



# understand your church

Look at the ministries, church activities, attitudes and practices in your church and how to make them an opportunity to create loving connections with families in the First Thousand Days (FTD).

## what is happening in your church now?

Every church has a range of activities that serve its congregants. What is happening in your church that might not have a direct focus on families or children, but could potentially shift to include them? This is a tool to help you identify these opportunities.

Look at where you are working and what *strengths* you have as a church. look at what is working well, and what strengths you have that can be utilized to become an FTD-friendly church. To do this well, sit with your church leaders to think through what is happening in your church and where you would like to focus on first. Later on, you can look outside your church and what is happening in your community. This may mean partnering with other churches or organizations. But for now, look inside your church.

Here are some questions to think through and prompt you to take a deep look at your church environment, activities and attitudes – to know where to start your journey to become a FTD-friendly church.

know your church		
What is the size of your church?		
Do you know who is in the First Thousand Days of life? If yes, how many families are in the FTD of life?	YES	NO
Do you have a Child Protection Policy?	YES	NO
What is going well in your ministries and church activities that you can build on having a FTD-focus?		
What already exists that can be tweaked to include FTD and the key topics or issues related to FTD?		

<b>speaking up</b>	<b>never / no</b>	<b>sometimes / maybe</b>	<b>regularly / yes</b>
Does your eldership/leadership/pastor speak about the First Thousand Days and the importance of this time in life, in sermons or weekly emails etc.?			
Does your preaching include addressing social ills (that could threaten the thriving of children and families to reaching their God-given potential)?			
Does your preaching include God's heart for children?			
Are children included in church traditions like worship and communion?			
<b>surrounding families</b>	<b>never / no</b>	<b>sometimes / maybe</b>	<b>regularly / yes</b>
Do you celebrate new life? How do you celebrate with moms/families who have just had a baby?			
Do you organise a meal roster for anyone who has just had a baby?			
Do you have baby dedications?  How can you make those moments meaningful?			
Is there support offered for those families and parents who are struggling?			
Do church members visit sick and isolated people in their homes?			
Are there missional activities that seek to reach people outside the church with the love of Jesus?			

<b>your church environment</b>	<b>never / no</b>	<b>sometimes / maybe</b>	<b>regularly / yes</b>
Do you have a Sunday school / Sunday ministry aimed at children?			
Do you have a class or activities for 0-2 years old on a Sunday?			
Do you have a class for parents of young children (0- 2years)?			
Do you have a mom's room/breastfeeding room/cry room/toddler room/parent room?			
Are children in their FTD within your church receiving the nurturing care they need to thrive?			
What does your church community currently do to empower families to promote, and foster nurturing care?			
How do caregivers feel about being part of church community in the FTD? Is your church a welcoming space for families in the FTD? (including single; teenage mothers....)			
How does your church respond to teenage pregnancy?			
How does your church respond to single parenthood, adopted/fostered families etc.?			
Do you know your church culture towards crying babies, breastfeeding, the mom's room? Does it promote breastfeeding, or is it unhelpful for moms wanting to breastfeed?			
How are children in the FTD seen / valued / celebrated within your church?			
How are mothers, fathers and other caregivers within the FTD seen / valued / celebrated within your church?			

<b>prayer</b>	<b>never / no</b>	<b>sometimes / maybe</b>	<b>regularly / yes</b>
Are people in your church praying for families, pregnancies, and new births?			
Do you have a WhatsApp group for prayer topics?			
As a church, do you pray into the challenges and issues around FTD (nutrition, single parents, teenage pregnancy, postnatal depression etc.)?			
<b>equipping and preparing parents</b>	<b>never / no</b>	<b>sometimes / maybe</b>	<b>regularly / yes</b>
Who could you refer to for extra support, capacity development and other more specialized care – both within your congregation and in your community?			
Do you host parenting workshops? Or any other workshop that you can add on parenting? (e.g. marriage course, pre-marriage course)			
Do you have groups of women who meet during the week?  If no – do you have the capacity to host women's groups during the week?			
Do you have a social justice / compassion ministry / mercy ministry team? Or activities that focus on social justice and/or outreach?			
Do you have small groups/home groups/weekly groups that gather to discuss the Bible and/or it's teachings?			

<b>collaborating and connecting</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>maybe</b>	<b>yes</b>
Is your church well connected to and informed of other community resources e.g. health care facilities?			
Do you know of other NGOs/faith based organisations/government facilities working in the First Thousand Days of life?			
Are you connected to other churches in your area to collaborate and ensure all families in the FTD in your community are supported?			
<b>managing volunteers &amp; budget</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>maybe</b>	<b>yes</b>
Do you have volunteers who would be willing and ready to join your team?  If not, look at the criteria of someone you would want on your team and find people to grow your team.			
Do you have a budget that you could allocate to a FTD ministry? Majority of activities are add-ons to what you are already doing but it is worth thinking through potential budget costs.			
<b>physical space</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>maybe</b>	<b>yes</b>
Do you have a venue or room to have a dedicated space to parents' room during the Sunday meeting?  If no, any space will do – can you make a space for parents to meet during the Sunday meetings, with their babies?			
Do you have people who can facilitate this space and make it welcoming and warm?  Sikunye can give tips on how to do this.			
Do you have an infrastructure that can be used for support meetings during the week? (e.g. to host Flourish antenatal and postnatal classes or a woman's Bible study)			

## conclusion

This tool is to help you think through the activities that you are currently running, what could potentially be adjusted to include a FTD-ministry or how you could start up a FTD team focusing on serving and supporting the children and families in the FTD of life. These questions are not exhaustive and are examples of ideas to prompt your thinking around how your church can become more FTD-friendly. Some of the answers to these questions could be implemented immediately, and others will take some time to do and may require permissions/consultation with church leadership. Whilst using this tool, it would be best to discuss ideas and options with your church leadership to decide what can be done. You could print this tool and use it as a growing document to record ideas, options and areas in which your FTD activities can grow.



An FTD-church is a church that is actively taking steps to become a space that is warm, welcoming and seeing families who are in the First Thousand Days of life – whilst providing or linking with services that provide equipping skills to parents to be the best parents they can be and together as a church, or village around a family, help raise healthy children that thrive.