

# Resources for a Multifaith Children's Sabbath Celebration



**A** multifaith Children's Sabbath offers a powerful and meaningful opportunity to bring together people from all across your community who may never have connected before. It is a chance to highlight our shared concern—across religious traditions—for justice and protecting and nurturing children. It is a meaningful time to discover what our different faith traditions hold in common as well as to learn about the unique perspectives, texts and traditions that each brings. It is a time to unite in shared commitment to take action to solve the problems facing children in our communities and nation.

**This Multifaith Children's Sabbath Section is designed to be "evergreen" and not updated annually; There is an annual Children's Sabbath supplement that provides new material tied to the year's Children's Sabbath theme that you should print out each year for fresh resources**



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

**Planning a Multifaith Children's Sabbath Celebration:** Be sure to read the planning steps for organizing a multifaith community-wide service which are outlined in the "Planning Your Children's Sabbath" section of the Children's Sabbath manual. Follow the planning steps to bring together a planning committee that represents the many religious traditions in your community.

**Multifaith Children's Sabbath Service:** Following, you will find materials to help to create your own multifaith Children's Sabbath service that is inclusive, respectful of different traditions, focused on the Children's Sabbath core themes, and adaptable to your particular community and leadership:

- A suggested outline for your multifaith community-wide Children's Sabbath service;
- A variety of prayers, readings, and litanies that may be used in a multifaith Children's Sabbath service.
- A sample multifaith Children's Sabbath service that focuses on this year's Children's Sabbath theme will be posted separately on Children's Defense Fund website.
- You are encouraged to also download and draw from the separate sections providing resources from many faith traditions. Extensive Christian and Jewish sections are posted separately. In addition, this multifaith section includes resources from the following traditions:
  - Baha'i Faith
  - Buddhism
  - Christianity
  - Hinduism
  - Judaism
  - Islam
  - Native American Traditions
  - Sikhism
  - Unitarian Universalism

**Multifaith Children's Sabbath Action:** Be sure to plan activities before or after the multifaith service to engage participants in hands-on service and justice-seeking advocacy activities. Present opportunities for those present to connect with child-serving and child advocacy organizations, programs and agencies so they can make a difference throughout the year. See the Action Section for ideas.

**Multifaith Children's Sabbath Discussion:** If possible, plan to hold a Multifaith Children's Sabbath Discussion to engage adults and older youth participants in learning more about children and justice, solutions and the varied, valuable perspectives of different religious and ethical traditions, as well as options for action in the community.

# Suggested Outline for a Multifaith Children's Sabbath Service

## I: Gathering of the Community

The service begins with a "Gathering of the Community" that creates a sense of welcome and inclusion and affirms a sense of shared purpose. These earliest moments in the service should be planned with care to reassure people that this service is a "safe" space in which their own faith will not be denigrated and ease any anxieties that people may bring to a multifaith experience. Your planning team might arrange for "greeters" from each tradition to be at the doors as people arrive, to create an immediate experience of welcome and belonging.

The Gathering of the Community segment of the service may include some or all of the following:

- **Prelude:** Choral or instrumental music that either creates an atmosphere for contemplation and reflection or that builds excitement and generates enthusiasm. One choir or more could offer a selection, for instance, or an organist or pianist could play.
- **Opening Procession of Religious Leaders and Children:** This can provide a visual appreciation for the range of religious traditions represented and add a sense of importance and broad support for the event. You may want to include symbolic elements to the procession or other visual enhancements like banners, liturgical dancers, drummers, candle lighting or another creative element.
- **Welcome:** The religious leader whose place of worship is hosting the multifaith service may offer a very brief welcome. If the service is not being held in a place of worship, one of the key leaders involved in planning the Children's Sabbath may give a brief welcome. In the welcome, the leader should convey that people of any tradition—and those of no tradition—are welcome. The service has been designed to be inclusive of and comfortable for all. However, participants should feel free to join in or refrain from any parts of the service according to what is comfortable for them. What we all share is a desire to move forward with hope to assure love and justice for every child.
- **Gathering Words:** Beginning with an opening prayer, call to worship or other form of "Gathering Words" can make people from many different communities feel united in why they are there and reassured that all are welcome. See the sample resources below for Gathering Words that can be used, adapted or simply serve as an inspiration for your own creation.
- **Song, Hymn, Kirtan, Chant or Choral Anthem:** A musical selection at this point may keep the service lively. Remember, if everyone is asked to sing or say it, the words should include everyone. For instance, if all of those gathered will be singing, remember to select a song with inclusive words that people from many different faiths will feel comfortable singing—ensure that it does not use language specific to just one tradition, such as "Jesus Christ." If a choir or other group is presenting an anthem, chant or song to which those gathered will listen, and singing music specific to that group's tradition, remember to balance the groups represented and to ensure that no musical offering, while specific to a tradition, puts down another faith tradition.

## II: Time of Lament

This is a time to focus attention on the serious problems affecting children, to declare our concern for children's suffering, and recognize our responsibility as people of faith, adults, parents, citizens and community members for how we have contributed to or failed to prevent or end child suffering and ensure justice and care for all children.

The time of lament portion of the service might include one or more (but not all) of the following:

- **Prayer**
- **Litany**
- **Responsive reading**
- **Creative or symbolic action**
- **Visual experience** that underscores the problems to which we have come to respond (e.g., PowerPoint or slide presentation, a brief video or liturgical dance)
- **Anthem, hymn, kirtan, chant or song**

## III: Call to Service

This part of the worship service proclaims the call to justice, compassion and faithful action for children that is central to our religious traditions.

This part of the service could include some of the following:

- **Readings from sacred texts** such as Torah and other Hebrew texts, the New Testament, Qur'an, Bhagavad Gita and others. If the readings are recited in another language, either have the readers also read the English translation or, to keep the service from becoming too lengthy, provide written translations into English in the service program. This section might be introduced by words like: "Listen to these readings from a variety of religious traditions and sacred texts, as they speak to the call to compassionate service and action that seeks justice, especially to end poverty and oppression, and protect those in harm's way. How do they touch your heart and mind? How do they connect with your own tradition? How do they relate to your own experience? What sacred texts from your tradition come to mind?"
- **Songs, hymns, anthems, kirtans or chants** focused on our call to service.
- **A reflection on this year's Children's Sabbath theme.** A brief reflection—perhaps five minutes—during which a leader reflects on the shared concerns for children and the strong call across religious traditions to work to assure love and justice for children. (This reflection on the theme could include the "charge to the gathered community" in the next section instead of having two different leaders offer a separate "reflection" and "charge").

## IV: Commitment to Action

After the gathering, lament and call to service, people should be ready to respond to what they've heard and experienced with a commitment to action on behalf of children. This enables them to channel the experience into a positive, forward-looking, hopeful response that puts their faith into action.

The commitment to action section of the service might include one or more of the following:

- **A charge to the gathered community:** a brief, inspirational charge from a powerful speaker that encourages those present to respond to the call to service just heard with a commitment to action manifesting the justice and peace God intends. Five minutes may be an appropriate length to give the speaker for her/his charge. (This inspirational charge could be included in the “reflection on the theme” in the previous section, instead of being offered by a different speaker).
- **Prayer of commitment**
- **Act of commitment:** a responsive reading that invites those gathered to respond aloud and declare their intention to act on behalf of children.
- **Symbolic action:** a creative action or response through which the people or one or more leaders make visible the commitment to act. Options include: each person writing a commitment on a slip of paper that is collected with the others; distributing a small item to each person present that will serve as a reminder of their commitment; or lighting candles.
- **Song, hymn, kirtan, chant or anthem** with words that emphasize the commitment to faithful action.

## V: Blessing

The last portion of the multifaith service prepares the people to leave the time together inspired and committed to action, reassured that the gathered community will be dispersed but still joined in commitment and that they will continue to be guided and sustained by the divine.

The blessing portion of the service might include one or more of the following:

- **Blessing of the children:** many traditions have rituals for blessing the children that could be adapted for a multifaith gathering. Consider ways that those who have not come accompanied by children can feel part of the blessing experience.
- **Charge:** not as lengthy as the “charge to the gathered community” in the commitment to action, this very brief charge (just a line or two) can precede the final blessing as a reminder of what we go forth to do.
- **Final blessing:** the last words offered by a religious leader, reminding those gathered that we go forth to seek justice in the power of the eternal/divine source of love.
- **Closing hymn or song:** a final song that has a “sending forth” theme, such as the traditional spiritual, Guide My Feet. The religious leaders who processed in may process out during the closing hymn or remain in place.
- **Postlude:** instrumental (or choral) music as those gathered disperse.

In addition to the resources provided below, and those which your planning committee creates or finds, draw from faith resources offered in other sections of the Children's Sabbath resource manual which are available for download at [www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths](http://www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths).

## Alternative Prayers and Other Resources for the Multi-Faith Service

Your multi-faith planning committee may wish to use some rather than just adding more) some of the following for various readings and prayers in the multi-faith service. Or, your planning team may identify other readings and prayers from their various traditions that fit the theme and focus of the Children's Sabbath service. In addition to the resources that follow, which may be used any year, CDF provides a sample Multi-Faith Children's Sabbath Service focused on the year's theme, which is posted separately on CDF's website.

### Resources for the Gathering of the Community

**Opening Reading from Hindu tradition** Look to this day! For it is life, the very life of life. In its brief course Lie all the verities and realities of your existence: The bliss of growth; The glory of action; The splendor of achievement; For yesterday is but a dream, And tomorrow is only a vision; But today, well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness, And every tomorrow a vision of hope. (*"Salutation to the Dawn," attributed to Hindu poet Kalidasa*)

#### Gathering Words

(The Gathering Words could be led by one or more leaders—adults and/or children.)

**Leader:** We come with hopes—

**People:** **Hopes for our children and for ourselves.**

**Leader:** We come with hurts—

**People:** **Our own and the wounds of so many children and families.**

**Leader:** We come with faith—

**People:** **We are loved as children by the Holy.**

**Leader:** We come with doubts—

**People:** **We wonder how such suffering can exist in our world.**

**Leader:** We come for challenge—

**People:** **We seek renewed vision and bold commitment to bring justice to all children.**

**Leader:** We come to pray—

**People:** **To pray for children wounded by the violence of guns and the injustice of poverty, and to pray for ourselves, for the strength to respond.**

**Leader:** We come to praise—

**People:** **To praise the Holy for the gift of children.**

**Leader:** Come, let us celebrate the Children's Sabbath.

### Resources for the Time of Lament

O God, forgive and transform our rich nation where small babies die of cold quite legally. O God, forgive and transform our rich nation where small children suffer from hunger quite legally. O God, forgive and transform our rich nation where toddlers and school children die from guns sold quite



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

legally. O God, forgive and transform our rich nation that lets children be the poorest group of citizens quite legally.

O God, forgive and transform our rich nation that lets the rich continue to get more at the expense of the poor quite legally.

O God, forgive and transform our rich nation which thinks security rests in missiles and in bombs rather than in mothers and in babies.

O God, forgive and transform

O God, forgive and transform our rich nation for not giving You sufficient thanks by giving to others their daily bread.

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

### Gathering Words

(The Gathering Words could be led by one or several leaders—of any age—in turn, with all gathered responding with the lines in bold. Or, it could read by one leader, in which case remove the bolding.)

We come to hear the voices of children.

We come to hear the wisdom of our various traditions.

We come to hear words of care and concern, challenge and charge.

We come to help bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice for children.

We come to help bend the arc in partnership across religion and race, income and ethnicity, age and experience.

We come to help bend the arc with commitment and determination.

Come, let us celebrate the Children's Sabbath.

### Gathering Words/Opening Prayer

Eternal source of love and justice, we gather here from many places, different traditions, and diverse experiences. We give you thanks for the richness of our diversity and the treasured uniqueness of each one here.

We also gather here, brought together by what unites us and makes us one: concern for children in need—those left behind by inequitable education, pressed down by poverty, passed over for health care, pushed along a pipeline to prison. We give you thanks for planting in each of us a heart that cares for your most vulnerable children and a passion for justice so that every child may grow and flourish. We give you thanks for our shared concern and commitment.

Use us now, we pray, to seek justice and protect children so that each is educated and encouraged, prepared for a future bright with promise. Let all people of love and justice say, **Amen.**

## Resources for Calls to Compassionate Service and Justice-Seeking Action from Sacred Traditions

### Prayers of the People

*(Before the prayers of the people, pass along the pews baskets containing crayons, pencil stubs, chalk, Band-Aids®, pennies, and pens. Invite each congregation member to take one item. These items will be referenced in the Prayers of the People. Afterward, encourage members to take the item home and to pray for those it symbolizes.)*



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

Almighty God, the challenges facing children and those who care for and about them can seem so huge and so abstract that we lose touch with the reality. Help us to remember that the needs and prayers of each child, each parent, each teacher, each caring person are as real and individual to you as the items in our hands.

(Holding up a crayon)

And so we pray this day for the child care providers and parents who provide safe, warm, stimulating environments to spark a love of learning and fuel the curiosity of our youngest children as they scribble with crayons, pet the hamster, and try to taste the Play-Doh®. We pray especially for those providers who are underpaid and undervalued, for those parents who can't find quality, affordable care for their children while they work, and for the children whose potential is squelched in poor care. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

(Holding up a piece of chalk)

We pray for the teachers, covered in chalk dust, who devote themselves to educating our children and helping them flourish to their potential. For their dedication, imagination, and concern we give you thanks.

We pray especially for those teachers who have given up on themselves or on the children, those who feel unsafe, those who feel unappreciated. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

(Holding up a pencil stub)

We pray for students gripping pencils as they strive to learn, especially those faced with the challenges of disability, unsafe schools, low expectations from their parents, teachers, and selves, and inadequate resources. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

(Holding up a Band-Aid®)

We pray for children who are sick and injured, whose ability to learn is hampered by vision and hearing problems or illness. We pray especially for those children who don't have health insurance to get the care they need, and for their parents who worry about what to do, who rely on Band-Aids® when prevention or treatment is needed. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

(Holding up a penny)

We pray for the youths who are preparing for the world of work, that you will guide them in discovering their gifts and talents, skills and aptitudes, and surround them with teachers and adults who will get them ready to succeed. We pray especially for those young people who fear they will not be able to find work and earn a living, who don't have adults to help them prepare, and who despair of ever succeeding. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

(Holding up a pen)

We pray for our leaders in government, business, and the media, that the laws they write, the bottom lines that are inked, and the stories they pen will demonstrate an investment and priority in our children today for our future tomorrow. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

### **Sikh Kirtan: Poota Mata Ki Asis**

*(Print translation into English in program.)*

Oh child! This is your mother's blessing. May you never forget God even for a moment and always remember the Lord of the universe. By meditating on God all the sins are obliterated and

generations are enlightened. Ponder over always on that Lord who is boundless. May the true Guru be kind to you and may you nurture love for the company of saints. May the preservation of your honor by the Lord be your attire: Singing of His praise your daily bread. Drink ever the nectar of God's name and live long. By remembering God may you attain bliss. May joys and playful pleasures be yours. May your hopes be realized and may you never get distressed. Let your mind hover like a humming black bee at the lotus feet of God. Says the humble Nanak [*the founder of Sikhism*], be attached to God like a pied-cuckoo that rejoices in ecstasy on finding rain drop.

### **A Reading from Sikh Tradition**

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, and only that victory endures in consequence of which no one is defeated.

### **Fifth Mehl, Second House, Du-Padas:**

One Universal Creator God. By The Grace Of The True Guru:

Fire is contained in all firewood, and butter is contained in all milk.

God's Light is contained in the high and the low; the Lord is in the hearts of all beings. ||1||

O Saints, He is pervading and permeating each and every heart.

The Perfect Lord is completely permeating everyone, everywhere; He is diffused in the water and the land. ||1||Pause||

Nanak sings the Praises of the Lord, the treasure of excellence; the True Guru has dispelled his doubt.

