



HOW TO...

sustain yourself & your team

sustaining for the long term

Now that you have clarity on what a First Thousand Days (FTD)-church is and what success looks like and [how to grow your team](#), this resource aims to give practical ways in which you can sustain this ministry.

It is the experience of the Sikunye team that in every church and every community there exist more needs and opportunities to serve families in the FTD than the capacity of a pastor, person or small team of committed volunteers. You may have already found that your personal passion for this is greater than the capacity you have to serve. You may have so many dreams, ideas, and plans, and are wondering: how on earth, for heaven's sake, are we going to do all this?

Firstly, it is important to recognise that you cannot do it all. Even as you grow your team, you will still need to have peace that you are doing what you can with what you have. This is why discerning and having a plan is so important (see our [put a plan together](#) resource). Having a clear range of responsibilities, or goals, will help any team be more sustainable, as they can focus and not be pulled in too many directions. It allows you and your team to set the 'pace' of what you are wanting to accomplish.

We encourage you to prioritise different parts of your plan, rather than trying to do everything at once. Take heart knowing that changes made today, will bear fruit into the future. You don't have to (and can't) do everything all at once. There is a pace that you, and your team, can sustain in this ministry.

check your own heart

As your awareness and passion for this grows, you may find increasing pressure to do something. This may be a sense of God moving in. Take care that you are not motivated by

***Being a healthy
team will ensure
a long-lasting
ministry!***

'selfish ambition and vain conceit' (Philippians 2:3). In a ministry that is so important for families and children, one can be tempted to worship the ministry, not God. Idolizing ministry can happen to anyone, and there are some common symptoms to look out for in yourself and your team:

- Serving families is the only ministry area you care about in the church
- You feel good about yourself when the ministry is doing well (and feel terrible when it doesn't)
- You look down on others who don't understand or who don't participate in FTD activities
- You are serving in order to be recognized and appreciated
- You can't say no to requests of your time
- You want to be the hero in someone's story

We encourage you to regularly reflect on your own heart and motivations. Don't let a good thing become an ultimate thing in your life and rob you of intimacy with your Heavenly Father.

lead yourself well

Even as you look around you to the needs and opportunities within and outside your church, be sure to lead yourself well. Explore how you can grow as a leader, how you can serve better, how you can be growing in your service. Explore how you can get mentored or trained to ensure that you are serving and leading better than you were when you started.

When we look at the earthly ministry of Jesus, he modelled something to us all about the interaction of ministry to (and with) others and his time of rest, replenishment, and self-care. In Mark 1, we see him ministering and teaching powerfully and early the next morning withdrawing to a quiet place for solitude. If Jesus needed rest, replenishment, and solitude, then we do too!

As you serve in this area of church life, be sure to build into your life ways in which you can replenish. This might be in the form of solitude, bible study, prayer, fasting, rest and keeping a Sabbath. Explore ways that work well for you – that you are ready to give others something that you know how to restore or replenish afterwards.

Be sure you are ready to ask for help. Who can you call on when it feels overwhelming? You cannot predict how things will turn out. For some families you are caring for, the time of birth is joyous, and they are thriving. For others, postpartum depression, health complications and miscarriage means that the type and depth of care required will exceed your, or your team's, capacity. Be sure you know who you can turn to for help.

lead others well

A crucial part of sustaining yourself and a team is to lead others in a way that brings out their best.

Create clarity for each team member. People will serve and volunteer for different reasons, and each bring into the team different skills, passions, experiences, and spiritual gifts. As a leader, be sure everyone always knows in what direction the team is going. When you consider the particular role, or tasks you are asking of them, give clear responsibilities, ideally captured in writing. This helps people know what success is and how their contributions are adding up to lives and families being positively impacted.

Be sure to **delegate tasks** to other team members. Even as broader roles and responsibilities are clear, always be sure talk about next steps for each person, and the time by which they must report back. This will ensure that each team member knows exactly what is asked of them.

As the leader of a group of volunteers, be sure to **get roadblocks/obstacles out of the way** of your volunteers. There may be things standing in the way of one of your ministry areas. As the leader, you may have insight to a solution, or the relationship to approach the relevant people to get things moving.

Keep people informed of progress. As you see new developments unfolding, keep in mind what others need to know. This could be a regular message, a short phone call or talking after a Sunday church serve. After participating in or seeing progress, ask yourself: Who needs to know what by when?

Create systems of care and support for volunteers on the front lines. As mentioned above, there are some areas of service that are more intense than others. Put people and systems in place to ensure that no member of the team is feeling isolated, burned

out or overwhelmed. Take care to understand people's personal story so that you know how to best support them should they be triggered or put in a situation requiring more than what they can give.

put boundaries in place

For a team to be sustainable, they need to be able to say Yes to the right things and say No to the requests that are unreasonable.

There are some general principles that can help to keep good boundaries:

- Don't do things for people that they could do for themselves. This principle helps to remind you and your team to not create dependencies, where families are overly reliant upon you and your team. We don't want people to disempower or patronise families.
- Maintain clear expectations with families. Both for yourself and your team, it is important that families know what you will and will not do for them. This may require open conversations ahead of time so that there is not disappointment or frustration. It also enables you and your team to say NO to requests that are too burdensome.
- See the families you are serving as equals. If you, or your team, see the families you are serving as 'less than', or somehow needy, broken or desperate, then the nature of the relationship will change. The family can feel like they are a 'project' being rescued or fixed, rather than fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who in a particular season requiring a different kind of support and care.

find the pace to last the race

Serving the needs of families in the First Thousand Days is a long term, marathon-like ministry. For you and your team to continue to be effective, we encourage you to keep learning, growing, reflecting and leading well. Carefully consider how much you can sustain, individually and as a team. Look to grow the team with people who can share the load. Keep your pastor up to date. And remember, we are here to support you. *Sikunye*, we are in this together.

