bosom of the Divine is made known in justice and care.

We are entrusted to water these seeds—with courage in the face of despair, with faith in the midst of struggle, with action that matches our love. Let us tend them in our homes, nurture them in our families, scatter them in our faith communities, and root them in our nation.

Until the day comes when every child can grow strong and free, play without fear, learn without hunger, rest without worry, and flourish in joy, in safety, and in love—this is the work we carry forward. This is the call that continues. This is how we will begin again and again and again.

SABBATH'S CODA
Commitment Card

children's defense fund

Children's Sabbaths Commitment Card

I/we commit to take action on behalf of children by:

□ Sending a letter to/calling an elected official
□ Signing a petition or public statement for children's justice
□ Sharing a story or testimony with my community
□ Participating in a public faith ritual that speaks to an injustice
□ Donating time, resources, or offerings to child-centered ministries or programs
□ Partnering with local organizations that advocate for children
□ Other:
_____

Contact Information

Name(s):
_____
Congregation/Organization: _____
City/State:
_____
Email/Phone (optional):
_____

Looking Ahead

□ Yes, we are interested in hosting a Children's Sabbaths next year.

□ Yes, we are interested in participating in a Children's Sabbaths Manual Virtual Training.

Return this card to a Children's Sabbaths organizer or a Chlidren's Defense Fund team member for follow-up.

SABBATH'S CODA
Post-Sabbath Survey

Share Your Feedback

You may complete the survey using the printed form provided or electronically.

To complete the survey electronically, please **scan the QR code below**.

SABBATH'S CODA

Post-Sabbath Survey

Section One
Congregational/Community Information

Congregation/Organization Name:(Required)

City/State:(Required)

Faith Tradition / Spiritual Community (check one or describe): (Required)

Please enter contact information below:

Name:(Required)

First

Last

Email:(Required)

Phone:(Required)

Role:(Required)

Return all pages of this survey to a Children's Defense Fund team member, email to faith-based@childrensdefense.org, or mail a physical copy of this survey to: 777 Sixth Street NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20001

Section Two
Participation

How many people participated in your Children's Sabbaths observance?

Adults:(Required)

Children/Youth under 18:(Required)

What type(s) of observance did you hold? (check all that apply) (Required)

- [ ] Worship service(s)
- [ ] Educational forum or study group
- [ ] Advocacy or public witness event
- [ ] Service project or community outreach
- [ ] Other:

Return all pages of this survey to a Children's Defense Fund team member, email to faith-based@childrensdefense.org, or mail a physical copy of this survey to: 777 Sixth Street NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20001

Section Three
Advocacy & Action

How many advocacy actions did your congregation/community take?

Letters sent to elected officials

Petitions or statements signed

Advocacy meeting scheduled with policymakers

Story or testimony shared with the community

Donations to child-centered ministries or programs

Other:

Return all pages of this survey to a Children's Defense Fund team member, email to faith-based@childrensdefense.org, or mail a physical copy of this survey to: 777 Sixth Street NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20001

Section Four
Stories & Highlights

Please share a highlight or story from your Children's Sabbaths observance.(Required)

Please email or mail photos from your celebration using the contact information below.

Return all pages of this survey to a Children's Defense Fund team member, email to faith-based@childrensdefense.org, or mail a physical copy of this survey to: 777 Sixth Street NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20001

SABBATH'S CODA
Post-Sabbath Survey

Section Five
Feedback & Looking Ahead

Was the Children's Sabbaths manual helpful to your planning and organizing?(Required)

- ☐ Very helpful
- ☐ Somewhat helpful
- ☐ Not helpful
- ☐ Did not use

Would your congregation/organizing team be interested in: (check all that apply)(Required)

- ☐ Hosting a Children's Sabbaths next year
- ☐ Participating in a Children's Sabbaths manual virtual training
- ☐ Hosting a Children's Sabbaths manual training for your organizing team
- ☐ Having a brainstorming session with CDF staff about how to expand your Children's Sabbaths observance