The Lord is pervading everywhere, permeating all, and yet, He is unattached from all. ||2||1||29||

### **Dhanaasaree, Fifth Mehl:**

I am meek and poor; the Name of God is my only Support. The Name of the Lord, Har, Har, is my occupation and earnings. I gather only the Lord's Name. It is useful in both this world and the next. ||1|| Imbued with the Love of the Lord God's Infinite Name, the Holy Saints sing the Glorious Praises of the One Lord, the Formless Lord. ||Pause|| The Glory of the Holy Saints comes from their total humility. The Saints realize that their greatness rests in the Praises of the Lord. Meditating on the Lord of the Universe, the Saints are in bliss. The Saints find peace, and their anxieties are dispelled. ||2|| Wherever the Holy Saints gather, there they sing the Praises of the Lord, in music and poetry. In the Society of the Saints, there is bliss and peace. They alone obtain this Society, upon whose foreheads such destiny is written. ||3|| With my palms pressed together, I offer my prayer. I wash their feet, and chant the Praises of the Lord, the treasure of virtue. O God, merciful and compassionate, let me remain in Your Presence. Nanak lives, in the dust of the Saints. ||4||2||23||

### **Reading from Mormon Tradition**

"In the twenty and ninth year there began to be some disputings among the people; and some were lifted up unto pride and boastings because of their exceedingly great riches, yet even unto great persecutions; for there were many merchants in the land, and also many lawyers, and many officers. And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and other did receive great learning because of their riches. Some were lifted up in pride, and others were exceedingly humble . . . And thus there became a great inequality in all the land, insomuch that the church began to be



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

broken up..... [And so Jesus, quoting Malachi, said] "I will be swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger, and fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts" ....In response, "Every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free."

(3 Ne 6:10-14, 24:5, 4 Ne. 1:2-3)

### A Prayer from Native American Tradition

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

### A Reading from Baha'i Tradition

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no [one], and show all meekness to all [people]. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the Children's Defense Fund I 13

feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

(Baha'ullah, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahau'llah, p. 346)

## Resources for the Commitment to Action

*(All together read words in bold. Buddhist leader or different leaders including children and youths may read following lines in regular type.)*

### Act of Commitment

*(Optimally, but not necessarily, have a young person or leader from those traditions read the lines from their tradition.)*

#### Leader:

Hear these words from Jewish tradition: "**A voice is heard in Ramah, wailing and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children who are gone.**" Will you be a voice for children who are being lost to violence and poverty? Will you live so God can use you to help all children know safety and security in their homes and community? Will you?

#### People: Yes!

**Leader:**

Hear these words from Buddhist tradition: *"A mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects her child, her only child. In the same way should you cultivate love without measure toward all beings."* Will you love all children and show your love by demanding that all children have what they need to survive and thrive? Will you?

**People: Yes!**

**Leader:**

Hear these words from Christian tradition: *"Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."* Will you serve and call others to service so that our nation, communities, and families put children first and assure that every child is cared for? Will you?

**People: Yes!**

**Leader:**

Hear these words from Baha'i tradition: *"O God! Rear this little babe in the bosom of Thy love, and give it milk from the breast of Thy Providence. Cultivate this fresh plant in the rose garden of Thy love and aid it to grow through the showers of Thy bounty."* Will you work so that every child has the family, health, school, and community supports to grow and thrive, blossoming as God intends? Will you?

**People: Yes!**

**Leader:**

Hear these words from Islamic tradition: *"And why should you not strive in the cause of God and of those who are ill-treated and oppressed?—men, women, and children, whose cry is 'Our Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors, and raise for us from The one who will protect, and raise from Thee one who will help.'"* Will you speak out to protect those who are ill-treated and oppressed, especially children beaten down by injustice? Will you?

**People: Yes!**

**Alternative Litany of Commitment—**

**Based on Buddhist Prayer of Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, ending with words from the Buddha in Sutta Nipata**

**All: May [we] become at all times, both now and forever:**

**A protector for those without protection**

especially children facing opportunity gaps our nation allows to exist and to widen

**A guide for those who have lost their way**

especially elected leaders who have strayed from ideals of justice and service

**A ship for those with oceans to cross**

especially families overwhelmed by rising tides of poverty and choppy seas of unemployment

**A bridge for those with rivers to cross**

especially parents with difficulty wading through the systems to secure health coverage for their children

**A sanctuary for those in danger**

especially children and youths facing gun violence, bullying, abuse and neglect

**A lamp for those without light**

especially children struggling to learn in schools without adequate resources and low expectations

**A place of refuge for those who lack shelter**

especially families who are homeless, refugees, and immigrants

**And a servant to all in need**

especially those we hold in our hearts and lift up now in the silence:

*[silence]*

Let your love flow outward through the universe,  
to its height, its depth, its broad extent,  
a limitless love, without hatred or enmity.  
Then as you stand or walk,  
sit or lie down,  
as long as you are awake,  
strive for this with a one-pointed mind;  
your life will bring heaven to earth. **(The Buddha – Sutta Nipata)**

**Closing Music: Canto D'Esperanza (Song of Hope)** by Alvin Schutmaat  
*(It could be sung first in English, then in Spanish, and again in English.)*

May the God of hope go with us every day,  
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.  
May the God of justice speed us on our way,  
bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Refrain:

Praying, let us work for peace;  
singing, share our joy with all;  
working for a world that's new,  
faithful when we hear [Your] call.

(Spanish)

Dios de la esperanza, danos gozo y paz.  
Al mundo en crisis, habla tu verdad.  
Dios de la justicia, mandanos to luz,  
luz y esperanza en la oscuridad.

Refrain:

Oremos por la paz,  
cantemos de tu amor.  
Luchemos por la paz,  
fieles a ti, Señor.

**Music: I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me** (*adapted*)

(Announce or note in the program that those who wish may use “Love” in place of “God.” An alternative song to use at this point is the service is *We Shall Overcome*.)

I'm gonna live so God can use me,  
anywhere, oh, any time.

I'm gonna live so God can use me,  
anywhere, oh, any time.

Additional verses:

I'm gonna love so...

I'm gonna pray ...

I'm gonna vote...

I'm gonna speak...

**Affirmation of Commitment**

**Leader:** Chilean poet Gabriele Mistral spoke to the urgency with which we must pursue justice when she wrote:

We are guilty of many faults and errors,

but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many things we need can wait.

The child cannot.

Right now is the time his bones are being formed,

his blood is being made and his senses are being developed. To [the child] we cannot answer “Tomorrow”.

[The child's] name is “Today”. (Chilean poet Gabriele Mistral)

Every child's name is today. Too, there are particular children you hold in your heart, who need us to act with urgency and persistence to bring joy and justice to their lives. Aloud or in silence, let us lift up those names. [Moment for names to be called out.]

**Leader:** Friends, the one we call Holy, the Eternal Source of Love and Justice, calls us to pursue justice for children with urgency and persistence, today and every day.

How will you speak out with and for children and families whose voices have too long been ignored, who struggle in poverty, without health coverage, in a chasm of inequity and a widening academic achievement gap, at risk in the Cradle to Prison Pipeline? How will you speak out with them for justice?

**People: “With urgency and persistence!”**

**Leader:** How will you reach out to children who need our care—those vulnerable to abuse and neglect, those who are hungry and homeless, those who are suspended and incarcerated? How will you reach out to children who need rich early learning experiences, strong schools, and caring communities?

**People: “With urgency and persistence!”**



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

**Leader:** How will you pursue justice so that every child has a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life?

**People: “With urgency and persistence!”**

**Leader:** The pursuit of justice is a marathon, not a sprint. Let us draw on our own deep commitment, on the support and companionship of others in the race, and on the guidance and sustenance of the Holy as we look to reaching the finish line so that every child of God experiences love and justice.

### Resources for the Blessing

#### **Sending Forth: This Moment for America’s Children**

**Leader:** Hear these words from cellist and composer Pablo Casals as we prepare to pursue justice for children with urgency and persistence:

*Each second we live is a new and unique moment of the universe,  
a moment that will never be again.  
And what do we teach our children?  
We teach them that two and two make four,  
and that Paris is the capital of France.  
When will we also teach them what they are?  
We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are?  
You are a marvel. You are unique.  
In all the years that have passed, there has never been another child like you.  
Your legs, your arms, your clever fingers, the way you move.  
You may become a Shakespeare, a Michaelangelo, a Beethoven.  
You have the capacity for anything.  
Yes, you are a marvel.  
And when you grow up, can you then harm another who is, like you, a marvel?  
You must work, we must all work, to make the world worthy of its children.*

**Leader:** We don’t have a minute to wait or a child to waste. May each of us go forth to work to make this world worthy of our children.

#### **Alternative reading from Hindu tradition:**

*(If this reading is substituted for the opening reading, this reading might be offered as part of the closing Blessings)*

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

### **Sending Forth**

Friends, with God's grace we are ready, ready to go into the world and help all children learn and succeed.

We are ready, ready to spread the word of God's love for children.

We are ready, ready to support and uphold each other as we serve children and speak out for them.

Know that you go into a world ready and waiting, urgently waiting, for your loving service.

And know that God goes with you, even before you, into that world and work. Amen.

### **Sending and Blessing**

Shalom. Salaam. Peace.

May the Eternal source of love who called us into being  
go with you now to bring love and justice and peace to every child.

Shalom. Salaam. Peace.



## Resources from Many Faiths

The following pages provide resources from a variety of faith traditions: the Bahá'í faith, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Native American traditions, Sikhism and Unitarian Universalism. The resources include passages from sacred texts or other writings central to these traditions, prayers and reflections.

**For Christian and Jewish resources, please draw from the extensive materials provided elsewhere in the Children's Sabbath resource manual.**

These resources may be used in a multifaith Children's Sabbath service, to spark a Children's Sabbath in places of worship of these traditions, or to enrich the Children's Sabbath of congregations from other traditions. They also may be used in an interfaith Children's Sabbath educational program.



### Bahá'í Faith Resources

This section provides suggestions for learning activities for children, youth and adults, devotional and fellowship activities for the Nineteen Day Feast for the Month of 'Ilm (Knowledge), selections from the Bahá'í Writings on putting our faith into action, and resources for continuing the community's involvement in the themes of the Children's Sabbath beyond the event itself. Please utilize these as appropriate for your community. A brief Glossary is provided at the end of this section, to acquaint the reader with terms that may be unfamiliar.

#### Suggestions for Observances and Related Activities:

- **Feast of 'Ilm (Knowledge):** National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® celebration. Hence, you may wish to join the Children's Sabbath early (as do many places of worship) and consider including the readings and prayers about faith in action reprinted in this section, for the devotional, consultative and fellowship portions of Feast of 'Ilm. Include a diversity of readers, including children and youth. Consider inviting others to serve refreshments to the children and youth, and/or to those who work to fill the needs of children and youth, such as teachers, parents, grandparents, social workers and health care providers. During the administrative portion of the Feast, encourage consultation about specific needs and hopes of children and youths in your community.
- **Devotional meetings:** Encourage community and individual devotional meetings during the Children's Sabbath weekend to focus on the theme of "Realizing Dr. King's Vision for Every Child: Lives of Hope, Not Despair," perhaps including some of the readings and prayers reprinted in this section. Consider inviting children and youths to be involved in planning and presenting a devotional meeting on the subject of creating a better world of justice and love.
- **Children and youth classes:** Encourage children and youth classes in the community to utilize the materials in this manual for their participation in observing the Children's Sabbath.

- **Ongoing community learning through local study groups or weekend workshops:**  
Consider beginning study circles in your community that help develop strong, vibrant communities and families, in which children and youth can thrive. Many Bahá'í curricula support the themes of providing for the needs of children, creating a more just and prosperous world and developing nurturing communities. For a variety of educational resources, see [www.ruhiresources.org](http://www.ruhiresources.org) and [www.corecurriculum.org](http://www.corecurriculum.org).
- **Encourage every family in your community to subscribe to (and read with their child), *Brilliant Star*,** the Bahá'í children's magazine. Included in this section are many activities and articles from past issues. For subscription information contact BDS at [www.Baháibookstore.com](http://www.Baháibookstore.com), call 1-800-999-9019 or visit [www.brilliantstarmagazine.org](http://www.brilliantstarmagazine.org).
- **Deepen your personal understanding about the principles of justice and peace by perusing the Bahá'í Writings** through books from the Bahá'í Distribution Service at <http://www.Baháibookstore.com/index.cfm> or talks and web resources available at [www.Baháí.us/Baháí-multimedia](http://www.Baháí.us/Baháí-multimedia). Of special interest: the series *In Service to the Common Good*, prepared by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States in 2004, 2005 and 2006, about the Bahá'í approach to lifting human misery. Download from: <http://www.Baháí.us/in-service-to-the-common-good> or purchase from the Bahá'í Distribution Service (BDS).

### Passages and Prayers from the Bahá'í Writings Related to the Children's Sabbath

O CHILDREN OF DUST! Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

*(Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, Persian No. 49)*

O YE RICH ONES ON EARTH! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease.

*(Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, Persian No. 54)*

They who are possessed of riches, however, must have the utmost regard for the poor, for great is the honor destined by God for those poor who are steadfast in patience. By My life! There is no honor, except what God may please to bestow, that can compare to this honor. Great is the blessedness awaiting the poor that endure patiently and conceal their sufferings, and well is it with the rich who bestow their riches on the needy and prefer them before themselves.

*(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 202)*

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.

*(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 285)*

God has created all, and all return to God. Therefore, love humanity with all your heart and soul. If you meet a poor man, assist him; if you see the sick, heal him; reassure the affrighted one, render the cowardly noble and courageous, educate the ignorant, associate with the stranger.

*(Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 290)*



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

The fourth principle or teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the readjustment and equalization of the economic standards of mankind. This deals with the question of human livelihood. It is evident that under present systems and conditions of government the poor are subject to the greatest need and distress while others more fortunate live in luxury and plenty far beyond their actual necessities. This inequality of portion and privilege is one of the deep and vital problems of human society. That there is need of an equalization and apportionment by which all may possess the comforts and privileges of life is evident. The remedy must be legislative readjustment of conditions. The rich too must be merciful to the poor, contributing from willing hearts to their needs without being forced or compelled to do so. The composure of the world will be assured by the establishment of this principle in the religious life of mankind.

**(Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 107)**

What could be better before God than thinking of the poor? For the poor are beloved by our heavenly Father. When Christ came upon the earth, those who believed in Him and followed Him were the poor and lowly, showing that the poor were near to God. When a rich man believes and follows the Manifestation of God, it is a proof that his wealth is not an obstacle and does not prevent him from attaining the pathway of salvation. After he has been tested and tried, it will be seen whether his possessions are a hindrance in his religious life. But the poor are especially beloved of God. Their lives are full of difficulties, their trials continual, their hopes are in God alone. Therefore, you must assist the poor as much as possible, even by sacrifice of yourself. No deed of man is greater before God than helping the poor. Spiritual conditions are not dependent upon the possession of worldly treasures or the absence of them. When one is physically destitute, spiritual thoughts are more likely. Poverty is a stimulus toward God. Each one of you must have great consideration for the poor and render them assistance. Organize in an effort to help them and prevent increase of poverty. The greatest means for prevention is that whereby the laws of the community will be so framed and enacted that it will not be possible for a few to be millionaires and many destitute. One of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings is the adjustment of means of livelihood in human society. Under this adjustment there can be no extremes in human conditions as regards wealth and sustenance. For the community needs financier, farmer, merchant and laborer just as an army must be composed of commander, officers and privates. All cannot be commanders; all cannot be officers or privates. Each in his station in the social fabric must be competent—each in his function according to ability but with justness of opportunity for all.

