

Web resources will include print materials, such as prayers and litanies that can be downloaded to paste into a worship bulletin and lesson plans for all ages that can be printed and distributed to Sunday school teachers. The Web resources will also include a PowerPoint presentation that can be shown to Children's Sabbath planning committees or others considering hosting a Children's Sabbath, links to speeches by Marian Wright Edelman and Martin Luther King, Jr., to offer valuable insights and perspectives on the theme and streaming video of noted religious leaders and others addressing poverty, racism and nonviolence.

- *Nationwide Conference Calls:* New this year, CDF will be hosting several nationwide telephone conference calls for Children's Sabbath organizers. These conference calls will link participants with each other and with dynamic speakers who will address the urgent children's concerns and theological perspectives the Children's Sabbath brings together.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Congregations will answer Dr. King's question, "Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?" by their participation in the 2008 Children's Sabbath. Join the nation-spanning community of congregations committed to love, justice and peace for our children. Join the courageous community of congregations who are determined to wrestle with the challenging and uncomfortable conversations around racism, poverty and excessive materialism and militarism.

It takes courage to declare opposition to the entrenched forces of poverty, racism and militarism, and to engage in that conversation and action in congregations and communities. Last year my daughter Sophie, then 5, asked me for a piece of paper. She drew a heart encircled by doves with the word "Peace" in the middle. Next to it she wrote, "The Lord we pray loves us for our wisdom and our courage no matter how small." My first thought when I read it was that she recognizes that God loves the

wisdom and courage of the small – children like her.

On reflection, however, I realized that the prayer may be for us big folks. God loves us even when our wisdom and courage are small and don't feel up for the task. We can tackle racism, militarism and poverty. We can. And God will love us through it all.

Join the bold and determined Children's Sabbath community of congregations encouraged and sustained by Dr. King's proclamation:

"Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal opposition to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores and thereby speed the day when 'every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain.'"

*Shannon Daley-Harris, MDiv, has served the Children's Defense Fund in various capacities since 1990. While serving as CDF's Director of Religious Affairs, she created the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths and established the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry. Daley-Harris has written many publications including *Our Day to End Poverty: 24 Ways You Can Make a Difference* (Berrett Koehler, 2007) and the annual *interfaith Children's Sabbath manual*.*



UNCLE WILLIE AND THE SOUP KITCHEN by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan

First Mulberry Edition, (New York, 1997).
ISBN0-688-15285-6, 30 pp.

This wonderful children's book presents a complex and often emotional subject in a compassionate, matter-of-fact manner, providing parents and teachers a basis for introducing the topic of poverty to children. Throughout the story, the illustrations convey a sense of joy.

The two main characters, Uncle Willie and the boy he takes care of, simply walk us through several days in their relationship. In the story, a school holiday allows Uncle

Willie to introduce his young ward to the soup kitchen where he works.

In no way presenting poverty as maudlin, Willie and his protégé walk down their city's streets on the way to the kitchen and casually greet Willie's soup kitchen friends. At the soup kitchen, the boy helps prepare food and meets the kitchen's customers.

There is genuine friendship between Willie and his soup kitchen buddies. The reader senses no condescension from Willie. In the end, the young boy develops healthy questions and opinions of what it means to "feed the poor."

This Reading Rainbow book is perfect for use by any teacher (social workers, parents, public and private school teachers and pastors). The subject of interaction with people who are poor is presented in a straightforward manner. They are people, some with families, some alone, who need our help. The message of love and acceptance resounds on each page, and voices the message – "it doesn't matter where the customers of the Soup Kitchen live or what they do in their daily lives ... they are people who need help."

Any teacher can connect this lesson to the many strong messages about humanity at its very best. The Bible certainly contains many references to responsibility for people who are poor, but there are strongly held beliefs about helping others in most cultures whether they are Christian or not. If using the Bible, the teacher can choose one of the many stories of helping others to aid the children in making a connection with Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen. Once the teacher has made the connection, it is time to get the children involved in their learning.



SUGGESTIONS FOR READING

THIS BOOK WITH CHILDREN:

Here are a few questions you might ask children before reading the book: (Each response can be written on a large piece of butcher paper hanging on the wall.)

1. What does it mean to be "poor?"
2. Have you ever helped someone who was hungry or needed warm clothing? How did you help?
3. Have you seen people in your community who live on the streets and not in a house? What do you know about them?
4. Have you visited a shelter or a soup kitchen where people provide help to others with a need? Tell us about your experience.

