



WELCOME TO THE 2025 NATIONAL OBSERVANCE OF CHILDREN'S SABBATHS® CELEBRATION

WELCOME LETTER



Grounding Quote

"Don't listen to those who say you can't. Listen to the voice inside yourself that says I CAN."

Shirley Chisolm, Afro-Guyanese descent, first Black woman to serve in US Congress

In Danish culture and language, there is a phrase that means "play well," and it inspired a line of construction toys that children the world over have assembled, using their vivid and wide-eyed wonder imaginations to build anything that comes to mind, "brick by brick." This game is Lego. The name is derived from two Danish words, "leg godt." The founder and architect of the game wanted to create an experience where children could learn, imagine, build, and dream up a world, using colorful Lego bricks, and do it playing well. With each interlocking toy brick, children could assemble, snap together, and construct everything from trains and cars to little brick people, and play houses for them to live in. And when they were done, they could deconstruct what was built and start anew.

From the beginning in 1949, this was the impetus and idea for a children's game—giving them the ability to create and build. Seventy-five years later, Legos has helped generations of children and adults play well together to create fun, colorful, diverse, notable, award-winning masterpieces from the 300 billion Lego bricks that the toy manufacturer has made. Imagine what it would look like for adults and children from all backgrounds and faith expressions to build up a world where children can abound in faith, hope, and joy? It looks like living out this proclamation in the New Testament book of Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's masterpiece, created anew in Jesus Christ, to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." It looks like building the Beloved Community, a good work that we were created to do.



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This is the invitation that we are extending to all of our partners for the 2025 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® weekend. Our theme for this year's Children's Defense Fund's Children's Sabbaths Celebration is Beloved Community. Brick by brick, we can work collectively to do the good work that God has already prepared for us to do. Taking an action to do something that ensures our children flourish, is a holy commitment. Something like mobilizing our communities to rally around advocating for our children to have free school meals is an action. When we play well together, honoring one another, we have the interlocking wisdom, skills, strength and ability that we can assemble, snap together, and create a "Beloved Community," a fortified place that extends as far as the earth is wide and long, a place where all God's children flourish. Right here and right now.

The Beloved Community is a place where every child feels loved, valued, seen, protected, and has a sense of belonging. It is a place where every justice, equity, hope, and love abound. Struggle and injustice no longer breach the community because everyone is treated as God's Beloved. Just as the prophet Zechariah shares in the Old Testament, in places where the community has been breached, we can take action by being repairers of the breach. Imagine what we can build together—a place where our hands join with God's hands in building a place that no discriminatory policies or unjust actions can put asunder.

Lego. This word has another meaning within the faith community. In the Greek language, the word *legō* means to "say, speak or tell." In fact, it is a fundamental term that is used in the New Testament to introduce direct speech, or to convey a message, command, or teaching. Lego. Two words that are spelled the same yet have different meanings. Teachers might recognize this as a homonym. If we put these meanings together, how might we communicate in such a way that we understand that our children play well when they feel loved, a sense of belonging, cared for, seen, and heard? How might they be co-architects and experience the Beloved Community that we build together with *lego* and *legō* as the foundation?

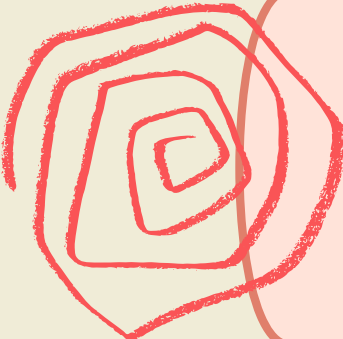




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Children have remarkable skills. They are imaginative, creative, and in their own way, they can tell you the kind of world they hope to live in. They can sketch it, they can sing it, and they can speak it. In Denver, Colorado, a group of children, along with adult tenors, sopranos, and altos, who are part of the Boulder Chorale Choir, lift their voices in unison to seemingly prophesy what building a new world can look like. With words written by Ginger Littleton, the children sing these hoped-for truths, shouting to the rafters with compassion, enthusiasm, and a kind of knowing that makes it believable and possible to create a Beloved Community:

A red spiral drawing, resembling a stylized flower or a sun, with multiple concentric loops.