**(Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 216)**

Soon will your swiftly-passing days be over, and the fame and riches, the comforts, the joys provided by this rubbish-heap, the world, will be gone without a trace. Summon ye, then, the people to God, and invite humanity to follow the example of the Company on high. Be ye loving fathers to the orphan, and a refuge to the helpless, and a treasury for the poor, and a cure for the ailing. Be ye the helpers of every victim of oppression, the patrons of the disadvantaged. Think ye at all times of rendering some service to every member of the human race... Let him do some good to every person whose path he crosseth, and be of some benefit to him.

**(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 1-3)**

Spiritual conditions are not dependent upon the possession of worldly treasures or the absence of them...Each one of you must have great consideration for the poor and render them assistance. Organize in an effort to help them and prevent the increase of poverty.

**(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*)**



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

O God! Rear this little babe in the bosom of Thy love, and give it milk from the breast of Thy Providence. Cultivate this fresh plant in the rose garden of Thy love and aid it to grow through the showers of Thy bounty. Make it a child of the kingdom, and lead it to Thy heavenly realm. Thou art powerful and kind, and Thou art the Bestower, the Generous, the Lord of surpassing bounty.

**(‘Abdu’l-Baha, from *Prayers for Young Bahá’ís*)**

Children are even as a branch that is fresh and green; they will grow up in whatever way ye train them. Take the utmost care to give them high ideals and goals, so that once they come of age, they will cast their beams like brilliant candles on the world. . . [and] will set their hearts on achieving everlasting honour and acquiring all the excellences of human kind.

**(‘Abdu’l-Baha, from *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha*)**

O Lord! Make this youth radiant, and confer Thy bounty upon this poor creature. Bestow upon him knowledge, grant him added strength at the break of every morn and guard him within the shelter of Thy protection so that he may be freed from error, may devote himself to the service of Thy Cause, may guide the wayward, lead the hapless, free the captives, and awaken the heedless, and that all may be blessed with Thy remembrance and praise. Thou art the Mighty and the powerful.

**(‘Abdu’l-Baha, from *O Thou Kind Lord! Prayers and Readings for Children from the Bahá’í Writings*)**

As to the difference between that material civilization now prevailing, and the divine civilization which will be one of the benefits to derive from the House of Justice, it is this: material civilization, through the power of punitive and retaliatory laws, restraineth the people from criminal acts; and notwithstanding this, while laws to retaliate against and punish a man are continually proliferating, as ye can see, no laws exist to reward him. In all the cities of Europe and America, vast buildings have been erected to serve as jails for the criminals.

Divine civilization, however, so traineth every member of society that no one, with the exception of a negligible few, will undertake to commit a crime. There is thus a great difference between the prevention of crime through measures that are violent and retaliatory, and so training the people, and enlightening them, and spiritualizing them, that without any fear of punishment or vengeance to come, they will shun all criminal acts. They will, indeed, look upon the very commission of a crime as a great disgrace and in itself the harshest of punishments. They will become enamoured of human perfections, and will consecrate their lives to whatever will bring light to the world and will further those qualities which are acceptable at the Holy Threshold of God.

**(Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 132)**

Children are the most precious treasure a community can possess, for in them are the promise and guarantee of the future. They bear the seeds of the character of future society which is largely shaped by what the adults constituting the community do or fail to do with respect to children. They are a trust no community can neglect with impunity. An all-embracing love of children, the manner of treating them, the quality of the attention shown them, the spirit of adult behaviour toward them – these are all among the vital aspects of the requisite attitude. Love demands discipline, the courage to accustom children to hardship, not to indulge their whims or leave them entirely to their own devices. An atmosphere needs to be maintained in which children feel that they belong to the community and share in its purpose.

**(*Ridvan Messages of the Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 157, 2000, p. 8*)**



## Buddhist Resources

The following resources—reading, Jataka tale, and a reflection—can be used as you consider how you might involve children and adults in your community in the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths*.

### Meditation on Compassion

Love is a mind that brings peace, joy and happiness to another person. Compassion is a mind that removes the suffering that is present in the other. We all have the seeds of love and compassion in our minds, and we can develop these fine and wonderful sources of energy. We can nurture the unconditional love that does not expect anything in return and therefore does not lead to anxiety and sorrow.

The essence of love and compassion is understanding, the ability to recognize the physical, material and psychological suffering of others, to put ourselves 'inside the skin' of the other. We 'go inside' their body, feelings and mental formations, and witness for ourselves their suffering. Shallow observation as an outsider is not enough to see their suffering. We must become one with the object of our observation. When we are in contact with another's suffering, a feeling of compassion is born in us. Compassion means, literally, 'to suffer with.'

We begin by choosing as the object of our meditation someone who is undergoing physical or material suffering, someone who is weak and easily ill, poor or oppressed, or has no protection. This kind of suffering is easy for us to see. After that, we can practice being in contact with more subtle forms of suffering. Sometimes the other person does not seem to be suffering at all, but we may notice that he has sorrows which have left their marks in hidden ways. People with more than enough material comforts also suffer. We look deeply at the person who is the object of our meditation on compassion, both during sitting meditation and when we are actually in contact with him. We must allow enough time to be really in deep contact with his suffering. We continue to observe him until compassion arises and penetrates our being.

When we observe deeply in this way, the fruit of our meditation will naturally transform into some kind of action. We will not just say, 'I love him very much,' but instead, 'I will do something so that he will suffer less.' The mind of compassion is truly present when it is effective in removing another person's suffering. We have to find ways to nourish and express our compassion. When we come into contact with the other person, our thoughts and actions should express our mind of compassion, even if that person says and does things that are not easy to accept. We practice in this way until we see clearly that our love is not contingent upon the other person being lovable. Then we can know that our mind of compassion is firm and authentic. We ourselves will be more at ease, and the person who has been the object of our meditation will also benefit eventually. His suffering will slowly diminish, and his life will gradually be brighter and more joyful as a result of our compassion.

**(From *Peace Is Every Step* by Thich Nhat Hanh)**



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

If beings knew, as I know, the fruit of sharing gifts, they would not enjoy their use without sharing them, nor would the taint of stinginess obsess the heart and stay there. Even if it were their last bit, their last morsel of food, they would not enjoy its use without sharing it, if there were anyone to receive it.

***(Itivuttaka 18)***

Better than a hundred years lived in idleness and in weakness is a single day lived with courage and powerful striving.

***(The Dhammapada, 112)***

Whatever living beings there may be—feeble or strong, small or large, seen or unseen, those who live far or those near, those who are born and those

who are yet to be born—may all beings, without exception, experience a happy mind. Let one not deceive another nor despise any person whatever in

any place. In anger or ill will let one not wish any harm to another. Let one's thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity.

***(Samyutta Nikaya, The Buddha Speaks)***

It is in this way that we must train ourselves: by liberation of the self through love. We will develop love, we will practice it, we will make it both a way and a basis, take our stand upon it, store it up, and thoroughly set it going.

***(Samyutta Nikaya, The Buddha Speaks)***

Arouse your will, supreme and great,  
Practice love, give joy and protection;  
Let your giving be like space,  
Without discrimination or limitation.  
Do good things, not for your own sake  
But for all the beings in the universe.  
Save and make free everyone you encounter,  
Help them attain the wisdom of the way.

***(Prajnaparamita, from The Buddha Speaks)***

Life is filled with suffering, but it is also filled with many wonders, like the blue sky, the sunshine, the eyes of a baby. To suffer is not enough. We must also be in touch with the wonders of life. They are within us and all around us, everywhere, any time.

***(Thich Nhat Hanh, Being Peace)***

### **Jataka Tale:**

*Note: The jataka tales are a collection of stories about the Buddha's previous births in the animal realm. A traditional part of the Buddhist canon found in both Pali and Mahayana texts, the jatakas are not merely folktales for children, but parables that can awaken adults to their own potential for compassion and selflessness.*

## Great King Goodness

by Rafe Martin

Once, long ago, when Brahmadata reigned in Benares, the Buddha came to life as the child of the queen. They named him Silava, or “Goodness.” Prince Goodness he was called. When he was sixteen, his father, the king, died, and he became king in his place—King Goodness.

His first act as king was to have six platforms built from which to distribute gifts, one at each of city’s four gates—north, south, east, and west; one at the city’s center; and one at the palace gates. From each of these he regularly distributed money, medicines, food, silks, and jewels to all those who came.

*He regarded all the people with such loving kindness that he felt towards each one of them as a parent feels towards a beloved only child.*

Now, at one time, it was discovered that a certain minister of King Goodness had taken for himself money set aside by the king for the poor. This man, the king also learned, mistreated all who tried to question him about it, using not only harsh words but dealing out blows as well. King Goodness spoke to the minister and reasoned with him, but the minister simply denied it all. “I have done no wrong!” he exclaimed, “and will not remain here to be mistreated!” Gathering his wealth, he left the kingdom and crossed the borders into the neighboring land of Kosala. And there he rose in influence and power until he was that king’s advisor.

One day the minister said to the King of Kosala, “Sire, the city of Benares is like a ripe honeycomb, easy in the taking. Its wealth is great. Its king is feeble. Send your soldiers into the city. Take the palace, the treasure, all. The king has no force to withstand you. His goodness has made him weak.”

But the King of Kosala was suspicious. “You have left Benares only recently yourself,” he said. “You are a spy for King Goodness! Yes, I see it all now! This is a ruse to destroy me. Upon entering the city, my forces will be ambushed. You are conspiring with King Goodness!”

“No, Sire, no!” exclaimed the minister. “Never.”

“Really,” said the king. “Do you take me for such a naïve simpleton? I can see it all, I tell you! And I think that perhaps a little torture will bring out the truth for all to see. Guards!”

“Sire!” exclaimed the minister. “Please, wait! If you doubt me, just send a raiding party across the border. Let them attack an outlying village of King Goodness’s realm. Then see what he will do!”

So a raiding party was sent. After robbing, beating, burning and looting, they were at last captured by King Goodness’s soldiers, brought to Benares, and set before the king.

“My children,” asked King Goodness, “why have you done such terrible things? Why have you robbed and beaten others? Why have you burned their home?”

“We were hungry!” they said. “We needed money, and we were paid to do it.”

“My children,” said King Goodness, “if you need food, money, clothing, whatever, come to me in the future and I will give it to you. You need not harm others. Such actions only harm yourselves.” And giving gifts to the astonished men, he set them free.



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

"As you see, Sire," said the evil-hearted minister when those men had returned, "Benares is a honeycomb, a ripe plum. The king is intoxicated with his own goodness. He has no power to resist. Attack, my Lord, and take the kingdom from the hands of this weakling."

"Wait," said the King of Kosala, "not so fast. We shall try this again." So another raiding party was sent closer yet to the capital. Again violence was done. And again, these men were captured and brought before King Goodness.

"My children," he asked, "why have you done these things?"

And again the men said, "Why, we needed money, and were paid to do it!"

Then King Goodness again said, "Come to me in the future and I will help you. But do not harm others. By such actions you grievously harm yourselves." And giving them gifts, he allowed these men, too, to return to their homes unharmed.

"You see, Sire," said the minister. "Didn't I tell you! He is a weakling—and a fool. Attack!"

"Wait," said the king, suspicious still. "Third time tells all."

So yet a third group of men was sent, and this time they struck in the heart of the kingdom, on the very streets of Benares. Yet once again, even they returned telling the same tale. They too had been given gifts by King Goodness and released.

Satisfied at last that King Goodness was, indeed, a thoroughly good king, the King of Kosala raised his army, mounted his war elephant, and set off to capture the ripe, golden honeycomb that was Benares.

That afternoon, as King Goodness sat upon his throne with its legs carved like those of an antelope, he turned to his bodyguard of one thousand champions standing there. Each of those men was an unbeaten warrior, loyal, strong, and disciplined. And King Goodness said, "My children. It is war. I can feel it. You must be prepared." And those one thousand champions shouted, "Give us the order, Lord, and we will destroy any army. We will drive them back, take their king captive, and secure our borders."

But King Goodness said, "No violence, my children. None. Let them enter the kingdom. Let them enter the city. Let them enter the palace and yes, even come into the throne room itself. But you must be prepared. No one shall lift a hand in violence. Is that understood?"

And those mighty warriors, so strong in their discipline and their dedication to that great, good king, all, to a man, answered, "Yes."

Then the army of the King of Kosala entered the land and none opposed them. They marched into the city of Benares. No army of warriors stopped them. They mounted the steps of the palace and shattered the great bronze doors. Still no weapon was raised against them. They marched into the marble throne room of the great King Goodness. There sat King Goodness on his golden throne, surrounded by his one thousand champions. "Remember, no violence, my children," cautioned the king. "No thoughts of anger or hatred. Let thoughts of charity and love alone fill your hearts." And even as the men of Kosala laid rough hands upon him, he cautioned his champions, over and over, "No violence, my children. None." And so great was the discipline of those one thousand champions that not even one broke form in anger to destroy the enemy host.



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

Then the great King Goodness and his one thousand champions were all brought to the graveyard. Their weapons were taken from them and all were buried up to the neck in the earth. The ground was stamped down around them. And, as the sun set, they were abandoned there.

Darkness fell. The night grew chill. Towards midnight furtive shapes gathered, pacing nervously in the shadows. The jackals had come to devour fresh corpses. As they slunk forward, King Goodness said to his men, "Let your hearts be filled only with love and charity, my children. More powerful than any weapon is the desire for goodness."

When the jackals came close, the king and his men gave a great shout. At once the jackals turned and fled in terror. But, after a time, when nothing more happened, they returned and drew closer again. Then once more King Goodness and his men gave a great shout. And once more the jackals fled in fear. But, again, finding no one giving chase, they once more crept near. Then, for the third time, the king and his men raised their cry. But this time the jackal leader barked, "These are only prisoners, condemned men, trapped and helpless. Let us go forward and devour them."

And this time they came on and did not turn away.

King Goodness could see the jackal leader padding forward. Ears erect, it stopped, sniffed the air cautiously, then came on again. In the brightness of the moon's light its eyes glinted and its teeth gleamed. Then King Goodness raised his head, exposing his throat, as if seeking a quick and easy death. The jackal king, sniffing cautiously, came closer still. Then, seeing no danger, it lunged forward. But before its teeth could grip, King Goodness grabbed the fur of the jackal's throat with his own teeth and held tight. Terrified, the jackal king lunged this way and that, struggling to break free. It pulled and tugged desperately back and forth and from side to side, moving the king as it did so and loosening the earth around him. The wild scrabbling of its claws dug up and loosened the soil even more.

At last the jackal king broke free and ran off, howling, into the night, followed by his pack.

Then King Goodness, rocking back and forth in the loosened soil, broke the hold of the earth which had been stamped down around him. He worked his arms free, and at last climbed up out of the burial ground, free. Then he worked to free his companions. As each man was released, he too, worked to free others, so in a short time all one thousand men were again free.

Now, as it should happen, a corpse had been left lying in that graveyard extending across the territory of two goblins. Each goblin claimed the greater portion of that corpse as its own. Their argument grew more heated, worse and worse. Then, at the point of coming to blows, one of these two goblins said, "In this graveyard stands King Goodness, a truly righteous man. Let us bring the corpse to him. He will divide it fairly for us." And to this the other goblin agreed.

Dragging the corpse by a foot, they approached King Goodness and asked for his help. "Certainly," said the king. "But I am, as you see, covered with dirt. I must bathe first."

Then, just like that, with their magical powers the goblins made the king's own golden bath, filled with scented water, appear. Straight from the palace where that usurper king slept, they brought it magically through the air. When King Goodness was clean and refreshed, the goblins brought his own robes to him, the very robes which had been laid out for that usurping King of Kosala. They brought him perfumes in a golden casket and garlands of fresh flowers laid out on ivory fans. Then the goblins asked if there was anything else he might require. "Well," said King Goodness, "I am hungry." And just like that, at once, fresh-cooked rice flavored with the choicest



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

curries and the finest spices and herbs lay on a golden plate before him. The goblins also brought his own golden cup, filled with rose-scented water, for him to drink, straight from the usurper's table. Then King Goodness, well satisfied, had but one more request. "My sword," he said, "rests by the pillow of my bed. Bring it and I will now fulfill your request."