You will probably think of many other questions to draw each child's attention to poverty in your community.

One great tool is the KWL (Know, Want, Learn), used by many teachers. Before beginning, show the children the book and its pictures, but don't read it yet.

Make a chart using the following three headings on butcher paper and tape it to a wall. What do I KNOW? What do I WANT to know? What did I LEARN? The first two questions are asked prior to reading and children's answers are charted. You may include some responses to your first questions in the appropriate column. The last question is asked following reading. Then the children check to see if they answered all the questions they wanted to know. This approach engages the child in his/her learning rather than asking him/her to be a passive recipient of your knowledge. Children listen more carefully to books when given a purpose for their listening.

Next, it is important to ask children to apply what they learned. Ask each one to commit to an "action" related to what they have learned about poverty. Ask them to write their responses on a sticky note and post each one on another sheet of butcher paper on the wall. Tell them you want them to report on their "action" at some specific

time in the future. Continue this discussion into the future. The important truth Willie shows us is that real compassion happens every day. Compassion is not an isolated event.

Enjoy watching your children or students become compassionate, caring people who accept people who are poor as people who want to help others as you enjoy reading a wonderful book for children.

Reviewer Martha Ghee holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from Baylor University, in Waco, TX. Her master's and EdD are in the field of administration. Ghee's 30 year career in education includes experience as a teacher and administrator in both public and private schools. She is currently vice president for workforce services with Profiles International Inc.



THE LORAX by Dr. Seuss
New York, Random House (1971).
ISBN 978-0-394-92337-6

Bigger is better!
The gimmies are great! I want and I want, no time to be late! Doesn't this sound familiar? We find ourselves in a world that offers a never-ending list of consumables and playthings marketed to us and to our children as things we all need. After reading *The Lorax*, by Dr. Seuss, not only do rhyme and nonsensical words seem to stick in your head, the thoughts he conjures should make our faces red. (That's the last rhyme, I promise.) Dr. Seuss has always had an unusual effect on me. In this book, which in its time was quite controversial, our friend, the Lorax, finds himself in the midst of a "bigger is always better world" where wants supersede needs and greed drives the action.

Written in 1971, Theodore Geisel is poking industrialism with a critical stick. As one can imagine, the logging industry as well as big corporations didn't take this rhyming criticism too well. The jabbing, however, goes far beyond industrialization and a plea to save our earth, though it does



a fine job at both. The message delivered by the Lorax is compelling and should penetrate our hearts as we continue down the path of "biggering." The Once-ler, who serves as the perfect antagonist, is faceless, and has far-stretching green (color aptly chosen) arms, which reach out to grab the reader. The face is that of the reader, so beware! He, in his daring pursuit of success (sound familiar?), found something beautiful offered by nature, Truffula trees, and found a way to create something that everyone needs (calling them thneeds). Thneeds were sweaters made out of the beautiful fluff of these newly found trees. A taste of success fed the Once-ler to set his sights on getting bigger and bigger, attaining more and more.

*I biggered my factory. I biggered my roads.
I biggered my wagons. I biggered my loads.*

Through incessant biggering, the Once-ler and his success-driven followers completely destroyed the once beautiful Truffula forest, which of course left all the forest's inhabitants homeless. I wonder if Mr. Geisel knew how prophetic his message would be? Not only are our forests being destroyed, our wants and our buying into the "biggered" mentality is destroying our lives as well.

So how do we turn things around? Dr. Seuss knew. To the child, he says, "Now that you're here, the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear. UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it's not."

It begins with us, the adults, deciding our course of action. Are we going to continue down the path of destruction, or are we going to set our sights on lessering? Can we lesser our factories and lesser our roads? Can we lesser our wagons and lesser our loads?

With children, the place to start is growing an appreciation for things taught and not bought and to teach them the differences between wanting and needing. Children need to be taught to see their world as God sees it. Habits of mind are formed early in a child's life. Attention to

detail and the ability to recognize what is beautiful and true must be taught and modeled diligently. We must slow down and take the time to appreciate God's gift to us found in creation, and we must learn to think critically about how we make choices.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING

THIS BOOK WITH CHILDREN:

A good place to read *The Lorax* is in a garden or outside under the shade trees. The teacher may want to bring a basket of toys for an ending discussion. Nature notebooks should also accompany each child. A Nature Notebook is a sketch pad that is to be used for careful observation of nature. The goal is to produce drawings and/or paintings that reflect the beauty of nature while teaching children to be careful and attentive observers of God's world. The habit of attention seems to be a missing ingredient in postmodern educational philosophy.

