

# Public Education Sabbath

## NCFLPE

NC FAITH LEADERS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION



SPONSORED BY THE NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

## PURPOSE

This resource will help your faith community to plan a **Public Education Sabbath** that:

- ✚ **AFFIRMS** all who learn and labor in our schools; and
- ✚ **INVITES** those who gather for worship into a supportive relationship with the public schools in your community in response to God's love and Jesus'.

*"The North Carolina PTA recognizes the enormous benefits of faith communities joining hands with parents, teachers, businesses and schools to ensure children have the highest opportunities for academic success."*

Tannis Nelson, former president of the North Carolina PTA

## CALL TO ACTION

We invite every faith community in North Carolina to plan and celebrate a Public Education Sabbath during August or September.

Faith leaders in your area might also choose to plan an interfaith service of blessing for Public Education.

Please join us in:

- ✚ Asking God's blessing on our public schools
- ✚ Praying for all children, parents, teachers, staff, administrators, and school boards
- ✚ Reflecting on scripture and holy teaching
- ✚ Creating opportunities for your faith community to support stated needs of the public schools in your community
- ✚ Inviting a creative response to these stated needs during worship and in the weeks ahead, aware of the ways God calls us into the world

*"One of my favorite sermons is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's 'Drum Major' sermon ... He urged us to be drum majors for peace, for justice, to be servant leaders. Kids have the capacity to serve. They can develop the drum major spirit Dr. King called on us to demonstrate. One of the best ways I can think of for our schools and churches to be partners is by creating opportunities in which youngsters can act on the instinct to serve."*

Mike Ward, former State Superintendent of Schools, NC Department of Instruction, in a sermon during a Public Education Sabbath at St. Luke AME Zion, Wilmington, in 2002

This packet includes:

- ✚ Worship Resources
- ✚ Advocacy Toolkit
- ✚ Partnership Toolkit

# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## PUBLIC EDUCATION SABBATH WORSHIP RESOURCES

- ✚ In worship, God's people are formed and re-formed in faith, hope, and love. God's people are sent forth from worship to express God's love for the world in acts of service to neighbor.
- ✚ We recognize that faith communities worship God in diverse forms and styles. These resources are suggestions: they are a good place to begin! We hope worship leaders and planners will adapt these materials for their local contexts.
- ✚ We acknowledge that the resources offered here are predominantly Christian. If what is offered here does not fit within your own faith tradition, perhaps it will bring to mind an appropriate resource. We ask you to share your traditions with other religious and faith communities in your own area and to send them to us to use for future Public Education Sabbaths.

### Scripture Resources

#### **\*I Samuel 1 –3**

The story of Eli and Samuel.

#### **Isaiah 40: 3-5**

A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

#### **Psalms 19: 7 – 10**

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;  
the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple;  
the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes;  
the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever;  
the ordinances of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.  
More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

#### **Proverbs 4: 10 – 13**

Hear, my child, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.  
I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.  
When you walk, your step will not be hampered; and if you run, you will not stumble.  
Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

#### **Proverbs 22: 6**

Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.

**\*Micah 6:8**

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
 and what does the LORD require of you  
 but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
 and to walk humbly with your God?

**\*Luke 2:29 – 46**

The boy Jesus learning in the temple.

**II Timothy 1: 13 – 14; 3:14 – 17**

Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us. . . But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you have learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

## \*Suggested Worship and Sermon Themes

**God provides Mentors: I Samuel 1 –3**

The story of Eli and Samuel.

Although the human family is the basic instrument God has ordained for the nurture of children, the scripture also gives us examples of people mentoring children. Eli had a family of grown children when Samuel was placed in his care. Elkanah and Hannah appeared to have been good and loving parents, but God’s plan for Samuel included Eli’s involvement as well as theirs. It may have been tempting to Eli to say, “I raised my children, this boy is not my concern,” but Eli’s obedience to God’s leading helped Samuel “to grow both in stature and favor with the Lord and with the people” (I Samuel 2:26). Likewise God leads us to understand that the growth and development of all children, (not just “our” children), should be of concern to us.

**Justice in Your Own Backyard: Micah 6:8**

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice” . . .