At once the great sword appeared. Then, King Goodness set the corpse upright and with a single stroke split it perfectly. The goblins were overjoyed! The king washed the blade and girded on his sword.

The goblins ate their fill, and when they were done, glad of heart and filled with gratitude, they asked King Goodness if there was not something else they might yet do for him.

"If you would set me in my bedchamber where the usurper lies and also bring my men into the palace, I would be well satisfied," said King Goodness.

In an instant it was done.

King Goodness stood once again in his own bedchamber and looked down upon the sleeping form of that usurper, the King of Kosala. Then, raising his sword, he struck the sleeping king upon his side with the flat of the blade. The King of Kosala awoke and saw, by the light of the lamp burning there, his enemy, King Goodness—or his ghost—standing beside him sword in hand. And the King of Kosala was terrified! Summoning his courage he asked, "Are you man or ghost?"

"Man," answered King Goodness, "even as you are."

"How did you enter? It is impossible," said the King of Kosala. "The gates are guarded. The doors are barred. The halls patrolled. What's more, you were left as food for the jackals. Yet you stand here sword in hand, robed in splendor."

Then King Goodness told the whole story in all its detail.

Then the heart of the King of Kosala was moved and he cried aloud, "Sir, this is wondrous! I called myself a man, was blessed with a man's shape, with a man's heart and mind. Yet, for all that, I did not know the worth of your goodness, while even these blood-drinkers, these eaters of carrion flesh knew it! I will never plot against you again! I swear it!" Then he swore an oath of friendship with King Goodness, swore it on his own sword, and he begged, too, for the king's forgiveness. Then he had King Goodness lie down in safety upon his own bed of state, while he stood by the doorway, guarding the great king from danger.

When the morning came, the King of Kosala had the drum sounded and gathered all his men. Then, in full sight of his army and of all the people, he announced, "I thought I was a great king and that this man here, the King of Benares, was a weakling and a fool. But in one night, all is changed. My only concern was for power; my only recourse violence and war. But King Goodness is far greater. The forces of heaven and of earth are on his side! That is greatness indeed!" Then, turning to King Goodness he said, "Great King, rule in peace. My men and I shall keep watch over your borders. I will use my might to protect your realm as well as my own." And passing sentence on the treacherous minister, he departed with his army of men and his war elephants, back to his own land.

## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

Seated in splendor upon his golden throne with legs carved like those of an antelope, beneath a great white parasol, King Goodness looked with joy upon his people and upon his one thousand mighty men. "If I had not remained true," he said to himself, "if I had not persevered fearlessly in goodness, both the people of my own kingdom as well as those of the kingdom of Kosala would have suffered greatly. At this moment what joy arises in me! How could any victory gained through violence or war compare with it!"

And speaking from his heart, he said to the assembled people, "Never doubt it. Effort in goodness will be rewarded. Even if you don't see how it may work out, persist in goodness. The fruit of such perseverance is sweet indeed!"

*Rafe Martin, a practitioner of Zen Buddhism for more than twenty-five years, is the author of numerous award-winning books and recordings for children and adults. His books and recordings have won him several prizes, and he has been featured at the National Storytelling Festival, as well as at schools and libraries, conferences and festivals throughout the U.S. and around the world.*

"Great King Goodness" from *The Hungry Tigress*, by Rafe Martin. Copyright © 1999 by Rafe Martin. Used by permission of the author. ("Great King Goodness" from *The Hungry Tigress* by Rafe Martin. Copyright © 1999 by Rafe Martin. pp. 145-51. Yellow Moon Press, P.O. Box 381316, Cambridge, MA 02238, (617) 776-2230, [ymp@tiac.net](mailto:ymp@tiac.net))



## A Buddhist Perspective:

### **Invoking Reality from *Heart of Being***

*by John Daido Looi Roshi*

When Zen arrived and began to take root in this country, there arose a misconception about the role of morality and ethics in the practice of the Buddhadharma. Statements that Zen was beyond morality or that Zen was amoral were made by distinguished writers on Buddhism, and people assumed that this was correct. Yet nothing can be further from the truth. Enlightenment and morality are one. Enlightenment without morality is not true enlightenment. Morality without enlightenment is not complete morality. Zen is not beyond morality, but a practice that takes place within the world, based on moral and ethical teachings. Those moral and ethical teachings have been handed down with the mind-to-mind transmission from generation to generation.

The Buddhist precepts form one of the most vital areas of spiritual practice. In essence, the precepts are a definition of the life of a Buddha, of how a Buddha functions in the world. They are how enlightened beings live their lives, relate to other human beings, make moral and ethical decisions, manifest wisdom and compassion in everyday life. The precepts provide a way to see how the moral and ethical teachings in Buddhism can come to life in the workplace, in relationships, in government, business, and ecology.

The first three precepts are vows to take refuge in the Three Treasures—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Buddha is the historical Buddha, but at the same time Buddha is each being, each creation. Dharma is the teaching of the Buddha, but at the same time Dharma is the whole phenomenal universe. And Sangha is the community of practitioners of the Buddha's Dharma, but at the same time Sangha is all sentient beings, animate and inanimate.

The Three Pure Precepts are: “not creating evil,” “practicing good,” and “actualizing good for others.” The Pure Precepts define the harmony, the natural order, of things. If we eschew evil, practice good, and actualize good for others, we are in harmony with the natural order of all things.

Of course, it is one thing to acknowledge the Three Pure Precepts, but how can we practice them? How can we not create evil? How can we practice good? How can we actualize good for others? The way to do that is shown in the Ten Grave Precepts, which reveal the functioning of the Three Pure Precepts. The Ten Grave Precepts are: 1) Affirm life; do not kill, 2) Be giving; do not steal, 3) Honor the body; do not misuse sexuality, 4) Manifest truth; do not lie, 5) Proceed clearly; do not cloud the mind, 6) See the perfection; do not speak of others' errors and faults, 7) Realize self and other as one; do not elevate the self and blame others, 8) Give generously; do not be withholding, 9) Actualize harmony; do not be angry, 10) Experience the intimacy of things; do not defile the Three Treasures.

The Sixteen Precepts—taking refuge in the Three Treasures, the Three Pure Precepts, and the Ten Grave Precepts—are not fixed rules of action or a code for moral behavior. They allow for changes in circumstances: for adjusting to the time, the particular place, your position, and the degree of action necessary in any given situation. When we don't hold on to an idea of ourselves and a particular way we have to react, then we are free to respond openly, with reverence for all the life involved.



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

When we first begin Zen practice, we use the precepts as a guide for living our life as a Buddha. We want to know how to live in harmony with all beings, and we do not want to put it off until after we get enlightened. So, we practice the precepts. We practice them the same way we practice the breath, or the way we practice a koan. To practice means to do. We do the precepts. Once we are aware of the precepts, we become sensitive to the moments when we break them. When you break a precept, you acknowledge that, take responsibility for it, and come back to the precept again. It's just like when you work with the breath in zazen. You sit down on your cushion and you vow to work with the breath, to be the breath. Within three breaths you find yourself thinking about something else, not being the breath at all. When that happens, you acknowledge it, take responsibility for it, let the thought go, and return to the breath. That is how you practice the breath, and that is how you practice the precepts. That is how you practice your life. Practice is not a process for getting someplace; it is not a process that gets us to enlightenment. Practice is, in itself, enlightenment.

It is one thing to study the precepts, but the real point of practice is to be the precepts through and through, to manifest them with our lives. The precepts are a sword that kills and a sword that gives life. The sword that kills is the absolute basis of reality, no-self. The sword that gives life is the compassion that comes out of that realization of no-self. The precepts are the sword of the realized mind.

The precepts need to be understood clearly from the literal point of view, from the perspective of compassion and reverence for life, and from the absolute, or "one-mind," point of view. Their richness is wasted if we see them simplistically as a set of rules, a list of "dos and don'ts." They are not meant to bind but to liberate. In fact, they define a life that is unhindered, complete, free. What the precepts do is to bring into consciousness that which is already there.

When one only reads about Buddhism, one can come to the conclusion that Zen is amoral, that it considers itself above morality and does not address itself to ethical teachings. That is the view of a person standing on the sidelines, only involved intellectually. Those who truly embrace this practice cannot help but see the intimacy between the Buddhadharma and a moral and ethical life. It is intrinsic to the teaching itself. The life of the Buddha is the manifestation of compassion, but if we do not engage it, it does nothing. It all depends on us. To stand on the sidelines merely thinking about practice is self-styled Zen. For the teachings to come alive, they have to be lived with the whole body and mind.

I feel that because we put such an emphasis on the precepts, we have a moral obligation to do something about that misconception concerning Zen and morality. There are thousands of Zen practitioners in our country, many thousands who have received the precepts and taken refuge in the Three Treasures but who don't really know what they've done. They have no idea what the precepts mean.

Ask yourself what it means to take refuge in the Three Treasures. What is refuge? What, really, are the Three Treasures? We say "Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha," but what does that mean? Those are the words. What is the reality of Buddha, of being one with the Buddha, being one with the Dharma, being one with the Sangha? It is not some idea. It is a reality, a state of consciousness, a state of being. It is the state of being in harmony with the moral and ethical teachings.



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

We live in a time period of considerable moral crisis, with an erosion of values and a fragmentation of meaning prevalent throughout the fabric of the society. The crisis impacts on us personally, as a nation, and as a planet. The injuries that we inflict on each other and on our environment can only be healed by sound moral and ethical commitment. That doesn't mean being puritanical. It doesn't mean being "moralistic." These precepts have a vitality that is unique in the great religions. They are alive, not fixed. They function broadly and deeply, taking into account the intricacies and subtleties of conditions encountered.

There is so much to learn. The precepts are incredibly profound. Don't take them lightly. They are direct. They are subtle. They are bottomless. Please use them. Press up against them. Push them. See where they take you. Make them your own. They are no small thing, by any measure. They nourish, they heal, and they give life to the Buddha.

### Atonement:

#### *Realizing Responsibility*

*All evil karma ever committed by me since of old,  
Because of my beginningless greed, anger, and ignorance,  
Born of my body, mouth, and thought,  
Now I atone for it all.*

Many rites of passage that take place in the context of Zen practice include the Verse of Atonement near the beginning of the ceremony. The Verse of Atonement, or At-one-ment, creates a pure and unconditioned state of consciousness. It introduces an attitude of mind conducive to entering and engaging a new way of being, a mind receptive and open to transformation.

Engaging the precepts as one's life is a serious matter. When we vow to maintain them, making a commitment to manifest our life with the wisdom and compassion of the Tathagata, we enter a new and different realm. In that passage, the Verse of Atonement establishes a clean slate.

The spiritual search begins when we open our mind and heart, raising to consciousness the inherent possibility of completely realizing this human life. We call it raising the bodhi mind. This raising of the bodhi mind simply means seeing, hearing, feeling, experiencing and realizing in ways that were not even imagined before. It means opening the doors of perception and awareness.

Usually, out of that transformation and opening emerges practice. And practice is doing. Practice means commitment and action. We are no longer observers standing on the sidelines. We become participants.

With practice—the doing, the commitment, the action—there comes discovery and realization. As a result, the precepts begin to be actualized as our own life. We make conscious, in a very personal way, the identity of the life-stream of the Buddhas and ancestors with the life-stream of all sentient beings. Not the life-stream of the Buddhas and ancestors in identity with our life-stream alone, but the life-stream of the Buddhas and ancestors in identity with all sentient beings, which, of course, includes oneself.

Real atonement takes place only when the bodhi mind has been raised and practice is engaged. When that has happened, we're dealing with a very powerful spiritual magnet that attracts everything into the sphere of practice. Raising the bodhi mind, practice and enlightenment thus become one reality.



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

*All evil karma ever committed by me since of old.* Every cause has an effect, and every effect is the next cause. But we should always appreciate the fact that cause and effect are one; they are not two distinct events. Cause does not precede effect, and effect does not follow cause. This is why karma does not move in only one direction. Remarkably it moves backward in time and space as well as forward in time and space. It permeates the ten directions.

*Because of my beginningless greed, anger and ignorance.* Greed, anger and ignorance are the three poisons. They are the basis of evil karma. Transformed, they become the three virtues — compassion, wisdom and enlightenment, and these qualities are the basis of good karma. They describe a way of being in harmony with the nature of all things.

*Born of my body, mouth and thought.* Body, mouth and thought are the spheres of action where karma is created, both good and evil. What we do with our bodies, what we do with our words, and what we do with our thoughts, all lead to consequences, all establish specific karma. We should appreciate this fact thoroughly.

Body language speaks outwardly and inwardly. When you clench your fists and grit your teeth, you create anger mentally and physically. When you place your hands in the cosmic mudra, you create a state of consciousness that reflects introspection and peace. What we do with our bodies is who we are. It is for that reason that the posture of zazen is so important.

When we bow, we manifest the body karma of the three virtues. When we gassho we manifest the body karma of the three virtues. It is nearly impossible to communicate the meaning of this in words. Most of it is a process of personal discovery. If you just sit cross-legged and make the cosmic mudra with your hands, you may appreciate how that mudra affects your whole being, how it can turn your attention inward to the deepest aspects of yourself. There are other mudras, some that turn you outward, toward the world, but all of them are about the karma of body.

Words are also karma. What we say has a tremendous impact on our lives and on the world around us. When we vow to attain the Way, we connect with the karma of that vow. In chanting the name of the Buddha, we are one with the Buddha. There is no separation. On the other hand, "God, give me a Mercedes" creates an immediate separation. When our words are motivated by compassion and wisdom, they manifest as wisdom and compassion. When our words are motivated by greed, anger, and ignorance, that's what they manifest. When we express goodwill, we create the karma of goodwill. When we express anger, we create the karma of anger.

There is also the illusive karma of thought, which is all too often unrecognized. Thought, in and of itself, has the ability to transform. Actually, transformation can occur in all three spheres, but generally we pay little attention to the cause-and-effect power of thought. We think it is a very personal, invisible process, and that nobody knows about it. But thoughts radiate like signals from a telecommunication satellite. We project what we are thinking in hundreds of ways. What we think touches the world and it touches us.

When thoughts move inward, and these thoughts are thoughts of greed, anger, and ignorance, we end up chewing up our own bodies. We end up destroying ourselves. This happens on both an individual and a collective level. Sometimes it is easy to see this in people's faces; somebody who is fifty years old looks a hundred; somebody who is a hundred years old looks fifty. Why? It is about body, mouth, and thought. It is karma that creates who we are, how we live our lives, how we relate to each other, and how we relate to ourselves. It is that simple and that important.

## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

Now I atone for it all. When at-one-ment takes place with the whole body and mind, you have created a state that is pure and unconditioned. Spiritual realization and moral action are one reality. They are interdependent—just like cause and effect. Enlightenment is not beyond good and evil, as popularized Zen would have us believe. It is rather a way of using one's body and mind and living one's life with a clear and unequivocal moral commitment. Enlightenment is realized and actualized not only in the realm of good and evil but also within all dualities, and is at the same time not stained by those dualities. To realize the Verse of Atonement is to enter the practice of the precepts with the whole body and mind, prepared to make the enlightenment of all Buddhas, past and present, one's true self.

*John Daido Looi is the founder and spiritual leader of the Mountains and Rivers Order of Zen Buddhism and abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery, as well as a lineage holder in both the Rinzai and Soto Schools of Zen. Devoted to maintaining the authenticity of these traditions, Daido Roshi is known for his unique adaptation of traditional Buddhism into an American context, particularly with regard to the arts, the environment, social action, and the use of modern media as a vehicle of spiritual training and social change.*





## Hindu Resources

The following resources—reflections, songs, prayers and stories—can be used to engage children and adults in your temple during your *National Observance of Children's Sabbath* celebration.

