



HOW TO...

use key moments in your church calendar for FTD-friendly purposes

Watch the [recording](#) of the Practical Workshop hosted by Sikunye, discussing how you can use key moments in your church calendar for FTD-friendly purposes. Here you can listen to some practical ideas of what you can do on public holidays and key moments in your church to celebrate moms, dads, caregivers.

why are key moments and holiday important?

- It is important to make mothers, fathers, and caregivers in your community feel seen and special, and this contributes to the sense of families being held in a modern-day village
- It can also be used as an outreach opportunity in your community and invite families into your church
- We recognize that your church or denomination may have prescribed ways of commemorating or celebrating these events. This document is intended to give a range of ideas from which you can discern what will work. It is not intended that you do everything suggested, but rather select what suits you best.

What dates can we use to be an ftd-friendly church?

Below is a list of public holidays and events with ideas of what your church can do to be FTD-friendly:

Easter

- As you consider your Easter and Holy Week church practices, explore how to include families in the First Thousand Days (FTD)

International Worker's Day – 1 May

- Use this day to raise awareness around single parents who are working and not able to spend time with their families to form loving connections – who can be the modern-day village around these parents

- Speak up and encourage congregants to advocate for workplaces that are breastfeeding friendly. Workplaces need to ensure that moms can take two 30-minute breaks in order to breastfeed or express to ensure their babies can still be breastfed even though they are working

Mother's Day

- Make an announcement and a moment of prayer – invite mothers to stand up and pray for them. This can be for ALL mothers and women who play a mothering role in a child's life – it is recognising it is not only the biological mother who can raise a child. Also recognise those that have lost children or miscarried
- Give moms a biscuit, chocolate, or hand out a flower
- Link with Mother's Day events happening in your community or nationally. For example Embrace, where you can visit a Maternity Unit on Mother's Day and give a care pack to moms). Collaborate with local organisations to see what is happening in your community and get volunteers in your church to take part in the events hosted to celebrate moms and dads, even grandparents
- If you have the time and resources, create a short video for your Sunday service and get the kids in your church involved – film short clips of kids talking about their moms with questions like:
 - What is your favourite thing about your mom?
 - What is the funniest thing your mom does?
 - Why do you love your mom?
- Have a special offering on Mother's Day that you can then donate to an NGO who supports mothers or support another church in your network to support families or bless families in your community with a Mother's Day celebration or give a meal to moms.
- Set up a photo booth for moms in FTD – and all moms. We all love to get pictures of their families, so there is a good chance on Mother's Day the whole family will be together. Use this opportunity to encourage families to get dressed up and take photos – this can be done with a camera or on cell phones and shared with mom on WhatsApp

Child Protection Week

- Use this time to look at the Child Protection Policy you have for your church and ensure that you have practices in place that protect children from harm – you can look at template Child Protection Policies to develop your church policy. On

a Sunday nearest to these dates, briefly share why you want the church to be a place where children are protected and valued.

- Wear the colour green, use green ribbon or green material to decorate your space. The Green Ribbon was adopted by the National Child Protection Committee in 1994 and symbolizes life and growth associated with children as well as the nurturing of children. Get more ideas [here](#).

Youth Day – 16 June

- Use this day to speak to the teens in your community (both boys and girls) and support those that already have children and those that are already pregnant. It is an opportunity to show them that the church is a safe space when their peers may be rejecting them. The local church can give them hope and encourage them not to leave the church or fellowship. This encourages a loving supportive community around a teen parent
- Conduct workshops on teenage pregnancy, addressing some of the myths and factors facing teen parents and the baby. Encourage responsible parenting and how to plan a family and what kind of parent they would like to be

Father's Day

- Launch a father's group on Father's Day that will be looking at the [Father's Matter](#) content – it is a great way to get a regular dad's group that can be a men's Bible study group at a later stage
- Call up all dads in the congregation and pray for them
- Hand out a gift such as book that dad can read with baby to encourage bonding with their child – whilst acknowledging dads on Father's Day
- Have a braai after the church service for all families in FTD to meet and dads can talk and cook together
- Explore some of the ideas for Mother's Day above that can be adjusted for dads

Parent's Day – 24 July

- Invite family strengthening organisations to speak about Positive Parenting
- Host Parenting workshops or courses to equip and inspire parents to be the best parent they can be – or host a games night for parents in FTD

- Pray for all types of parents in your community – all people that play a part in raising a child to have a strong start to their life (e.g. foster families, adopted, orphanages etc)

Breastfeeding Week

- Host a breastfeeding workshop for parents and invite an expert to speak about breastfeeding and infant feeding during breastfeeding week – for parents to understand more the importance of breastfeeding
- Inspire, **equip**, and support parents to exclusively breastfeed for a minimum of 6 months – do this by creating a moment to welcome breastfeeding moms into your space, put a couch in the corner of the room where they can breastfeed and still hear the sermon. Encourage congregants to be ok with moms breastfeeding in public – put a sign up saying “we welcome moms to breastfeed here” whilst speaking into the importance of breastfeeding, the challenges women face and encouraging the congregation to support moms to breastfeed.
- Look at the **Breastfeeding in the Workplace** resource to encourage your congregation to speak up in their workspaces or create those spaces for moms to express or breastfeed.

Grandparent’s Day – 11 September

- Speak up about the important role that grandparents have in supporting parents and being involved in the lives of their grandchildren. Affirm their contribution to families.
- Is there an event for grandparents in your community that you can use to encourage the role of grandparents in the life of a child in FTD?

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day – 15 October

- Pray for families by sending a WhatsApp on the day or praying for them in church
- Get congregants to make meals and take them to the house of the grieving parents
- Plant a flower / tree for families who have lost a child or hang pink and blue ribbons at your church venue

World Preemie Day – 17 November

- Ask your church community to knit beanies for prem babies in the nearest Neonatal ICU ward
- Dedicate babies in church and pray for the family, with a promise to support them as a church
- Stand in solidarity with families by decorating your space with purple material or purple items. Hang a small purple sock amongst a line of nine full-sized socks, which symbolises that one in ten babies are born preterm across the world

16 Days of Activism – 25 November to 10 December

- Use this time to call the church to pray into the huge issue of violence against women and children.
- Encourage those who are experiencing violence to seek help and offer counselling to those that come forward

Christmas Day – 25 December

- Use your Sunday service to speak about the importance of the FTD and remind the church of how Jesus also started in the FTD – in the womb! You can also use this time to pray for mom or dad

“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit”

Luke 1: 41 (NIV)

generate your own ideas

Depending on your context, the congregants, and families you have in your church, you will have additional ideas and opportunities. Use the FTD-friendly circle to spark new ideas that can serve you and the families.

