



How to be a FTD-friendly church

For children to thrive, they must be in a caring family. And for families to responsively care for their children, they need a supportive community. The Church is well-positioned, more so than any other institution, to be that community. Churches can use what they are already doing to become FTD-friendly, creating an environment in which loving connections are formed.

Speak Up

Speaking up is one of the ways we as Christ followers can influence how families are seen, cared for, and supported. Churches have trusted voices in communities and can use existing moments of preaching and teaching to share the opportunity of the First Thousand Days (FTD). You can grow your church members' hearts and awareness around this by making regular use of the many opportunities to share/preach/talk about God's heart for children, such as baby dedications, celebrating births, preaching, and testimonies. You can also speak up outside of your church gatherings, in fraternal meetings, or on social media where you can make public comments about God's heart for children and the role of the church.

Read this document for ideas on **How to Speak Up**:

https://sikunye.org.za/wp-content/uploads/Speak-up_FTD-Friendly-Church.pdf

Pray

Churches are already praying – but ask yourself, are we praying for and with families in the FTD? We can encourage congregations to pray about the big issues that families are facing at this stage. The fruit of this is that when we pray for and with families, we are embracing them in our communities of faith. We are standing with them before the God who loves them and their young child. And when we pray for the big issues in our community that affect families, we are asking the all-powerful God to move, to act, to make the pathway level for families to overcome these challenges.

Read this document for ideas on **How to Pray for families in FTD**:

https://sikunye.org.za/wp-content/uploads/Pray_FTD-Friendly-Church.pdf

Surround families

This area of an FTD-Friendly church - Surrounding families – is looking for ways to build supportive relationships. Finding practical ways to come around expecting and new families in nurturing relationships - and building the modern-day village / showing practical love. At the heart of this, it is about relationships and practically showing love. It is about coming around families and creating spaces or opportunities in your church to allow for these types of relationships to grow and develop. Find out more on how to do this.

Read this document for ideas on **How to Surround families:**

https://sikunye.org.za/wp-content/uploads/Surround-Families_FTD-Friendly-Church.pdf

Collaborate and Refer

This might be the strangest element of being FTD-friendly, but the reason why this is included is that you don't have to provide all the care and support that families need. You are not a health care professional. Your church is not a clinic or a hospital. It is a church. Even as you surround families, mom still needs to get professional care – and other services to ensure she and baby are well, healthy, and cared for. So, the church must do what the church can do – and then collaborate with others and refer families to ensure they get the care, support, and information they need.

Read this document for ideas on **How to Collaborate and Refer:**

https://sikunye.org.za/wp-content/uploads/Collaborate-and-Refer_FTD-Friendly-Church.pdf

Equip and Prepare

In a world with so much information and knowledge available, why is it that so often parents feel anxious, unsure, or unprepared, overwhelmed, and scared – whether during pregnancy, birth, or caring for a newborn baby? This is something that churches have a unique opportunity to use their strengths and assets to help parents feel confident and well prepared. Parents that are better equipped and confident in their knowledge have a positive impact on their child's brain growth – with a lifelong impact.

Read this document for ideas on **How to Equip and Prepare families:**

https://sikunye.org.za/wp-content/uploads/Equip-and-Prepare_FTD-Friendly-Church.pdf

Create warm welcoming spaces

The place and spaces in your church send a message to people about what you believe about families and young children. This is the warm element of the church. No matter how nice your meeting space is, people get the message from the comments, the looks, and the people. The physical meeting space is also important – to be simpler, and easier for families with young children.

Read this document for ideas on **How to Create welcoming spaces:**

https://sikunye.org.za/wp-content/uploads/Welcoming-Spaces_FTD-Friendly-Church.pdf