### Reflection

#### **Charity (daana)**

Charity is considered to be a cardinal duty of a Hindu. A Hindu is supposed to perform a *athithi* and *balivaivsadeva* sacrifice every day. The former consists of feeding a guest or a poor person and the latter feeding and taking care of livestock. Special occasions have been earmarked for charity, such as birth and marriage of a child, death of the parents, eclipses, and two seasons of *sraavana* (July-August) and *maarghshira* (November-December)—both these times nature is vibrant and crops are ready. *Daana* can be given as food (*anna*), knowledge (*vidya*), land (*bhu*) for temples, clothes (*vastra*), ornaments (*svarna*), grains (*dhaanya*) and water (*jala*). Charitable acts should be done without any ulterior motive such as fame or for return of a favor. **(By Dr. Vidya Bhushan Gupta)**

The goal of the multifaith Children's Sabbath weekend is to make our congregations aware of the plight of children living in poverty in the United States. A nation's children, rich or poor, are its most precious possession and its hopes and aspirations. The most important oblation in a Hindu religious service is offered to God *prajapati*, protector of progeny, to pray for healthy children who are givers of joy. [Rig-Veda X, 41-42] Making this wish for everyone in the society, the mantra uses first person plural 'us' instead of first person singular 'me.' Let us offer this oblation to almighty God *prajapati* on this weekend for all our children, those who are born in riches and those who are born in poverty, that every one of them may have all the opportunities to achieve the potential that God has endowed them with. Let us affirm our commitment to those who are born in poverty by vowing that we will contribute to their welfare in whatever way we can (*yatha-sambhav*), either in cash by donating money for the schools, orphanages, and other programs that serve them or in kind through advocacy to create opportunities for them to get better education, health care and to help their families move out of poverty.

Salvation or God realization in Hinduism depends upon performance of good deeds (*karma*), altruistic, for the benefit of the world at large (*shrauta karma*) and egoistic, for the well-being of oneself and one's family (*smaarta karma*). Deeds done for the poor and not-so-fortunate can be considered both *shrauta* and *smaarta*, depending upon the philosophical perspective (*darshan*) from which we conceptualize God and His children—as a universal spirit pervading everything in this world (*Isha vasya idam sarvum, yat kinchit jagatyam jagat*) (*Ishwar sarva butanaam hrideshu tishatathi Arjuna*), a universal ocean in which we exist temporarily as waves, part and yet separate for a finite time (monism) or as a divine father or mother of everyone of us (*sarveshaam amritsya putrah*). Each of these concepts unites us in a way that helping one another in times of difficulty is not an act of sympathy, empathy or altruism, but an act of self help and preservation because in essence we are the same. Therefore to a Hindu the act of helping the poor is not an act of pity but a sacred duty.

At the ethical level, Rig-Veda reminds us that, “It is expected of every rich man to satisfy the poor implorer. Let the rich have foresight that the rich of today may not remain rich tomorrow because remember that riches revolve from person to person like the spokes of a wheel.” The same hymn warns us that the riches of one who gives liberally do not waste away while the one who does not give does not find anyone to console him. A person who has ample food in his store and hardens his heart against the needy person who comes in a miserable shape begging for bread to eat, will find no one to console him. It declares that bounteous is he who gives food to the needy and helps a person in need, to him there is ample recompense, and success awaits him in battle because he makes a friend of him in future troubles. [Rig-Veda X 117]. In Hindu codes of ethics (*dharma*) service (*seva*) and compassion (*daya*) are considered cardinal virtues. Satya Sai Baba, a Hindu monk, calls the service of the poor or *dridra narayana* as the highest form of spiritual practice. Swamii Dayananda, a social reformer, made the welfare of everyone in the society an article of faith of his organization.

So, I urge all Hindus to reflect upon their duty to the poor and unfortunate in the society and do whatever they can to help them. In the future of our children lies the future of humankind. Service and love make us dear to the lord as Krishna says in Gita, “the One who is not envious (*advesta sarva-bhutanam*) but who is a kind friend to all living beings (*maitrah karuna eva ca*), who does not think himself a proprietor (*nirmamo*), who is free from false ego (*nirahankarah*) and ...and whose mind and intelligence are in agreement with Me (*mayy arpita-mano-buddhir*)—he is very dear to Me (*yo mad-bhaktah sa me priyah*).”

### Compassion (Daya)

*Daya dharma kaa mool hai, paap mool abhimaan*

Compassion is the root of religion while arrogance is a sin.

*Bada hua to kyaa hua jese ped khajoor, punchhi ko chaayaa nahin phal laage ati dur.*

What is the idea of being tall like a date palm tree which does not give shelter to the birds and carries fruit too high to be accessible?

*Bhunjate te twagham paapaah ye pachanty aatmakaarnaat*

Those sinful ones who cook food only for their own verily eat sin. (**Gita 3-13**)

*Piniyaadinna adha maanaay tavyaan draaghiyaasam anu pasyeta panthaam*

*O hi vartante rathyeva chakranyam-anyam upa tish thant raayah*

It is expected of every rich man to satisfy the poor implorer, let the rich have foresight (for the rich of today may not remain rich tomorrow). Remember that riches revolve from person to person like the spokes of a wheel. (**Rigveda X.117.5**)

### Reflection

“Arjuna, whenever righteousness is on the decline, unrighteousness is in the ascendant, then I am reincarnated. For the protection of the virtuous, for the extirpation of the evil-doers, and for establishing Dharma [righteousness] on a firm footing, I am born from age to age.”

(**Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 4: 7-8**)

“What Krishna tells him is that when the world is not on the right side of God, when it is unjust and immoral, the ensuing battle for what is right and just is what brings God into the world, to be born from age to age in the fight against evil. This God remains in the world until the world is set right. He then reveals to Arjuna the full glory and power of God – the God that is on Arjuna’s side—and tells him to pick up his bow and fight with him!



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

What does this reading tell us today? First, that God intervenes in our lives. Second, that God is not neutral. God takes sides and God takes sides with those who are oppressed and suffer injustice, because God loves life. And third, God calls us to action, to fight for what is right and just.

When I think of this story of Arjuna and Krishna, which has been passed down to us from long ago from our ancestors in another time of injustice when people were suffering and calling on God, from my own experience living in today's unjust world, I can better see where God is in these times:

God is fighting alongside the mothers and families in Flint against the injustice and immorality of poisoned water in their homes and schools.

God is fighting alongside NC NAACP and in states across the country against the injustice and immorality of voter suppression and the disenfranchisement of the poor and dispossessed.

And God is fighting alongside all those who are battling against the injustice and immorality of homelessness, hunger, hospital closures, foreclosures, and rampant inequality in a system that abandons human beings if they cannot pay for their basic needs, while 62 people have the same amount of wealth as 3.6 billion people.

And because God will not leave until righteousness and justice are established on earth, we must continue these battles knowing that God is here with us. And that we will win, moving forward together, not one step back!"

***(Excerpt from remarks by Shailly Gupta Barnes on February 12, 2016 at First Baptist Church in Raleigh, NC, at a Mass Meeting held the night before the 2016 Moral March on Raleigh, NC.)***

The Hindu mind is singularly dominated by one paramount conception: the divinity of life. Regarding the creation of the universe, Hindu tradition, based on the experience of illumined mystics, asserts with deep conviction that God is the supreme creator of everything and every being. . . Hindus give God a favored place in our homes as mother, friend, child, even husband or sweetheart. God, being the most beloved object of life, must find a place in our family life. He must be dear and near to us. This ideal of the sweet God, lovable God, playmate God, child God has been admirably illustrated in Hinduism in the personality of Sri Krishna. So, every child can be looked upon by anyone as a baby God, and spiritual life can be quickened in this manner.

***(Swami Tathagatananda, Vedanta Society, New York, from "Our Children, Their Earth," United Nations Environmental Programs)***

All beings, from the smallest organism to man, are considered manifestations of the Divine or reflections of the Divine's qualities, depending upon the school of thought. Because of this shared divinity, Hinduism views the universe as a family or, in Sanskrit, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. Hinduism also advances the concept of the equality of all mankind, as expressed in the ancient hymn:

*Ajyesthaso akanishthaso ete sambhrataro vahaduhu saubhagaya*

No one is superior, none inferior. All are brothers marching forward to prosperity.

Mankind, in turn, carries a special responsibility to honor the underlying equality of people and unity of existence because it is believed to be the most spiritually evolved. The popularly recited Hindu invocation demonstrates this concern for universal kinship and well-being:

*Om sarve bhavantu sukhinah. Sarve santu niraamayaah.*

*Sarve bhadraani pashyantu. Maa kaschid dukhbhaag bhavet.*



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

May all beings be happy. May all beings be healthy.

May all beings experience prosperity. May none in the world suffer.

Against the backdrop of this understanding of equality and unity, the Hindu world has been able to embrace the reality of diversity through its philosophy of pluralism. Every being, with their varying likes and dislikes, their unique personalities, and their different cultures, not only connect with one another in their own unique ways, but connect with the Divine in their own individual ways.

**(Hindu American Foundation)**

The husband and wife of the house should not turn away any who comes at eating time and asks for food. If food is not available, a place to rest, water for refreshing one's self, a reed mat to lay one's self on, and pleasing words entertaining the guest—these at least never fail in the houses of the good.

**(Apastamba Dharmasutra 8.2)**

A householder must give (as much food) as he is able (to spare) to those who do not cook for themselves, and to all beings one must distribute (food) without detriment (to one's own interest).

**(Manu Smriti 4.32)**

In the kingdom of God there is no premature death or suffering, everyone is healthy and beautiful. No one lives in poverty and want; no one is without learning or virtue.

**(The Ramayana)**

### **Prarthana—Tvameva Mata Ca Pita**

*Tvameva. Tvam-Eva Maataa Ca Pitaa Tvam-Eva |*

*Tvam-Eva Bandhush-Ca Sakhaa Tvam-Eva |*

*Tvam-Eva Viidyaa Dravinnam Tvam-Eva |*

*Tvam-Eva Sarvam Mama Deva Deva ||*

*You are my mother and my father*

*You are my family and my friend*

*You are my knowledge and my wealth*

*You are my All, God of Gods!*

Oh Brahman Supreme! Formless and colorless are you. But in mystery, through your power you transform your light and radiance into many forms and colors in creation. You bring forth the creation and then withdraw them to yourself. Fill us with the grace of your auspicious thoughts and vision. . . You are in the woman, in the man. You are in the young boy, in the youthful maiden. You are in the old man who walks with his staff. . . You are in the dark butterfly, in the green parrot with red eyes. . . You are without beginning, infinite, beyond time and space. All the worlds had their origins in you.

**(From Svetasvatara Upanishad, IV:1-4)**

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

**Benediction in Vedic Sanskrit Pasyati Puthram,**

*Pasyati Poutram Aputraahas santu putrinaha,  
Putrinas santhu poutrinaha Daanyam, dhanam,  
Bahuputralaabham.*

May one live to see children,  
May one live to see grandchildren,  
May those that are childless have children,  
May those that have children have grandchildren!  
May you have lots of grain, wealth, and many children.

**In Honour of Children (*Bachche Man Ke Sachche*)**

Bachche man Ke sachche, saare jag kee aakh ke taare  
Ye wo nanhe phool hai jo bhagwaan ko lagte pyaare

*Children are by nature truthful and honest. They are dear to everyone. They are the flowers that God likes.*

Khud roothe khud man jaaye, phir hamjolee ban jaaye  
Jhagraa jiske saath kare, agle hi pal phir baat kare  
Inko kisee se bair nahee, inke liye ko-ee gair nahee  
Inka bholaapan miltaa hai, sabko baah pasaare

*Children bear no malice and enmity for anyone; in an instant they become your friends again. No one is a stranger for them. They are so innocent that they are ready to hug anyone.*

Insaan jab tak bachchaa hai, tab tak man kaa sachchaa hai  
Kyo kyo uskee umra barhe, man par jhooth kaa mail charhe  
Krodh barhe nafraat ghere, laalach kee aaadat ghere  
Bachpan in paapo se hatkar apnee umra guzaare

*People remain innocent as long as they are children. Their minds become corrupt as their age increases to adult life; Anger, hate and greed saturate their minds. A child enjoys his childhood far removed from these vices.*

Tan komal man sundar hai, bachche baro se behtar hai  
Inme chhoot aur chhaat nahee, jhoothee jaat aur paat nahee  
Bhaashaa kee takraar nahee, mazhab kee deewaar nahee  
Inkee nazro me ek hai mandir, masjid gurudwaare

*Children supercede adults in their behaviour - they are free from the prejudice of race, gender, caste and class. They are not imprisoned by barriers of language, religion and temple.*

## **The Story of King Shibi** **(found in Mahabharat, Ramayan, and Bhagavata Mahapurana)**

In the Ikshvaaku Dynasty (same family as Lord Ram), there was a King Shibi. He was very famous for being a just and dutiful king providing for all living beings in his kingdom. He would make sure there was justice in each action, available to all equally, irrespective of who they were. Devraaj Indra (the ruler of heaven or the chief of angels and spirits) and Dharmraaj (angel who governs righteousness) decided to test this great king. Devraaj Indra took the form of a dove (kapota) and Dharmraaj took the form of a falcon (syena) (a variety of eagle that preys on smaller birds and animals). Now the falcon followed the dove and arrived at the king's court.

While the king was sitting in his court, the dove came and fell into the king's lap and hid himself there. He was a bit wounded and a little blood was flowing from his wounds. In the meantime, the falcon that had been following, upon seeing the dove hiding in the king's lap, said to the king— "Oh! King, this is my prey, so give it to me."

Seeing the falcon, the dove got scared and hid more in the king's lap. King Shibi caressed the dove kindly and said to the falcon, "Maybe, it was your prey, but now he is in my shelter, and whosoever comes in to my shelter, it is my duty to protect him, so I cannot give him to you."

The falcon said: "It will be injustice to me if you will not give me my prey. He is my food. If you don't give him to me, then I will be hungry." King Shibi said: "That is not a problem at all. I am a king. I have lots of food in my kingdom; you can take as much as you wish to satisfy yourself." The falcon said: "You cannot kill others to protect one. This is not just conduct. I cannot accept such food."

The king thought for a few moments, then spoke. "Well, I cannot give you this dove because it is my duty to protect him. But at least I have the right to offer you my flesh in exchange of this dove, don't I?"

Falcon accepted his offer. All courtiers were astonished by the king's decision. A large scale was set in the court. The king kept the dove on one side of the scale, and he started cutting his flesh and keeping it on the other side of the scale to make it equal to the flesh of the dove. He continued to cut his flesh and keep it on the scale, but it never became equal to the little bird's flesh. The dove always remained heavier than his flesh. In the end, he himself sat on the scale to make his flesh equal to the dove's flesh.

When the king sat on the scale, all the courtiers shouted: "God bless the king, God bless the king!" Then the dove and falcon also appeared in their real form as Devraaj Indra and Dharmraaj and blessed King Shibi. They were very happy to see the king, who had proven his justice in his duty to protect and provide for living beings in his kingdom. They made him whole by instantly healing his wounds, and he ruled for many years to come.



## Islamic Resources

In this section you will find:

- Suggested activities to engage your mosque, Islamic center, school or group in the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths;
- *Care for the Children of America: An Islamic Reflection* by Dr. Ahmed Nezar Kobeisy, Ph.D.;
- Materials for khutbahs and discussions, including:
  - Passages from the holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.); and
  - A sample Friday sermon/khutbah by Syed Shakeel, Islamic Shura Council of Southern California; and
- Two duas.

## Suggested Activities

### 1. A Friday sermon on the vulnerability of children and the urgent need to care for them.

Material provided here in addition to other materials from the Qur'an, Sunnah, Islamic law and biography of early Muslim generations can be used to illustrate the care given to children. One great story is that of the second great rightly guided caliph Omar when he declared that infants and children must be given allowances like adults in order to allow their parents to provide adequate care for them.

