



HOW TO...

integrate FTD into the whole life of your church

Watch the [recording](#) of the Practical Workshop hosted by Sikunye, discussing how to integrate First Thousand Days (FTD) into the whole life of your church. Here you can listen to ideas on how a church can include families and infants in FTD into each ministry running in their church.

many ministries make up the life of a church

This is not about trying to create a baby-centred church or an FTD-centred church – instead think about how to include FTD as part of the planning of the different ministries in the church - **How to make the different ministries more FTD-friendly?** Here are some ideas:

senior's ministry

This can also be known as a ministry for the elderly or old age homes. Seniors are not always frail - many have energy and are in good health, and they want to contribute and have an opportunity for their gifts to be used.



Ideas

- The elderly may have grandchildren nearby; encourage them to play with them, talk to them, and show them love, whilst explaining how they are building a baby's brain!
- When praying with the elderly, include the baby in the prayers for their grandparents, and encourage grandparents to pray for their grandchildren in the FTD.
- Sometimes seniors are the primary caregiver of young children and need support and care too. Look out for these caregivers and show them support and love – they in turn can show that love to the child they are caring for.
- Often the elderly/seniors may be a group of people forgotten or left alone – think about including them in caring for families in FTD. Ask the grandparents in your church to mentor younger parents – they have wisdom that can be shared; or pray for families in FTD by giving them a family's name to pray for at home; or ask the grandparents to meet up with the teen moms, single parents, young families for

tea/coffee – this allows for the grandparents to not feel alone/lonely and it allows the families to feel supported as well.

- For families that do not have extended family close by – have an 'adopt a granny' where the senior can play a grandparent role in that family.
- Watch this video [click here: https://youtu.be/Pm12mTIUJss](https://youtu.be/Pm12mTIUJss)

youth ministry

This can also be known as or include teens, or mentoring ministries.

Ideas

- The youth of today will be the parents of tomorrow. Consider how your church can guide them to become good parents one day. In your youth ministry, include discussing with them that one day they will have a family of their own, help them goal set for the future – and what can they do now to help them become a good parent in the future. (At school we work hard to get a job or study at university one day, but seldom do we think about one day being parents and what that means?).
- Speak to the youth about the science of FTD – where the brain is developing faster than at any other time - before the age of 2 years – that things like anxiety, depression, alcohol, drugs, and other stressors impact the brain development of babies – so encourage positive parenting and making healthy lifestyle choices for a baby, whilst seeing the negative impact of having a child too young has on the baby's development and life trajectory.
- The youth can come around and support teen parents – by not shaming them or mocking them but by showing them the love of God and praying with them. Teen parents are children themselves, so they need more help and support – so teens can encourage their friends who are teen parents to be the best parents they can be, whilst getting other youth to be the supporting community around teen parents
- Youth can also babysit (not just the girls! Include the boys to help them see that men have a role in childcare), or they can take part in other serving ministries in your church that can help the church to focus on FTD (e.g. the youth can welcome people into the church focusing on welcoming families in FTD and helping them find a seat or serving tea to pregnant moms and new parents).

worship ministry

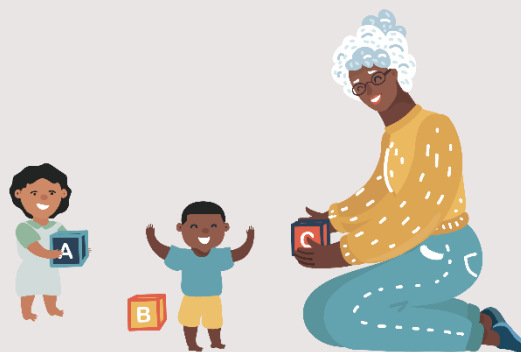
This can also be known as the choir, band, the praise and worship team.

Ideas

- Find ways to include babies in your Sunday singing. Babies love sounds, and they copy sounds, and their gurgling can be a form of praising the Lord – so include them, (let them make as much noise as they want). But if the baby is disrupting the whole service, plan ways to help the mom/dad care for the child and still be part of the praise and worship. Maybe it is a mid-week/Saturday group with moms and including worship for them to have an opportunity to worship.
- Your songs can reach children under the age of two years. Find opportunities to invite babies up to the front of the church and let them sing and dance (with a parent for very young). In your kid's ministry include the little ones in the singing. If there is a family service, plan to include families of children under 2 years in the singing and activities.
- Remembering that babies can minister to others – they are part of God's mission and have agency.
- Help infants feel the spirit and help them have awe and wonder for God's creation.
- Singing, dancing, praising, and worshipping are powerful ways to praise God, celebrate life, and express our love. Including the youngest amongst us gives them the opportunity to learn to praise and worship God early in life and continue to do for the rest of their lives.

children's ministry

Also known as Sunday school, or if a church runs an ECD programme during the week.