It is always helpful to give children ideas to ponder before reading a selection. It is important to understand genre and have an idea about what the author's purpose might be in writing the piece.

- After glancing through the pictures with the children, ask, "What do you notice about the first few pages and the last few pages that are similar?" Gloomy colors, sad mood.

- "What do the illustrations look like in the middle of the book?" Bright and cheerful.

- "Let's take a look to see if we can learn who the main characters might be." The orange creature with a yellow mustache, The Lorax; the little boy, and the

character with green arms, Once-ler.

- In most stories we read there are people making good choices and people making bad choices. The person making good choices is called the "protagonist" and the person making bad choices is called the "antagonist." "From looking at the illustrations, can we tell who the protagonist might be? What about the antagonist?" Let the children make predictions.

- It is always good to end the predictions with wonder statements. "Hmm, I wonder if these green arms are helpful or not? Will the little boy learn a lesson? I wonder why

some pages are dark and others are bright."

- "Let's read this story together and see if there is a message for you and me."

After reading through the book together, discuss whether the predictions were accurate. Discuss together the purpose of the author – why did he choose to write this story? Help the children come to the conclusion that we might all be like the Once-ler at different times (i.e., when we get gifts for our birthdays and then want more gifts a week

later; when we want to play outside in the water hose and don't remember to turn off the sprinkler when we are finished playing, etc.). Then guide the children to think about ways we can each be the little boy who has the power to start turning things around. "What are our 'seeds' of choice that can 'replant' good for greed?" In other words, how can each of us help make this world a cleaner and safer place? One good choice can grow into many good choices that produce change.

Using the basket of toys, lead a discus-



sion about how each toy was made. What natural resources were used to make each toy? With the children determine the worth. For example, do we really need the little plastic toys found in fast food kid meals? It takes factories that pollute our cities to make these little toys that we quickly throw away. Repeat with stuffed toys, balls. Think together how many toys we see in stores. Do we all have plenty of toys? Do we all need more toys? What do we do with our old toys? Encourage them to come up with ways to conserve resources. Some suggestions might include: recycling cans, paper, plastic, glass; making toys out of household items rather than always buying new ones; giving the clothes we've outgrown to friends; being mindful of the resources we're using while we play – if we're playing in the sprinkler set a timer for 10 minutes and then do another activity so we don't use too much water.

A good way to end the lesson is to teach the children to look carefully and attentively to the world around them. Start very small with an observation of one gift of creation: a leaf, a flower, a weed. Have the children draw what they see, not what they imagine. Once we learn to see God's creation as intricate beauty, we want to find ways to preserve it. The challenge is stopping; not just to stop and smell the Truffulas, but to plant, to watch grow and to marvel at their beauty.

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Waco, TX. She is married to Scott H. Moore, director of the Great Texts Program at Baylor University, and mother to five children. Andrea has worked with children and families for more than 20 years in the fields of education and ministry.



LOVE YOU FOREVER by Robert Munsch, illustrated by Sheila McGraw

Firefly Books Ltd (1986)
ISBN 0-920668-36-4



Few children's books resonate so completely with children and adults as does Robert Munsch's classic *Love You Forever*. The story of a mother's love for her son from infancy through adulthood poignantly captures the devotion, frustration and humor of parenting. Complimenting Munsch's words are the vibrant and energy-filled illustrations of Sheila McGraw – from that of a toddler dropping a watch into the toilet with toilet paper strewn around him to the brightly clad teenage boys sprawled in a messy front room.

The heart of the book, though, is that at every stage and age, the mother's love assures her son, "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, As long as I'm living my baby you'll be."

I read this book endlessly to my three sons as they grew, and they never failed to giggle at the pictures or to smile at the sight of an older woman holding a grown man in her arms as she rocked him. Nor did they fail to choke up when that scene was reversed and the grown son now held his elderly, sick mother in his arms and sang their song to her.

In the last pages, the son returns to his own home and picks up his infant daughter and sings the "love you forever" song to her.

This is parental love as we all long for it to be – steadfast, unchanging, constant, never-ending. Too, it reflects the parental love we can experience in our acceptance and spiritual journey with our heavenly parent – a love-you-forever love that we all seek, regardless of our age.

Read this to your children, give it to your mother, use it in Children's Sermons, or just pull it out once in awhile to comfort your own soul. It never disappoints.

– Reviewed by Vicki M. Kabat