### 2. An evening or weekend congregational event where parents and children who lack proper care, adequate education, or health insurance can speak to the community in order to raise awareness among members of the Muslim community.

### 3. A public and community-wide forum organized by the Islamic center or the Muslim community in which experts on child poverty, childhood hunger, housing and homelessness, health care, health insurance and school districts and public officials can attend to provide information on existing resources and, at the same time, direct the public on productive ways of activism to change existing public policies and commit themselves to helping in these noble tasks.

### 4. A gathering of various ethnic and religious groups to raise awareness and commit themselves to producing the necessary and desirable change. The Muslim representative can read one of the Islamicly based public prayers included in this section.

### Care for the Children of America: An Islamic Reflection

By Dr. Ahmed Nezar Kobeisy, Islamic Society of New York

Generally speaking, children are the most precious, yet vulnerable, most innocent, yet fragile, of all age groups. The future of any nation depends greatly on how that nation educates, treats, and nurtures its children. Due to the unique position and role of the United States in the world as the sole superpower, not only the future of the United States but also that of the world will be greatly affected by the way children in America are educated, nurtured, and treated today. Although the United States is the most advanced in the world industrially, scientifically, and militarily, among

other things, statistics on children are not encouraging. A great percentage of American children are left in poverty, in harmful environments, and without adequate nourishment, health care, or education.

**To illustrate:**

**In poverty:**

- Every 41 seconds a child is born into poverty.
- Children under the age of five remain more likely to be poor than older children.
- Nearly 70 percent of poor children in America are children of color.
- Every year that 12.8 million children live in poverty costs the nation \$700 billion in lost productivity, increased crime and poorer health.

**In health:**

- There are nearly four million uninsured children in America.
- Every day 1,301 children are born uninsured.
- Every 2 minutes a baby is born at low birthweight.

**In education:**

- Every 9 seconds during the school year a student drops out.
- Only 19 percent of Black, 22 percent of Hispanic, and 46 percent of White fourth graders are reading at grade level.
- States spend on average almost three times as much per prisoner as per public school student.

**In harmful environments:**

- Every 47 seconds a child is confirmed abused or neglected.
- Every 2 hours and 34 minutes a child or teen is killed with a firearm.
- On any given night, 115,000 children are homeless.

The Qur'an describes children's condition as that of vulnerability, weakness, and need.

*The Qur'an states:*

It is He who has created you from dust then from a sperm drop, then from a leech-like clot; then does he get you out (into the light) as a child: then lets you (grow and) reach your age of full strength; then lets you become old—though of you there are some who die before—and lets you reach a Term appointed; in order that ye may learn wisdom.

**(Qur'an 40:67)**

Islam commands mercy when dealing with children and considers the way children are treated as the measure of mercy. In an authentic narration, while a man was sitting with the Prophet (peace be upon him), a child came to the Prophet, so the Prophet held and kissed him. The man asked:

"Do you kiss your children? I have ten children but I've never kissed any of them." The Prophet replied: "What help I can offer to you if Allah has deprived your heart of mercy?"

This narration explains the great attention that the Qur'an gives to the care for orphans and the reward promised for treating them like one's own children.

*The Qur'an states:*

And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive.

**(Qur'an 76:8)**



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) states that which means: “I and the one who cares for the orphan in Paradise are as near as these two fingers” (while holding the index and the middle fingers).

*The Qur'an forbids mistreatment of orphan children:*

Therefore, treat not the orphan with harshness.

**(Qur'an 93:9)**

In Islam, children who are not orphans but are still weak, vulnerable, and deprived should be no different. The Orphan in Islam refers to the child who lost his/her father (i.e., the breadwinner for the family). There are many children whose parents are both alive but who still can be described as “orphans” due to the lack of adequate care in various aspects of life from negligence, ignorance, or inability in the face of difficult circumstances. They are weak and vulnerable without an adequate family income, or food, or health care, or housing, or safe and nurturing care.

A Muslim poet states what could be translated to the following:

“The true orphan is not the one whose father or mother has passed away and left him behind. The true orphan is the one whose mother has become negligent or whose father has become inattentive.”

Of course, many parents are trying to do the best they can for their children, yet face insurmountable challenges of unaffordable housing or health care, unavailable child care and jobs that pay a living wage, lack of job training and transportation, and all kinds of other obstacles. Despite their best efforts, these circumstances leave their children as vulnerable as the orphans we are instructed to protect, and to them, too, we must offer our care and concern.

It is the duty of every Muslim, male and female, young and old, to change the unfair and unhealthy circumstances of children of our societies and consequently of our nation. Muslims are urged to display the mercy of Islam for the vulnerable and the care for the future of our nation and for that of the world by working hard to bring this issue to the attention of the public and to the public policy makers, by raising the awareness among Muslims of the plight of children in the United States and of the need to change such conditions, and by collaborating with their fellow citizens of various religious and non-religious groups to change such oppressive and unhealthy conditions of children.

### Materials for Sermons and Discussions:

#### Passages from the holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.):

Use verses that assert the honor and dignity which Allah assigned to the human race, equality among all people, the essentiality of justice and standing for justice, the obligation to cooperate with everyone—Muslim or non-Muslim—on issues of justice and mutual good, the mercy of Islam and the kind treatment Muslims are required to give to the vulnerable and weak. Some illustrations are included below. Muslim leaders are encouraged to utilize the abundant sources in the Qur'an and Prophetic tradition to support the activities related to this program.

You who believe, uphold justice and bear witness to God, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or your close relatives. Whether the person is rich or poor, God can best take care of both. Refrain from following your own desire, so that you can act justly—if you distort or neglect justice, God is fully aware of what you do.



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

**(S. 4: 135, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem translation)**

God forbids you not, with regards to those who fight you not for your faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for God loves those who are just.

**(Qur'an 60:8)**

God truly enjoins justice and Ihsan (kind and excellent treatment). Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) states that which means: "The creatures of God (i.e., humans) are the children (i.e., liability and responsibility) of God, and the most beloved to God are those who show kind and excellent treatment to His children."

"We sent aforetime our apostles with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that they may stand forth in justice."

**(Qur'an 57:25)**

"None of you shall attain to full faith until he/she loves for his/her brother or sister what he/she loves for him/herself." He also states: "He/She who loves to be moved away from hell and admitted to Paradise, must not die until he/she is in a state of faith in Allah and the Last Day and must do unto other people what he/she loves others do unto him/her."

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) states that which means:

"The creatures of Allah (i.e., humans) are the children (i.e., liability and responsibility) of Allah and the most beloved to Allah are those who show kind and excellent treatment to His children."

In the Name of God the Compassionate the Caring Do you see him who calls the reckoning a lie? He is the one who casts the orphan away who fails to urge the feeding of one in need. Cursed are those who perform the prayer unmindful of how they pray who make of themselves a display but hold back the small kindness.

**(S. 107, Michael Sells translation)**

In the Name of God the Compassionate the Caring  
By the morning hours  
By the night when it is still  
Your Lord has not abandoned you and does not hate you.  
What is after will be better than what came before  
To you the Lord will be giving  
You will be content  
Did he not find you orphaned  
and give you shelter  
Find you lost  
and guide you  
Find you in hunger  
and provide for you  
As for the orphan—  
do not oppress him  
And one who asks—  
do not turn him away



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

And the grace of your Lord—  
proclaim

**(S. 93, 1-11, Michael Sells Translation)**

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

**(S. 2:177, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem translation)**

Those who have been graced with bounty and plenty should not swear that they will [no longer] give to kin, the poor, those who emigrated in God's way: let them pardon and forgive. Do you not wish that God should forgive you? God is most forgiving and merciful.

**(S. 24:22)**

They ask thee  
What they should spend  
(In charity.) Say: Whatever wealth  
Ye spend that is good,  
Is for parents and kindred  
And orphans And those in want  
And for wayfarers  
And whatever ye do  
That is good, -Allah  
Knoweth it well.

**(S. 2, 215, IFTA translation)**

### **Commentary on Surah 2, 215**

"Three questions arise in charity: 1) What shall we give? 2) to whom shall we give? And 3) how shall we give? The answer is here. Give anything that is good, useful, helpful, valuable. It may be property or money; it may be a helping hand: it may be advice; it may be a kind word; "whatever ye do that is good" is charity. On the other hand, if you throw away what is useless, there is no charity in it. Or if you give something with a harmful intent, e.g., a sword to a madman, or a drug or sweets or even money to someone whom you want to entrap or corrupt, it is no charity but a gift of damnation.

To whom should you give? It may be tempting to earn the world's praise by a gift that will be talked about, but are you meeting the needs of those who have the first claim on you? If you are not, you are like a person who defrauds creditors: it is no charity. Every gift is judged by its unselfish character: the degree of need or claim is a factor which you should consider: if you disregard it, there is something selfish behind it. How should it be given? As in the sight of Allah; this shuts out all pretense, show, and insincerity.

**(From The Holy Qura-An, English translation of the meanings and Commentary,  
Revised and Edited by the Presidency of Islamic Researches, IFTA, Call and Guidance)**

### **Sample Friday Sermon (Khutba)**

**By Shakeel Syed, Islamic Shura Council of Southern California**

*O our Lord! Grant our spouses and offspring that are joy to our eyes, and help us to be a model*

*among those who are conscious of You.” (25:74)*

*It is God alone who has made for you from among yourselves pairs, male & female. And He has made for you from your mates, children and grandchildren. He has provided you, moreover, with all that is wholesome in life. Then is it in falsehood they shall believe, while in the blessings of God they disbelieve? (16:72)*

These two verses reflect on the priceless gifts that the Most Compassionate God Almighty has bestowed upon us—the gift of children and grandchildren.

Our most grateful response toward this awesome gift of children and grandchildren ought to be;

- In our gratefulness to God Almighty for His awesome gifts
- In our absolute commitment to take care of these gifts by protecting and sheltering them
- By being a source of comfort and means to their needs
- By helping them reach their full potential
- And, most importantly, making our lives revolve around their well being

Brothers and Sisters—as people of faith and people of conscience, we most regrettably are living in a society that seems to have misplaced our priorities, almost completely.

Children seem to have become the last and not the first priority of our society.

This is best demonstrated by virtue of our dismal record in protecting them ...

- records indicate that a child or teen is killed by gunfire every 2 hours and 34 minutes
- data reveals that 12.8 million of our children are poor; 3.9 million of them are without health insurance; nearly 674,000 of them are victims of abuse and neglect; 13 million of them live in households that are food insecure, and we spend less than \$12,000 to educate each child but have the audacity to spend nearly \$28,000 on each prisoner .... and the list goes on.

As people of faith and people of conscience, brothers and sisters, we have a responsibility and an urgent one—toward this most awesome gift from the Most Compassionate God Almighty.

We are reminded by Prophet Muhammad (blessings & peace be upon him) that the “best of you are those who are best to your family.”

The question we ought to ask ourselves is: am I the parent who is best to my family—am I the citizen who cares for my own and other children—is the community and society that I live in the one who takes care of “all” the families and not just “some” ... have we abdicated our responsibilities or embraced our obligations?

These important and urgent questions are the need of the day, my dear brothers and sisters.

As a nation we have spent hundreds of billions of dollars for death and destruction in Iraq and Afghanistan but did not have enough to provide shelter, health care and education to our own children affected by Katrina.

As a nation we chose to remain blind to the hundreds of millions of tax dollars as bonuses to Wall Street while voiceless children and their helpless parents are being asked to remain silent.



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

As a nation that claims to be the “richest” and “most powerful” of the planet—how can we possibly reconcile the disparity in our priorities?

A nation that cannot take care of the most vulnerable ought to be ashamed of itself rather than boasting as a leader of the world—we have become the immoral cheerleaders of a corrupt system and a society that we lead.

Brothers and Sisters—as people of faith and conscience, we ought to uphold “the God granted dignity and right of every child born to Adam” (*“laqad karramna bani Adam”*) – and not only some ...

Brothers and Sisters—as tax-paying citizens of this country—we ought to hold the perpetrators of the crimes of highest magnitude by their neglect of our children—responsible ...

Brothers and Sisters—as members of a human society—we ought not to ask whose child it is but rather embrace each one of them- with a name or no name—with a parent or none as ours ...

Let us remember what Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) reminded us, that those “who take care of the orphans will accompany him just as twin fingers in the best of heavens in the eternal life hereafter.”

Let us remember that it is most noble to give before we are asked for it ...

Let us remember that our gratefulness to God’s awesome gifts is to protect them ...

Let us remember that children are a mighty and priceless blessing to us and not a curse ...

Let us remember as parents and guardians our imperative to be a source of comfort to them ...

Let us remember that we’ll be remembered by our care and concern for the voiceless...

Let us remember that our joy is in giving rather than in receiving...

Let us remember that in God, we seek refuge and find strength in reclaiming and restoring the lost rights of His most awesome creation and gift to us—our children.

In closing, my dear brothers and sisters, I would like you all to dedicate a day a month, if not more, to nothing else but to find ways to be a source of comfort and joy to children. I invite you to join me and Islamic Shura Council and the Children’s Defense Fund to engage in this noble struggle to defend those who are defenseless, to give voice to those who are voiceless, and to be a reason for smiles and joy to those who are full of tears and without hope. Their voiceless cries must be heard because in it is our salvation and in them is our present and future!

Amen.

### Two Duas

#### A Dua by Dr. Ahmed Nezar Kobeisy, Ph.D., Islamic Society of Central New York

Our Creator, The Lord of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, Our beloved God and Our Loving God,

We know Our Lord, Most Wise, that You created humans purposely to proliferate on Earth, to reproduce and have children and for their children, when they mature and become responsible, to have children, and it is Your Grace which has allowed us to draw from this... an immense joy.

But, we also know that along with the pleasure you have graciously planted in our hearts, Our Lord, Most Just, You have placed on our shoulders a hefty responsibility. Deeply embedded in Your Divine Purpose, is our obligation to defend all that is weak, to nurture all that is vulnerable, to protect all that is innocent, to safeguard all that is fragile and to cherish all that is precious.

And who should know better than You, O’ Lord, Who is Most Cognizant, that our children are all of these things?



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

So graciously, O' Lord, assist us in fulfilling our duties towards them so that they can grow up to be whoever they wish to become and we hope them to be. Please shape us into the perfect examples for them to follow as they inevitably become the adults of tomorrow.

Our Lord, Most Forgiving, we are horribly ashamed of the way in which we failed You by failing our children. Alarming statistics of hunger, deprivation, lack of adequate health care, and closed doors of opportunities deprive us of our humanity and civilization. Daily images of children being abducted from their homes, raped, killed, and brutally mutilated rob us all of any sense of accomplishment. Other children indicted and convicted as adults pass the conviction to all of our societal institutions. We have foolishly let our greed, arrogance, and apathy get the best of us by letting these vices cloud our judgment and darken our hearts and souls.

So we ask You, Mighty Lord, to turn the eagerness of our greed into a spirit of selflessness so that we may give back to our children the innocence we so voraciously took. Please turn our arrogance and false pride into humility and servitude so that we may rightfully nurture them the way they so deserve. And Lord, Most Gracious, please turn our apathy and inertia into empathy and compassion so that we may change the tears we so wrongfully caused into the smiles our children so direly need, and the cries we so unjustly provoked into giggles and laughter carried by the gentle breeze. After all, until our children succeed and prosper, our hearts will know no peace... and torment will continue to replace the joy that once was.

Our Lord, help us learn the lessons from all that goes on around us.

Grant our members, religious leaders, city officials, public policy makers, and national caretakers the will, strength, resolve and wisdom to nurture, educate and support our children towards excellence in life, health, the opportunity to learn and virtue in values.

Guide our society members, officials, educators and parents to join hands in preparing the children of today to become the peacemakers of tomorrow.

Help us make the world a safer place for them.