There are three requirements from God listed in this passage from Micah. Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly. Of the three, it is easy to see how we can love kindness and walk humbly in our ordinary lives, but it may seem like “doing justice” requires a scope of action denied to many who feel caught up in the everyday reality of living.

Racial and economic disparities plague our schools and the experience of God’s children who gather there to learn. Getting involved in the concerns of our local schools can give one a chance to “do justice” in a meaningful way in our own backyard.

**The Eager Learner: Luke 2:29 – 46**

The boy Jesus learning in the temple.

Luke paints a picture of the twelve-year-old Jesus listening to the teachers, “asking them questions,” and, no doubt, answering those that they proposed. It is a picture of a lively, curious, and learning young man whose ability to grasp ideas amazed his teachers.

This is the only story in the gospels that tells of Jesus’ childhood, or, indeed, illuminates any of the time between the infancy stories and Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan that was the beginning of his public ministry. The birth story and this childhood story

remind us that Jesus started life like the rest of us – small, weak, vulnerable. It was part of God’s plan that Jesus experience babyhood, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood.

That this story, above all other possible stories, is the one that Luke shares suggests that learning and growing are an integral part of God’s plan for humankind, even for Jesus who was called the Christ. The progress he made in this growth is summed up by the gospel writer in the passage, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and 10 man.” (Luke 2:52.) A picture of learning and growth – exactly what we pray is life’s outcome for every one of God’s children.

### **Injustice and Inequity: every story in which Jesus healed, fed, chose to empower and affirm outcasts**

Every child that comes into the world is created in the image of God. To develop the unique blend of gifts and abilities that comprise each child, it is a necessary part of God’s creation process that the child continue through childhood an eager learner, developing his or her mind, body, and spirit. That this is not happening for many children in our society should be of deep concern to the communities of faith.

If Jesus is our model, we are called to participate in those things that bring wholeness, that mend brokenness, that welcome children, that heal bodies, that enliven imagination, that shed light, and that invoke hope. We are called by God to be the hands and feet of Jesus who healed, fed, and chose to empower and affirm outcasts.

In this season when injustice and inequity in education are particularly pronounced, faith communities have the opportunity to turn, with renewed energy, toward bolstering the healing, feeding, and empowering which take place in the public schools in our communities.

## Prayers

### **For the Spirit of Truth**

From the cowardice that dares not face new truth,  
From the laziness that is content with half-truth,  
From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,  
Good Lord, Deliver me. Amen

Prayer from Kenya

### **Prayer of Ignatius of Loyola**

Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give and not count the cost; to fight and not heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labor and not ask for any reward, except that knowing that we do your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ignatius of Loyola

### **Come, Divine Interpreter**

Come, divine Interpreter, bring me eyes thy book to read, ears thy mystic words to hear, words which from thee proceed, words that endless bliss impart, kept in an obedient heart. All who read, or hear, are blessed, if thy plain command we do; of thy kingdom here possessed, thee we shall in glory view when thou comest on earth to abide, reign triumphant at thy side.

Charles Wesley, 1762

### **For the Care of Children**

Almighty God, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer

### Congregational Prayer for Children

Loving Parent, we praise You for Your watchful eye of Mercy that protects Your children from the evil one. We thank You that You have blessed us to be loved by You, even when we fail to be obedient. Please, we pray, continue to keep Your children of all ages, in the Hollow of Your Holy Hand. This we ask in the name of Jesus, Our Redeemer. Amen

African Methodist Episcopal Zion Book of Worship

### For Patience and Discernment

Dear Lord, in the midst of everyday joy and pain, struggles and opportunities, grant us the patience to learn discernment. Teach us to listen with the “third ear” to You and Your Word. Amen

African-American Devotional Bible, p. 649

For Guidance Direct us, O God, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life. Amen.

Adapted from the Book of Common Prayer

### Other available prayers:

**Hold My Hand: Prayers for Building a Movement to Leave No Child Behind**, by Marion Wright Edelman, available through the online bookstore of Children’s Defense Fund website. <http://www.childrensdefense.org>.