Ideas

- Children's ministries usually start with children who go to school or from 3 years old – once they can speak. Discuss with the children's ministry how you can include parents with children under the age of 2 years – parents can join in with their young baby in the singing, storytelling, games, and prayers.
- Make a room or space available where moms and dads can go if their baby is fussing. In this room try including age-appropriate activities to assist parents in playfully engaging with their baby. Babies love to play (like banging drums, painting, drawing, blocks, and singing) and this builds their brains. Find ways to encourage and help parents learn to do activities that build their baby's brains.

- Have a volunteer who can host this room or space. This volunteer can pray with mom and dad. They can share a short devotion with the parents in this space. They can encourage parents to responsively engage with their young babies. This space can be a supportive, caring, safe space for parents on Sundays.
- Create mid-week groups for families in FTD so that moms and babies can come to connect with other moms whilst exposing the babies to Bible stories and pictures.

hospitality ministry

This includes serving, catering, ushers, and welcoming people into the church.

Ideas

- Find volunteers to look for moms, dads, or caregivers who are in the FTD and specifically welcome them to church; smile; say hi; carry their bags to their chairs – and show them to any area specifically for families in FTD like nappy change facilities or a parent's room/space or breastfeeding spaces.
- If you have communion, remember to take it to the parents that may be at the back or in a parent's room.
- When serving refreshments to in the congregation include parents that may be in a parent's room, this will help them feel seen, loved, and cared for.



home, hospital, or prison ministry

This is any outreach ministry into the community. It can be a Pastoral or Evangelical Ministry

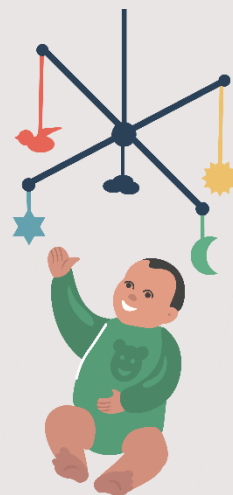
Ideas

- If you are visiting families in their homes –including families in FTD. Seek out the families that were once part of the church and haven't been around since having a baby. Visit them, talk to them, see them, and pray for and with them. And invite them to come to church. Set up a welcome team who specifically watches out for these families.
- Whilst you are visiting families in their homes, you can be praying for the things that are "stressors" to the family and the community as a whole – things like finances, joblessness, violence, nutrition, and health – including the issues facing families in FTD into the prayers.

baptisms / baby dedications / christenings

Ideas

- In these moments, include the congregation to stand with the family – to surround them with care and support – so that they can be the best parents they can be.
- Click [here](#) for an example of a baby dedication script. Use this to speak about why as a church you stand beside families in the FTD, which is also an opportunity to raise awareness in the congregation that you are an FTD-friendly church.



prayer / intercession ministry

Ideas

- Pray for pregnancies, births, and children under the age of two years.
- Include babies in the prayer evenings/days. Invite toddlers (under 2 years) to pray.
- Invite the Sunday school children to pray for the younger children – teaching them to pray for others (especially those more vulnerable than themselves).
- When announcing a pregnancy or birth, pray for the family. Set up a WhatsApp group where people can announce pregnancies and births – and assign members of the group to pray to a specific family.
- Call families in FTD up to the front to pray for them.
- Pray for the stresses that affect families in FTD – as a congregation you can pray together, or as individuals.



preaching ministry



Ideas

- Invite families to talk about their experiences in FTD and how the church can help them.
- Raise awareness of the negative factors that are impacting babies and infants – and how the church can support and help parents/moms/dads to build the resilience to overcome these negative factors.
- Include FTD examples in your sermons.

home group ministry

Other names can connect groups, home-cell groups, mid-week services, bible study

Ideas

- Encourage older families who are out of the FTD season to join with families in the FTD season as people who have empathy, and compassion and who can support and encourage the new families – they can be the ones to offer meals after the baby's birth, or babysit, or pray for the family/caregiver when announcing a pregnancy or birth.
- Leaders of these groups can let the church FTD team know who is expecting a baby and who needs extra support.
- Forming these relationships can help families that aren't coming to church because of the baby, to come back to church as they will have friends at church.

other ministries – how are you focusing on families in FTD in these ministries?

- Ladies' Ministry / Sister's / Single Ladies Ministry
- Men's Ministry / Fatherhood & Sons Ministry
- Couples Ministry / Marriage & Pre-marriage Ministry
- Divorce Ministry

What ministry do you have that can include families in the First Thousand Days?