Are you planning to attend the 2027 Prathia Hall-Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry at CDF's Alex Haley Farm in Clinton, TN?(Required)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Return all pages of this survey to a Children's Defense Fund team member, email to faith-based@childrensdefense.org, or mail a physical copy of this survey to: 777 Sixth Street NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20001

Section Five
Feedback & Looking Ahead

What resources, training, or support from CDF would be most helpful for your future participation?(Required)

Return all pages of this survey to a Children's Defense Fund team member, email to faith-based@childrensdefense.org, or mail a physical copy of this survey to: 777 Sixth Street NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20001

SABBATH'S CODA
Post-Sabbath Survey

Section Six
Invitation for Next Year's Manual

Children's Sabbaths is a multi-faith observance. For the 2026 Manual, we are inviting leaders, organizers, and participants from diverse faith traditions to submit prayers, blessings, or short liturgical pieces.

Would you (or someone in your community) be interested in authoring a prayer for next year's manual?(Required)

- ☐ **Yes, I would like to contribute.**
- ☐ **Yes, I would like to recommend someone from my community.**
- ☐ **Maybe, I'd like more information.**
- ☐ **No**

If yes, please provide your name (or nominee's name) and email:

Name _____ **Email** _____

Are you (or someone in your community) interested in contributing creative work?(Required)

- ☐ **Yes, I would like to submit artwork/poetry/photography.**
- ☐ **Yes, I would like to recommend an artist from my community.**
- ☐ **Maybe, I'd like more information.**
- ☐ **No**

Return all pages of this survey to a Children's Defense Fund team member, email to faith-based@childrensdefense.org, or mail a physical copy of this survey to: 777 Sixth Street NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20001

SABBATH'S CODA
A Closing Chant/Litany

Leader: *Nurturers, what is our charge?*
People: *To ensure every child may flourish.*

Leader: *What must every child have?*
People: *Freedom to live joyfully and securely. Nourishing meals. Healthcare for body and mind.*

Leader: *Where shall they be kept?*
People: *In sanctuaries of safety, in spaces where harm has stopped, in the bosom of the Divine*

Leader: *And what is our ethic?*
People: *Love is our ethic. Love is our power. Love is our way*.

Leader: *What do we see in our children?*
People: *Promise and freedom*

Leader: *Who shall we be for them?*
People: *Prophetic witnesses. Diverse voices. Revolutionary Nurturers.*

All Together (unison or chant):
We will teach.
We will heal.
We will speak truth.
We will love.
We will begin again—
for every child, for every family, for every future.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

IS THE CHILDREN'S SABBATHS THE SAME THING AS CHILDREN'S DAY, YOUTH SUNDAY, TOT SHABBAT, OR CHILDREN'S SERVICE?

The Children's Sabbaths shares some aspects of Children's Day, Youth Sunday, Tot Shabbat and children's services, but it is distinct and unique in some vital ways.

Some congregations celebrate June Children's Day, often to congratulate and recognize youngsters who have completed Sunday school or Confirmation Class. Like a Children's Day, the Children's Sabbaths celebrates the gift of children—inheritances from God—and has a sense of hopefulness and joy. The Children's Sabbaths also focuses purposeful attention on the urgent problems facing children across our nation and provides a call to action and support to respond to improve children's lives. And while Children's Day is more typically celebrated only in churches, from the start the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths weekend has been a multifaith movement.

Many congregations have Youth Days when they turn the service over to the young people to plan and lead. Like a Youth Day, on the Children's Sabbaths, children and youth often participate in the planning and leadership of the day. But on the Children's Sabbaths, the adults aren't only the "audience," because the Children's Sabbaths is an intergenerational event drawing on the leadership and involvement of all ages to convey its message that each of us, no matter our age, has a role to play in nurturing and protecting children and working for justice.

Some places of worship have separate services designed just for children to attend. Like those "children's services," or a "Tot Shabbat," worship on the Children's Sabbaths is intended to be engaging and meaningful to the children who attend. The Children's Sabbaths is a service for everyone, and it aims to speak to all ages.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN THE CHILDREN'S SABBATHS MOVEMENT. WHERE DO I START?