A print copy of the catalogue is available by calling 202-662-3652

## Hymns and Songs

### Hymns

All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly  
 Be Thou My Vision  
 Bless Thou the Gifts  
 Called as Partners in Christ’s Service  
 Cantemos al Señor  
 Forth in Thy Name, O Lord  
 God of Grace and God of Glory  
 Here I am Lord  
 In Christ There Is No East or West  
 Lift Every Voice and Sing  
 Lord You Give the Great Commission  
 Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service  
 Rise Up O Church of God  
 There’s A Wideness In God’s Mercy  
 This Little Light of Mine  
 We Call Ourselves Disciples

### Taize or Meditative

Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying  
 Ubi Caritas  
 O Lord, Hear Our Prayer

### Praise and Worship Songs

Beautiful Things  
 Christ Be All Around Me  
 Compassion Hymn  
 Do Something  
 Embrace the World  
 Go Light Your World  
 God of Justice  
 I Will God  
 Micah 6:8  
 Micah’s Song  
 No Outsiders  
 Testify To Love  
 You Have Shown Us  
 You Redeem



## A PRAYER FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**HOLY GOD** in whom we live and move and have our very being.

**THANK YOU** for the gift of your light in the children among us, for your promise to know their greatest joys and their deepest sorrow, for your deep and abiding love.

**TEACH US** our responsibility towards your children. Open our hearts and minds to the needs which we must meet, to gaps that we must fill, to the doors that we must open, to the wisdom that we must impart.

**DIRECT US** in paths of righteousness as we make decisions about our schools - about work and worth, about salary and program support, about the provision of food and transportation and support services.

**GUIDE US** to engage, advocate, listen, ask, and act.

**WE PRAY** for children whose brains are dancing with hope and curiosity;

for children for whom learning is made difficult because of barriers rooted in language, inequity, or challenges of mind and body and medication;

for children who arrive fragile, hungry, scared, sad, and broken;

for children whose legs cannot navigate the stairs of the school bus or the playground or the building;

for children who are nourished by play and beautiful music and the opportunity to create beautiful things;

for children for whom school is the only happy and safe place;

for all teachers, bus drivers, custodians, administrators, nutrition specialists, counselors, psychologists, nurses, and volunteers who give all that they have, knowing that more is needed.

**INSPIRE IN US** the courage to advocate, the wisdom to insist on what is right and good, and the compassion to work for wholeness for all children and all who serve them.

# Amen

## Other Resources

Lectionary Helps from NC Churches

<https://www.ncchurches.org/lectionary/public-education/>

<https://www.ncchurches.org/lectionary/public-education-2/>

To sign up to be a part of the network, North Carolina Faith Leaders for Public Education, please visit [www.ncchurches.org/ncflpe](http://www.ncchurches.org/ncflpe)

For advocacy resources, please visit [www.ncchurches.org/ncflpe/advocacy](http://www.ncchurches.org/ncflpe/advocacy).

To get and share ideas, follow @ncflpe on Facebook – and chime in!

# Advocacy Toolkit

LET'S GET THIS ADVOCACY STARTED

**PLEASE CONSIDER** signing on to NCFLPE by visiting [www.ncchurches.org/ncflpe](http://www.ncchurches.org/ncflpe). We have two goals: to encourage partnerships with schools in your community, and to encourage advocacy on behalf of public schools in your community and across NC.

**WHAT IS THIS?** This is part of your Advocacy Toolkit! But for links to great resources, please visit [www.ncchurches.org/NCFLPE/Advocacy](http://www.ncchurches.org/NCFLPE/Advocacy).

We have gathered ideas from those who have been advocating for public education in NC, including our team at the Council of Churches, and offer you some ideas for best practices. We are always updating and improving; please send suggestions our way.

**WHO IS IT FOR?** This Advocacy Toolkit is for those who are ready to begin advocating for public education to our state and local representatives. It is useful to those who wish to work independently, and those who wish to coordinate within faith communities and community organizations.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The Council of Churches has prepared helpful online resources for advocacy, and we encourage you to begin there. Please visit these two parts of our website:

- [www.ncchurches.org/take-action/grassroots-advocacy-toolkit/](http://www.ncchurches.org/take-action/grassroots-advocacy-toolkit/)
- [www.ncchurches.org/NCFLPE/Advocacy](http://www.ncchurches.org/NCFLPE/Advocacy)

These are important steps:

- Make an appointment with the local leaders to whom you wish to advocate. Get to know your city council, county commissioners, school board members, school superintendent, and all who have the ability to impact funding for the district.
- Make an appointment with your state representatives at their local offices.
- Read the local news and attend local budget meetings. Know what is going on and become known as one who is going to be vocal.
- Write OpEds. NCFLPE and our partner organizations can provide updates and background information for you.
- Look for opportunities to educate community members so that they can join you in advocacy.
- Use social media to share information from NCFLPE and our partner organizations.
- Invite NCFLPE into your communities to talk about advocacy and partnerships.