*Build me a world where there's hope for children
to grow with no poverty, no hatred or war.
Build me a world where there's room to move in
with wide open scenery and clear skies above.
I'll climb the mountains and look out over the sea.
I'll build the bridges connecting people to me.*

*Build me a world where there's no more sickness.
We share all our promises, the rich and the poor.
I'll build this world if you'll stand beside me.
Give me hope. Give me faith. Give me love.*

These children, God's masterpiece, playing well together, and singing in unison as if they are architects of the Beloved Community. And they are. If you think for one moment that children are not impacted by the rollbacks, cutbacks, and setbacks issued by this presidential administration in the form of executive orders, then perhaps you have not considered that children are intuitive and paying attention. They feel the impact of defunding that happens to their school and after-school meal programs. They feel the loss when their parents are terminated from a DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusivity) position that emphasizes playing well with others regardless of their skin color, sexual orientation, differently-abled condition, or age. They feel when the essence of who they are as the IMAGO DEI, made in the image of God, is compromised by school policies, dress codes, hair codes, and legislative loopholes that deny them to simply exist as their authentic selves.





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For we are God's masterpiece. Whether it is Asian children, African children, American children, or Argentinian children playing a game of mancala, watching their favorite anime character, dressing in cosplay or playing with their Legos and building up a world where there is no poverty, hatred, or discrimination based on anything, we need to model what it means to lego godt.

Children, God's masterpieces, deserve to live in a world where freedom is the expectation for all and not the exception for some. As Vincent Harding, the Civil Rights prophet, freedom fighter, historian, and orator who shepherded Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and steadfastly stood with him, looked across the political landscape of the United States and witnessed policies that were incongruent with God's polity of loving our neighbors as ourselves, he wrote songs that became anthems on the soundtrack of freedom. Harding unabashedly issued a clarion call, one that today still invites our response:

*We Are Building Up a New World
we are building up a new world
builders must be strong!
Courage, sisters, don't get weary
Courage, brothers, don't get weary
Courage people, don't get weary
Though the way be long.*

*Everyday our hope grows deeper
People must find hope.*

*We seek justice for all people
We seek justice for all creatures
We seek justice for all beings
Even through the trials.
Rise, shine and give God
glory
Rise, shine and give God glory
Rise, shine and give God glory
Children of the Light.*





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This is how we play well together and invoke our power as children of the Light—that is of Jesus—for we are God's masterpiece, dwelling in the Beloved Community that we will create.

Your participation in the multifaith National Observance of Children's Sabbaths weekend means you are joining a chorus of diverse voices who are engaged in intercessory work on behalf of children across nationalities, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities, income levels, familial status, and race. You are joining in a commitment to amplify the voices of marginalized children—those in what may be considered traditional and nontraditional families, whether fostered, adopted, or orphaned—to work toward their liberation and transformation and ensure that their real-lived experiences are anchored in health, wholeness, wellness, and access to a quality of life that helps them thrive as God intends.

This approach to Children's Sabbaths is faith-rooted, trauma-informed, and grounded in womanist theology. A trauma-informed approach is an invitation to consider the psychosocial needs of individuals, groups, and systems. It challenges individuals, groups, and systems to embody safety, freedom, wholeness, and wellness values. We need this approach for the well-being of our children. In the Resources Section of this Children's Sabbaths manual, you will find the Resist and Rise Model. This model is rooted in womanism that integrates care, awareness, and healing while resisting triggers that cause further harm and oppression.

Dismantling the barriers that cause oppression and liberating the oppressed from oppressive systems that hinder the flourishing and wellness of all God's children is part of our ecclesial response as people of faith. Womanist theology centers the voices of the oppressed toward the arc of liberation, transformation, and freedom. As Dr. Prathia Hall often noted, the gospel involves both the liberation of individuals and the redemption of systems so that all of God's people can be free.



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The multifaith resources that have been curated and created to spark your imagination as you participate in the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths while striving toward the well-being and welfare of children are an extension of Dr. Hall's legacy. "Through Freedom Faith, the belief that God wants people to be free and equips and empowers those who work for freedom, Dr. Hall's life's work proclaimed truth to power, mobilizing thousands to do the same."

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

Let us take our cues from the children as their voices lead us forward, mobilizing the multitude to ensure that every child is treated with dignity, respect, honor, and seen as worthy of having access to every good thriving thing. This is what Beloved Community looks like.