Reviewing these Children's Sabbaths resource materials is the first important step in getting involved in the Children's Sabbaths. You are already on your way!

The next planning steps can be found in the “Planning Your Children's Sabbaths Celebration: Ideas for All Faiths” section of this resource. One of the first decisions you and those who join you in the planning will need to make is whether to plan a Children's Sabbaths just for your place of worship or to join with other faith communities or denominations to plan a multifaith or ecumenical Children's Sabbaths in your community.

Either option is a valuable way to participate. You should determine what is right for your place of worship this year.

These Children's Sabbaths resource materials provide planning suggestions, promotion ideas, worship resources, educational resources, activity ideas, and suggestions for building on your Children's Sabbaths to help children throughout the year.

I WANT TO HOST A CHILDREN’S SABBATH, BUT MY FAITH COMMUNITY CAN’T DO THE THIRD WEEKENDING IN OCTOBER. CAN I HOST IT ANOTHER WEEKEND?

Observing Children’s Sabbaths on the designated weekend can be especially powerful, connecting your congregation to a shared witness taking place across communities, states, and the nation and demonstrating a collective commitment to child well-being.

However, we do recognize scheduling conflicts and want to ensure your Children’s Sabbath is tailored to your congregation’s needs. We invite you to choose an alternate date and hope you can plan to host next year’s Sabbath on the same weekend as thousands of other places of worship. What’s most important is to participate in the movement at a time that works for your community.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHICH IS BETTER TO DO, A CHILDREN'S SABBATHS IN MY OWN PLACE OF WORSHIP OR A MULTIFAITH, COMMUNITY-WIDE SERVICE?

Both are valuable. A service in your own place of worship communicates that this concern is an integral part of the life of your congregation and makes it easier to plan follow-up efforts. A community-wide service is an exciting experience and expression of the shared concerns and common commitment to children of many faith traditions. They can create new partnerships for effective community efforts to help children, but they can also take a lot more work to plan and generate turn-out! Either way, as Dolores Huerta, civil rights activist and humanitarian said, “The great social justice changes in our country have happened when people came together, organized and took direct action.” This is what our children need from us.

WE JUST HEARD ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S SABBATHS WEEKEND AND DON’T HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT TO PLAN. WHAT CAN WE DO?

There are a couple of options. You could schedule your celebration for a later date to allow for more planning time, or you could still plan to participate on the third weekend of October and start with incorporating one of the activities such as the Psalms Templates for Children and Youth, liturgy, or one of the prayers or readings provided in the Children's Sabbaths resource materials. (You might still have time to invite a guest speaker who is engaged in work to improve the lives of children such as Boys and Girls Club, United Way, Bread for the World). Then, you could plan an educational program or activities focused on seeking justice for children to take place in the months and year that follow.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SHOULD WE BOTHER PARTICIPATING IN THE CHILDREN'S SABBATHS CELEBRATION IF MY PLACE OF WORSHIP ALREADY CARES ABOUT CHILDREN?

The Children's Sabbaths is an opportunity to intentionally raise awareness about the most critical issues, needs and concerns affecting children. It is also a time to affirm what we already do and, at the same time, deepen our understanding both of God’s call and the current crises facing children so that we may more fully, persistently, effectively, and faithfully live out that calling not only on the Children's Sabbaths weekend but throughout the year. There is an extraordinary power in participating in the Children's Sabbaths, knowing that all across the country, in places of worship of many different faiths, we are united in our concern for children and in our ecclesial commitment to respond.

JOIN US FOR THE 2027 PRATHIA HALL-SAMUEL DEWITT PROCTOR INSTITUTE FOR CHILD ADVOCACY MINISTRY

July 12-15, 2027
Alex Haley Farm
Clinton, TN

Deepen your congregation's commitment to children through learning, leadership development, relationship-building, and action. Begin planning now to support participation by your ministry team, congregational leaders, and community partners

Scan the QR code to learn more

2026 NATIONAL OBSERVANCE OF CHILDREN'S SABBATHS® MANUAL

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