## PRAY!

Spend time praying individually and corporately for our public schools. Pray for the teachers and students who gather in classrooms every day. Pray for leaders who making decisions that impact our public schools. Pray for efforts to support the advocacy of teachers in your own community. Pray for guidance and inspiration of the Spirit

And if you get stuck, email [NCFLPE@ncchurches.org](mailto:NCFLPE@ncchurches.org). We look forward to partnering with you.

# PARTNERSHIP TOOLKIT

## LET'S GET THIS PARTNERSHIP STARTED

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**WHAT IS THIS?** This is your Partnership Toolkit! We have gathered ideas from those who are already partnering with schools, and from schools who are partnering with faith and community organizations. These are some ideas for best practices. We are always updating and improving; please send suggestions our way.

**WHO IS IT FOR?** This Partnership Toolkit is for those who hope to help their faith communities partner with local schools. Some of you have long-established partnerships, and some are forging new ones. Please adapt these suggestions to your situation.

### TIPS FOR BUILDING HELPFUL PARTNERSHIPS:

- Cooperation will work most smoothly if partners come to the table with both questions and ideas.
- **Choose a school:**
  - You might consider forming a partnership with a school that is close in proximity to your church.
  - You might consider forming a partnership with a school that is across town but that has very little community support.
  - You might consider forming a partnership with a school in which one of your congregants teaches, or which many of your children or youth attend.
  - Perhaps you will be able to intentionally choose to partner with two schools – one with which you already have relationship, and one which needs an influx of community support.
  - Keep in mind that you will need to talk to the school administration about whether they want or need community partners!
- **Make Contact:** Contact the principal at the school with whom you would like to build a partnership.
  - The principal can either take the lead in communicating needs, or can help you to identify and connect with the professional or volunteer at the school who will serve as your best contact.
- **Train your leaders:** Take time to help form the expectations of those in the faith community who wish to take the lead on this project. Begin with a community meeting or a conference call where these guidelines are communicated:
  - IDENTIFY NEEDS
    - Instead of assuming that you know what the needs are in the community:
      - Ask those who are in a position to know.
  - BE A LEARNER
    - Instead of showing up full of ideas about how you can help fix everything -
      - Communicate support: we would really like to support this advocacy effort and we are ready to listen. How can we partner with you? What is already happening? How can we support what is already happening? Are there needs that no one is yet addressing?
    - Instead of telling people what needs to be done and how best to do it -
      - Talk with principals, school counselors, community coordinators with local shelters or advocacy agencies, and leaders with local groups such as the YMCA or the Boys and Girls Club. You are in the best position to identify who, in your own community, knows what is happening.
  - MAJOR IN ASKING AND LISTENING
    - Instead of making hasty conclusions -
      - Ask questions and listen to the answers.
      - Follow up by checking what you have heard: “I heard you say that this is the top priority. Did I understand that correctly? What is the best way for me to help with that need?”

- **Discern Together:** Communicate among your leadership to answer these types of questions:
  - What schools are we already working with? Which are nearby?
  - What can we offer in terms of financial and human capacity to help?
  - What resources and connections do we have within the congregation to help schools meet their needs?
  - What means will we use to engage the congregation in this opportunity on short notice?
  - Do we know other faith communities that we could engage to help us?
  - Who can lead a team to communicate and coordinate with outside partners.

## **PRAY!**

Spend time praying individually and corporately for our public schools. Pray for the teachers and students who gather in classrooms every day. Pray for leaders who making decisions that impact our public schools. Pray for efforts to support the advocacy of teachers in your own community. Pray for guidance and inspiration of the Spirit!

And if you get stuck, email [NCFLPE@ncchurches.org](mailto:NCFLPE@ncchurches.org). We look forward to partnering with you.