### **A Dua by Afeefa Syeed**

*The following dua was written and spoken by Afeefa Syeed at the Interfaith Service for Justice for Children and the Poor sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund at the Washington National Cathedral on October 28, 2004.*

### **Our Prayer for Children: A Muslim Call to Justice**

I begin with the name of God. The God of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. The God whose everlasting compassion and never ending mercy are the saving grace of all humanity.

God who is the source of Peace and Perfection. God who is the Protector.

Our nation has been blessed with abundance. At this moment, Dear God, help us to remember and reflect on Your words:

*There will be a time We will test you with affluence—avoid arrogance and practice justice and equality.*



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

Oh Lord, Oh God! To every life afflicted with senseless, mean acts, grant your everlasting Mercy. We are comforted in the thought that innocent children whose lives were ended are safe now in Your embrace.

Your Prophet, Muhammad, said,

*The best community will be known because of its kindness to children.*

In this time of such suffering of the children, help us to remember that our children are a trust from You. We are their guardians and You will be the judge of how we guide and protect them. Guide us to teach them how to be better than we.

Help us to teach our children that a true believer's success is how close he is to God, how relevant and beneficial he is to mankind. The more pain we inflict on fellow human beings the more distance we put between us and God.

As parents in this nation, Lord, help us to sense and know that our children are born in a state of purity and innocence. They are gifts from You.

Remind us, oh Lord, of the story when a man came to Your prophet, Muhammad, and asked, "Do you kiss your children? I have ten and have never kissed them." The Prophet replied with a sorrowful tone and a clenched jaw, "That shows you have no mercy or tenderness at all. Those who do not show mercy to others will not have God's mercy on them."

Our Prophet drew great joy and happiness even in times of despair and loss at the sight of children. His supplication should be our supplication:

*I commend you, oh children of this world, to the protection of God's perfect words from every evil.*

Help us to raise children who are gentle and polite, not timid, afraid, or cowed down. Help us to raise children who are helpful and considerate, not arrogant and loutish.

Help us teach our children to know Your prophet's words:

*The strong person is not the one who is best at wrestling; but the one who controls himself in anger.*

Help us as parents to be tolerant, kind, understanding, truthful, reverent so our children will be tolerant, kind, understanding, truthful, reverent. Help us, Oh Lord, to utter often the verse from the Qur'an:

*God truly enjoins justice and kind and excellent treatment.*

Oh Lord, those of us who carry Your trust now in our wombs pray to you. Help us to dedicate our offspring to the founding of justice. Let us take the example of Hanna, mother of Mary, who beseeched her Lord to protect and guide her child who was not yet born. Make us conscientious and steadfast parents, not accidental or incidental ones.

Lord, help us to know that Justice is Your Attribute. Justice is a balance. Most importantly, we know from Your words, Justice is a call to action.



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

Oh Lord, as children of this country, help us to grow as citizens who work for the betterment of our brothers and sisters—no matter how small the action.

As children of this country, guide us to be leaders who will not be blinded to the injustices of this world.

As children of this country, grant us the wisdom to know what our country must do to seek Your Pleasure.

Our nation is great. Our nation is vast. America is beautiful.

Guide us, Oh Lord, to know that justice for all is not a luxury or a choice. Help us to remember You give all children the right to a good name, shelter, good health, and an education.

We will work for these rights for those who are without—help us be passionate and proactive in the preservation and practice of justice.

Our children are the future, Lord. Do not let us forsake our future by harming the trust You have bestowed on us. We are ready as children and as parents of this country, as Americans all, to pass this test together.

Oh Lord! Guard our children with Your never slumbering eyes. Hold them fast with your embrace of mercy. Shower them wherever they go with love from Your bottomless well of compassion.

Let us remember the mission of all Your prophets from Adam, to Jesus, Moses, and through to Muhammad who said:

*If any of you witness an injustice, he should change it with his hand, and if he is not able, then with his tongue, and if he is not able, then detest it with his heart. But that shows the weakest of faith.*

Finally, we remember Your words to us:

*Oh ye who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer. For God is with those who patiently persevere.*

Amen.



## Native American Resources

Grandfather,  
Look at our brokenness.  
We know that in all Creation  
Only the human family  
Has strayed from the Sacred Way.  
We know that we are the ones  
Who are divided  
And we are the ones  
Who must come back together  
To walk in the Sacred Way.  
Grandfather,  
Sacred One,  
Teach us love, compassion, honor  
That we may heal the earth  
And heal each other.

***(Ojibway Prayer)***

It is strictly believed and understood by the Sioux that a child is the greatest gift from Wakan Tanka, in response to many devout prayers, sacrifices, and promises. Therefore the child is considered "sent by Wakan Tanka," through some element—namely the element of human nature.

***(Robert Higheagle, Teton Sioux)***

Great Spirit, Great Spirit, my Grandfather, all over the earth the faces of living things are all alike. . . Look upon these faces of children without number and with children in their arms, that they may face the winds and walk the good road to the day of quiet.

***(Black Elk, Oglala Sioux holy man)***

In many Indian cultures, young children are considered sacred gifts to the family and to the tribe. . . Each child is to be treated with personal respect as an individual bearing special traits. . . Each adult generation is to acknowledge the sacredness of young children and to care for the coming generation.

***(Wahacanka Ska Win Gough)***

The gods and the spirits of the sacred mountains created a [child]. The [child] was made of all rains, springs, rivers, ponds, black clouds, and sky . . . with feet made of earth and legs of lightning. White shell forms the knees and the body is white and yellow corn; the flesh is of daybreak, hair of darkness; eyes are of the sun . . . white corn forms the teeth, black corn the eyebrows and red coral beads the nose. . . tears are of rain, the tongue of straight lightning, and the voice of thunder . . . human's heart is obsidian, the little whirlwind keeps nerves in motion, and motion and movement is the air . . . the name of this new kind of being was "created from everything."

***(A poetic legend of Indians, Christians and Native American Concerns  
in the Late 20th Century. Church Council of Greater Seattle, 1981)***

Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw. For I was seeing in the sacred manner the shape of all things of the spirit and the shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that make one circle, wide as daylight and starlight. And in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy.

***(Black Elk)***

O Great Spirit, Creator of all things;  
Human Beings, trees, grass, berries.  
Help us, be kind to us.  
Let us be happy on earth.  
Let us lead our children  
To a good life and old age.  
These, our people; give them good minds  
To love one another.  
O Great Spirit,  
Be kind to us.  
Give these people the favor  
To see green trees,  
Green grass, flowers, and berries  
This next spring.  
So we all meet again.  
O Great Spirit,  
We ask of you.

***(Mohawk prayer)***



## Sikh Resources

The following resources—reflections, shabad from the Guru Granth Sahib and a sakhi—can be used to engage children and adults in your gurdwara in your National Observance of Children's Sabbath<sup>®</sup> celebration or to enrich multifaith Children's Sabbath celebrations and educational events. This year's activities should focus on ending child poverty.

### A Sikh Reflection and Prayer for America

*By Valerie Kaur offered Nov. 9, 2016*

*Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!*

In our tears and agony, we hold our children close and confront the truth: The future is dark.

But my faith dares me to ask: What if this darkness is not the darkness of the tomb, but the darkness of the womb?

What if our America is not dead but a country still waiting to be born?

What if the story of America is one long labor?

What if all the mothers who came before us, who survived genocide and occupation, slavery and Jim Crow, racism and xenophobia, political oppression and sexual assault, are standing behind us now, whispering in our ear: You are brave!

What if this is our Great Contraction before we birth a new future?

Remember the wisdom of the midwife: "Breathe," she says. Then: "Push."

Now it is time to breathe. But soon it will be time to push; soon it will be time to fight - for those we love—Muslim father, Sikh son, trans daughter, indigenous brother, immigrant sister, white worker, the poor and forgotten, and the ones who cast their vote out of resentment and fear.

Let us make an oath to fight for the soul of America—"The land that never has been yet- And yet must be" (Langston Hughes)—with Revolutionary Love and relentless optimism. And so I pray this Sikh prayer:

*Nanak Naam Chardi Kala, Tere Bane Sarbat Da Bhalla*

"In the name of the Divine within us and around us, we find everlasting optimism. Within your will, may there be grace for all of humanity."

*Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!*

### Shabad from the Guru Granth Sahib

#### Goojaree Mehalaa 5 ||

#### Goojaree, Fifth Mehl: 22319

Jis Simarath Sabh Kilavikh Naasehi Pitharee Hoe Oudhhaaro ||

Remembering Him, all sins are erased, and ones generations are saved.

22320



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

- So Har Har Thumh Sadh Hee Jaapahu Jaa Kaa Anth N Paaro ||1||  
So meditate continually on the Lord, Har, Har; He has no end or limitation. ||1||  
22321
- Poothaa Maathaa Kee Aasees ||  
O son, this is your mother's hope and prayer  
22322
- Nimakh N Bisaro Thumh Ko Har Har Sadhaa Bhajahu Jagadhees ||1|| Rehaao ||  
That you may never forget the Lord, Har, Har, even for an instant. May you ever vibrate upon the  
Lord of the Universe. ||1||Pause||  
22323
- Sathigur Thumh Ko Hoe Dhaeiaalaa Santhasang Thaeree Preeth ||  
May the True Guru be kind to you, and may you love the Society of the Saints.  
22324
- Kaaparr Path Paramaesar Raakhee Bhojan Keerathan Neeth ||2||  
May the preservation of your honor by the Transcendent Lord be your clothes, and may the singing  
of His Praises be your food. ||2||  
22325
- Anmrith Peevahu Sadhaa Chir Jeevahu Har Simarath Anadh Ananthaa ||  
So drink in forever the Ambrosial Nectar; may you live long, and may the meditative remembrance  
of the Lord give you infinite delight.  
22326
- Rang Thamaasaa Pooran Aasaa Kabehi N Biaapai Chinthaa ||3||  
May joy and pleasure be yours; may your hopes be fulfilled, and may you never be troubled by  
worries. ||3||  
22327
- Bhavar Thumhaaraa Eihu Man Hovo Har Charanaa Hohu Koulaa ||  
Let this mind of yours be the bumble bee, and let the Lord's feet be the lotus flower.  
22328
- Naanak Dhaas Oun Sang Lapattaaaiou Jio Boondhehi Chaathrik Moulaa ||4||3||4||  
Says servant Nanak, attach your mind to them, and blossom forth like the song-bird, upon finding  
the rain-drop. ||4||3||4||  
22329  
**(SGGS, Ang 496 Raag Goojree Guru Arjan Dev)**

## Bhairo Mehalaa 4 ||

### Bhairao, Fourth Mehl: 48517

Sukirath Karanee Saar Japamaalee ||  
To do good deeds is the best rosary.

48518

Hiradhai Faer Chalai Thudhh Naalee ||1||  
Chant on the beads within your heart, and it shall go along with you. ||1||

48519

Har Har Naam Japahu Banavaalee ||  
Chant the Name of the Lord, Har, Har, the Lord of the forest.

48520

Kar Kirapaa Maelahu Sathasangath Thoott Gee Maaeiaa Jam Jaalee ||1|| Rehaao ||  
Have mercy on me, Lord, and unite me with the Sat Sangat, the True Congregation, so that I may  
be released from Maya's noose of death. ||1||Pause||

48521

Guramukh Saevaa Ghaal Jin Ghaalee ||  
Whoever, as Gurmukh, serves and works hard,

48522

This Gharreeai Sabadh Sachee Ttakasaalee ||2||  
Is molded and shaped in the true mint of the Shabad, the Word of God. ||2||

48523

Har Agam Agochar Gur Agam Dhikhaalee ||  
The Guru has revealed to me the Inaccessible and Unfathomable Lord.

48524

Vich Kaaeiaa Nagar Ladhhaa Har Bhaalee ||3||  
Searching within the body-village, I have found the Lord. ||3||

48525

Ham Baarik Har Pithaa Prathipaalee ||  
I am just a child; the Lord is my Father, who nurtures and cherishes me.

48526

Jan Naanak Thaarahu Nadhar Nihaalee ||4||3||  
Please save servant Nanak, Lord; bless him with Your Glance of Grace. ||4||3||

48527

**(SGGS, Ang 1134 Raag Bhaira-o Guru Ram Das)**

## Raag Bhairo Mehalaa 3 Choupadhae Ghar 1

### Raag Bhairao, Third Mehl, Chaupadas, First House: 48235

Ik Oankaar Sathigur Prasaadh ||

One Universal Creator God. By The Grace Of The True Guru:

48236

Jaath Kaa Garab N Kareeahu Koe ||

No one should be proud of his social class and status.

48237

Breham Bindhae So Braahaman Hoe ||1||

He alone is a Brahmin, who knows God. ||1||

48238

Jaath Kaa Garab N Kar Moorakh Gavaara ||

Do not be proud of your social class and status, you ignorant fool!

48239

Eis Garab Thae Chalehi Bahuth Vikaara ||1|| Rehaao ||

So much sin and corruption comes from this pride. ||1||Pause||

48240

Charae Varan Aakhai Sabh Koe ||

Everyone says that there are four castes, four social classes.

48241

Breham Bindh Thae Sabh Oupath Hoe ||2||

They all emanate from the drop of God's Seed. ||2||

48242

Maattee Eaek Sagal Sansaara ||

The entire universe is made of the same clay.

48243

Bahu Bidhh Bhaanddae Gharrai Kumhaara ||3||

The Potter has shaped it into all sorts of vessels. ||3||

48244

Panch Thath Mil Dhaehee Kaa Aakaara ||

The five elements join together, to make up the form of the human body.

48245

Ghatt Vadhh Ko Karai Beechaara ||4||

Who can say which is less, and which is more? ||4||

48246

Kehath Naanak Eihu Jeeo Karam Bandhh Hoe ||

Says Nanak, this soul is bound by its actions.

48247



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

Bin Sathigur Bhaettae Mukath N Hoeë ||5||1||

Without meeting the True Guru, it is not liberated. ||5||1||

48248

*(SGGS, Ang 1127-1128 Raag Bhaira-o Guru Amar Das)*

### Sorath Mehalaa 5 ||

#### Sorat'h, Fifth Mehl: 26680

Raajan Mehi Raajaa Ourajhaaeiou Maanan Mehi Abhimaanee ||

As the king is entangled in kingly affairs, and the egotist in his own egotism,

26681

Lobhan Mehi Lobhee Lobhaaeiou Thio Har Rang Rachae Giaanee ||1||

And the greedy man is enticed by greed, so is the spiritually enlightened being absorbed in the Love of the Lord. ||1||

26682

Har Jan Ko Eihee Suhaavai ||

This is what befits the Lord's servant.

26683

Paekh Nikatt Kar Saevaa Sathigur Har Keerathan Hee Thripathaavai || Rehaao ||

Beholding the Lord near at hand, he serves the True Guru, and he is satisfied through the Kirtan of the Lord's Praises. ||Pause||

26684

Amalan Sio Amalee Lapattaaeiou Bhooman Bhoom Piaaree ||

The addict is addicted to his drug, and the landlord is in love with his land.

26685

Kheer Sang Baarik Hai Leenaa Prabh Santh Aisae Hithakaaree ||2||

As the baby is attached to his milk, so the Saint is in love with God. ||2||

26686

Bidhiaa Mehi Bidhuansee Rachiaa Nain Dhaekh Sukh Paavehi ||

The scholar is absorbed in scholarship, and the eyes are happy to see.

26687

Jaisae Rasanaa Saadh Lubhaanee Thio Har Jan Har Gun Gaavehi ||3||

As the tongue savors the tastes, so does the humble servant of the Lord sing the Glorious Praises of the Lord. ||3||

26688

Jaisee Bhookh Thaisee Kaa Poorak Sagal Ghattaa Kaa Suaamee ||

As is the hunger, so is the fulfiller; He is the Lord and Master of all hearts.

26689



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

Naanak Piaas Lagee Dharasan Kee Prabh Miliaa Antharajaamee ||4||5||16||

Nanak thirsts for the Blessed Vision of the Lord's Darshan; he has met God, the Inner-knower, the Searcher of hearts. ||4||5||16||

26690

**(Ang 613, Raag Sorath, Guru Arjan Dev)**

### **Bhairo Mehalaa 5 ||**

#### **Bhairao, Fifth Mehl: 48675**

Khoob Khoob Khoob Khoob Khoob Thaero Naam ||

Excellent, excellent, excellent, excellent, excellent is Your Name.

48676

Jhooth Jhooth Jhooth Jhooth Dhunee Gumaan ||1|| Rehaao ||

False, false, false, false is pride in the world. ||1||Pause||

48677

Nagaj Thaerae Bandhae Dheedhaar Apaar ||

The glorious vision of Your slaves, O Infinite Lord, is wonderful and beautiful.

48678

Naam Binaa Sabh Dhuneeaa Shhaar ||1||

Without the Naam, the Name of the Lord, the whole world is just ashes. ||1||

48679

Acharaj Thaeree Kudharath Thaerae Kadham Salaah ||

Your Creative Power is marvellous, and Your Lotus Feet are admirable.

48680

Ganeev Thaeree Sifath Sachae Paathisaah ||2||

Your Praise is priceless, O True King. ||2||

48681

Needhariaa Dhhar Paneh Khudhaae ||

God is the Support of the unsupported.

48682

Gareeb Nivaaj Dhin Rain Dhhaae ||3||

Meditate day and night on the Cherisher of the meek and humble. ||3||

48683

Naanak Ko Khudh Khasam Miharavaan ||

God has been merciful to Nanak.

48684

Alahu N Visarai Dhil Jeea Paraan ||4||10||

May I never forget God; He is my heart, my soul, my breath of life. ||4||10||

48685

**(SGGS Ang 1137-1138 Raag Bhaira-o Guru Arjan Dev)**

## Salok ||

### Shalok: 11577

Guradhaev Maathaa Guradhaev Pithaa Guradhaev Suaamee Paramaesuraa ||  
The Divine Guru is our mother, the Divine Guru is our father; the Divine Guru is our Lord and Master, the Transcendent Lord.

11578

Guradhaev Sakhaa Agiaan Bhanjan Guradhaev Bandhhip Sehodharaa ||  
The Divine Guru is my companion, the Destroyer of ignorance; the Divine Guru is my relative and brother.

11579

Guradhaev Dhaathaa Har Naam Oupadhaesai Guradhaev Manth Nirodharaa ||  
The Divine Guru is the Giver, the Teacher of the Lord's Name. The Divine Guru is the Mantra which never fails.

11580

Guradhaev Saanth Sath Budhh Moorath Guradhaev Paaras Paras Paraa ||  
The Divine Guru is the image of peace, truth and wisdom. The Divine Guru is the Philosopher's Stone - touching it, one is transformed.

11581

Guradhaev Theerathh Anmrith Sarovar Gur Giaan Majan Aparanparaa ||  
The Divine Guru is the sacred shrine of pilgrimage, and the pool of divine nectar; bathing in the Guru's wisdom, one experiences the Infinite.

11582

Guradhaev Karathaa Sabh Paap Harathaa Guradhaev Pathith Pavith Karaa ||  
The Divine Guru is the Creator, and the Destroyer of all sins; the Divine Guru is the Purifier of sinners.

11583

Guradhaev Aadh Jugaadh Jug Jug Guradhaev Manth Har Jap Oudharaa ||  
The Divine Guru existed in the very beginning, throughout the ages, in each and every age. The Divine Guru is the Mantra of the Lord's Name; chanting it, one is saved.

11584

Guradhaev Sangath Prabh Mael Kar Kirapaa Ham Moorr Paapee Jith Lag Tharaa ||  
O God, please be merciful to me, that I may be with the Divine Guru; I am a foolish sinner, but holding onto Him, I will be carried across.

11585

Guradhaev Sathigur Paarabreham Paramaesar Guradhaev Naanak Har Namasakaraa ||1||  
The Divine Guru is the True Guru, the Supreme Lord God, the Transcendent Lord; Nanak bows in humble reverence to the Lord, the Divine Guru. ||1||

11586

Eaehu Salok Aadh Anth Parranaa ||

Read this Shalok at the beginning, and at the end. ||

11587

(SGGS, Ang 262 Raag Gauri Guru Arjan Dev)

## Sakhi from the Life of Guru Nanak:

Guru Nanak was thirty years old at this time in 1499. The next stage of his life began with extensive travels to spread the message of God. Accompanied by his Muslim rabab player Mardana for company, Guru Nanak undertook long journeys to convey his message to the people in the form of musical hymns. Guru Nanak choose this medium to propagate his message because it was easily understood by the population of the time. Wherever he traveled he used the local language to convey his message to the people. He traveled throughout the Indian Subcontinent and further east, west and north to spread his mission. Wherever he went he set up local cells called manjis, where his followers could gather to recite hymns and meditate.

Once when Guru Nanak came to the small town of Saidpur in West Punjab he chose to stay there with Lalo, a low caste carpenter. At the same time the local chief of the town Malik Bhago, who was quite wealthy and a very proud man, was holding a feast to which all holy men were invited. When Malik Bhago found out that Guru Nanak would not attend his feast but instead partook of the simple fare of his host Lalo, he was quite angry and had the Guru brought to him for questioning. When asked why he didn't join in the feast, the Guru sent for the meal served by Malik Bhago and also some of the simple meal served by Lalo. Holding these in separate hands he squeezed them, blood appeared out of the rich food of Malik Bhago, while milk oozed out of Lalo's simple fare. Malik Bhago was put to shame and realized that his riches had been amassed by exploiting the poor, while what Lalo offered was the milk of hard-earned honest work.

(Source: <https://www.sikhs.org/guru1.htm>)

## Reflection: "Kaljug mein Kirtan Pardhana" :

### How Gurbani Kirtan Helps in Applying the Message of Sri Guru Granth Sahib

We often think of kaljug (an era of vices) as a distant notion that is not of our making. However gurbani tells us in numerous sabad that we are immersed in lifestyles that sustain kaljug, lifestyles caught in a web of greed (lobh) and arrogance (ahankar) to such an extent that we are in denial about them; we live in delusion (bharam)....Gurbani kirtan (the musical rendering of gurbani) can help us overcome the social ills we perpetuate, often without awareness.

I will make my point with the help of a well-known sakhi (life story) about Guru Nanak, and a sabad by Guru Ramdas, as well as its musical rendition by the most renowned ragi of the last several decades, Bhai Harjinder Singh Srinagar Wale and his brother Bhai Maninder Singh. A thread running through these three that I will focus on will be the gurbani concepts of har-ras (divine sensations) and an-ras (other sensations).

Our guru sahiban not only sang and wrote down gurbani, but also put its message into action in their daily lives to counter kaljug. The painting below is a picturization of a sakhi which describes one of the many ways Guru Nanak confronted actions and lifestyles that sustain kaljug.



## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

In the sakhi, Guru Nanak rejects the invitation of Malik Bhago, a person who is rich in material wealth but poor in ethical values, and accepts the hospitality of Bhai Lalo, a person who is poor in wealth but rich in moral virtues. Through this action, Guru Nanak is leading us on how to conduct our everyday social lives. He is setting an example that we should choose those we associate with on the basis of their ethical values rather than the value of their wealth and power. Indeed, that is the very concept of *sadh sangat* – the company of the ethical. In this sakhi Guru Nanak is also setting an example of courage, of exposing wrong-doing and standing up against it. He squeezes the food prepared at the homes of both men to expose Malik Bhago's vices through the blood that oozes from his food, and Bhai Lalo's virtues through the milk that flows from his. The sakhi uses the metaphor of *ras*, literally juice and essence.

By comparing the pure *ras* in the food of the humble and honest Bhai Lalo with the impure *ras* in the arrogant and dishonest Malik Bhago's food, Guru Nanak is also teaching us that what we ingest matters. In many *sabads* in *Guru Granth Sahib*, we are asked to drink, eat, taste and savor *har-ras* and *amrit-ras*—the experience of the divine. These have ethical connotations too. *Har* is a word for the divine that refers to the divine moral virtue of removing suffering. *Amrit* is that which does not die, which is everlasting, that is truth and truthfulness. *Ras* here is then an experiential sensation of divine virtues. By incorporating these divine sensations into one's body, one renders it capable of divine actions, such as empathy and compassion for the less fortunate, and courage to speak truth to power, that Guru Nanak is showing in the above sakhi.

*An-ras* on the other hand is described in *gurbani* as the experience of other *ras*, of excessive consumption and worldly pleasures, as for example in the following *shabad*.

*Gau bairgamhl 4.*

Gauree Bairaagan, Fourth Mehl.

*Mere rm eh nc karam har mere.*

My *waheguru*, these are my unethical actions.

*Guvanhar har aiy kar kirpbakas avga sab mere. raho.*

Virtuous, Remover of suffering, Compassionate, bless me with your grace, forgive my vices. Pause.

*Kancan nrmh jo luba hai moh m miy.*

With my being/inclination immersed in the greed for wealth, sexual pursuits, worldly pleasures,

*Gar manar goe kus man an-ras li.*

And my happiness linked to conspicuous consumption, I am absorbed in *an-ras*.

*Har parab ci na v kio ct mere har ri. 1*

I do not remember divine virtues and, not surprisingly, have lost my divine.

As this *sabad* emphasizes, *an-ras* leads one away from divine virtues and ethical action.

Conspicuous consumption is particularly seen in *gurbani* as unethical action, because it leads to arrogance, and to further greed. Arrogance deprives one of the ability to see and treat all human beings as equal and deserving of the same human dignity. Greed compromises one's ethical principles. And both these escape the awareness of the person subject to them, making her/him a contributor to the preservation of *kaljug*.

To draw people away from the charms that the wealthy and powerful can offer, Guru Nanak travelled far and wide singing his songs that spoke of the divine and divine virtues, of ethics and social justice. Indeed the theme of this sakhi, and of daily ethical action, can be found in many sabad of our guru sahiban, such as:

*a baia har har i ai an in sukari kar ai.*

As you go about, contemplate the divine; day in and out, enact good actions.

Guru Granth Sahib: 621

Our guru sahibs not only used the medium of music to communicate their message, they explicitly proclaimed musical rendition as the most effective means of accessing the divine and divine virtues – “*Kaljug mein kirtan pardhana.*” Why? Why is the musical rendering of gurbani the most efficacious means in an era of vices?

The answer lies in music’s ability to affect us. Music moves us; it creates action tendencies. Some aspects of music that are particularly effective in affecting us are intonation, phrasing, repetition and variation, and voice quality.

Music creates ras in us. This can be har-ras or an-ras depending on the text (lyrics), context, associations, memories and histories. Music, including rg music, can generate an-ras and lead us away from the divine. For example, music in product advertisements leads to unnecessary and conspicuous consumption, which further leads to arrogance and greed, trapping one in a loop of vices outside one’s awareness.

When music is paired with gurbani, it can generate har-ras. It can move us to enact divine virtues, to ethical actions. Listening to gurbani kirtan, especially with sadh sangat amplifies the message of gurb ni, the ras from gurbani.

*[Please refer to Dr. Kaur’s original article for her analysis of how the phrasing, and repetition and variation are beautifully executed by Bhai Harjinder Singh and Bhai Maninder Singh in their rendition of the sabad discussed above, Mere rm eh nc karam har mere.]. This rendition can be heard on YouTube at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-O6Lkr55\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-O6Lkr55_Y).]* Har-ras brings peace and relief from the injustices rampant in kaljug. It can also move one to action to counter kaljug, to have the courage to be truthful, humble, and selfless, instead of becoming collusive with and participant in dishonesty, arrogance and greed.

However, the effectiveness of har-ras in moving us to ethical action is counteracted by all the an-ras flowing in our bodies from our immersion in a consumption oriented lifestyle. Typically, we spend most of the time in activities that produce an-ras, and very little time in activities that produce har-ras. The music too which we choose or which plays in the background in our everyday environments intensifies an-ras. For example, the background music in shopping malls is designed to increase consumer spending. With the immersion in such environments and activities, the effect of the little bit of kirtan listening is overtaken very quickly by the shift to worldly pleasures, taking us away from har-ras and ethical action. The derivation of pleasure from consumption and egotism dulls our ability to be aware of the compromises we make to Sikh values in our daily choices.

Thus, Guru Nanak’s example from the above sakhi is very difficult for us to follow. Not only are we unable to speak truth to power, we yearn the company of the wealthy and powerful, often irrespective of their everyday ethical values (such as arrogance, greed, and duplicity), and therein lies a significant way that we on a daily basis play a role in sustaining kaljug, because we end up further empowering those with poor ethics.

## RESOURCES FOR A MULTIFAITH CHILDREN'S SABBATH CELEBRATION

However, Guru Nanak's example is not impossible to follow, if we make it a conscious project. If we bring focus and mindfulness into our daily choices and actions, and inculcate the awareness of their consequences on ourselves, on others, and on the sustenance of kaljug, we can be strong agents of our guru sahiban's vision of an egalitarian and just world where divine virtues prevail.

In fact, the more we practice the guru's ways, the easier it becomes. And that is the gurbani concept of sahaj. Further, the more we practice ethical action, the more pleasurable it becomes. Our body wants more har-ras, and less an-ras.

Fortunately, guru sahiban gave us the gift of gurbani kirtan. It is a great resource for getting har-ras moving in our bodies, and for moving towards everyday choices and actions that, instead of being self-oriented and supportive of kaljug, are self-less and disruptive of kaljug....This har-ras is essential to our ability to stay away from vices such as greed and arrogance that are some of our daily ills sustaining kaljug. But we have to give har-ras a chance!

***(Dr. Inderjit Kaur is a scholar of Gurbani Kirtan, currently teaching at the music department at the University of California, Berkeley. She holds two PhDs, in musicology and in economics, both from UC Berkeley. She holds diplomas in North Indian Classical Music and in South Indian Classical Dance.)***





## Unitarian Universalist Resources

### Give Us the Spirit of the Child

Give us the spirit of the child.

Give us the child who lives within:

*The child who trusts, the child who imagines, the child who sings.*

The child who receives without reservation, the child who gives without judgment.

*Give us a child's eyes, that we may receive the beauty and freshness of this day like a sunrise;*

*Give us a child's ears, that we may hear the music of mythical times;*

*Give us a child's heart, that we may be filled with wonder and delight;*

*Give us a child's faith, that we may be cured of our cynicism;*

*Give us the spirit of the child, who is not afraid to need; who is not afraid to love.*

**(Sara Moores Campbell)**

### New Life Comes to Us

(Congregations may wish to adapt the following reading, traditionally used for a naming or child dedication, to honor all children.)

New life comes to us as a gift.

*Each new life makes its demand, exacts our attentiveness,  
enlists and organizes our energies, and blesses us.*

*May we be worthy of the gift, and glad receivers of the blessing.*

New life appeals to us.

*Each new life is helpless and so calls forth our help,  
is weak and so calls forth our strength,  
is innocent and so calls forth our wisdom.*

*May we be wise in our strength and ever-strong in our help.*

New life grows.

*Each new life ventures first words, first steps, first essays in the art of living.*

*Each grows, ever surpassing the life that was for the life that shall be.*

*May we patiently wait, and watch in wonder.*

New life bears untold promise.

*Each new life has a story to tell, and we shall listen.*

*Each new life goes forth from us, laying the child's sovereign claim  
on whole realms of being we had called our own.*

All: God of grace, may they be blessed, whatever the pathways they follow, whatever the life they claim as their own.

**(George Kimmich Beach)**

### **Commitment**

I am only one  
But still I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
But still I can do something.  
And because I cannot do everything,  
I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

*(Edward Everett Hale)*

### **Benediction**

And now, may we have faith in life to do wise planting that the generations to come may reap even more abundantly than we. May we be bold in bringing to fruition the golden dreams of human kinship and justice. This we ask that the fields of promise become fields of reality.

*(V. Emil Gudmundson)*

