



HOW TO...

equip & prepare parents

becoming an FTD-Friendly Church

Sikunye seeks to equip and support churches to care for families in the First Thousand Days (FTD). This reflection is part of a range of workshops hosted by Sikunye, aimed at equipping churches to become FTD-Friendly.

Watch the video recording [here](#)

In a world with so much information and knowledge available, why is it that so often parents feel anxious, unsure, unprepared, overwhelmed and scared about pregnancy, birth, and worried about caring for a newborn baby? There are often fears of whether I will be a good enough mother or father. And wishing that children come with an instruction manual.

Your church can help parents feel confident and prepared to positively go through this new season of life. This is something that churches have a unique opportunity to use their strengths and assets to help parents feel confident and well-prepared. Parents who are better equipped and confident in their knowledge - have a positive impact on their child's brain growth – with a lifelong impact.

how do you equip and prepare parents in your church?

FTD-Friendly Churches are seeking to enable loving connections by equipping and preparing parents in the First Thousand Days with correct knowledge, practical tools, love and care. This can be done in a formal way (such as delivering a programme or a parenting workshop) or an informal way (such as an older man mentoring a first-time dad or helping mom practice things like changing a nappy).



There are different ways you can equip and prepare parents for parenthood

1. There are **informal ways** – such as mentoring

This is like peer sharing, mentoring, sharing reliable information. Ideas on how you can do this are:

- Create opportunities for mentoring
- Create spaces for shared peer learning
- Moms & tots WhatsApp group or Dads & tots WhatsApp group
- Have a range of pamphlets/flyers
- Set up a WhatsApp Group for new moms or dads for group peer learning and support. On this group you can share quality trusted information
- Refer dads to reading blogs that will help them in their new father journey

Fruit of this is: that families are sharing their FTD experiences and guidance with each other.

2. There are **formal ways** of equipping – where families need training

There are various courses or training specifically for the First Thousand Days that churches can run. So these are structured formal ways to equip and prepare parents – either via by offering a course in your church or partnering with what is offered in your community

Fruit of this is: it can also serve your wider community as you open up the opportunities to other families to come and join any trainings or programmes.

your first step is to:

- Get to know what organisations, services and people are in your congregation and in your community that you can partner with to get good and reliable information – or you can refer parents to to find information.
- Look at what you already have happening in your church that can be used as a method/way to equip parents with knowledge and skills to raise a child in the first 1000 days of his/her life.

To help you to do this read: [get to know your community](#)

what is happening in your community to equip & prepare parents?

FTD-friendly churches do what they can, with what they have, to prepare families in the church and their community to provide the building blocks in a nurturing relationship with their child. This might involve partnering with an organisation to use their material or referring families to that service.

- What is happening in our community,
- What organisations are there, what services are present to equip parents (e.g. parenting classes? Antenatal classes?)
- Are there services that are equipping fathers?
- What about teenage moms and dads?

what is happening in your church to equip and prepare parents?

In your church, God has put various gifts and strengths in congregants. They can play a part in preparing moms, dads, and caregivers. Consider those older fathers who can mentor new dads, grannies in the congregation can encourage and give important information and so on. You might be able to host a specific training course or send out good and relevant information. Parents who feel connected and cared for are better equipped and connected to care for their children; and this has a positive impact on the child's brain growth - with lifelong impact.

A good question to ask is: what are you doing in your church that can be repurposed to equip and prepare parents in the First Thousand Days?

explore structured formal ways to equip & prepare parents such as:

- Start a formal [programme for fathers in the first thousand days](#) – by training a male volunteer in your church to meet with expecting or new dads to learn practical ways to be involved in their child's life
- And continue these groups with resources such as [Fathers Matter Connect Groups](#).
- Run **parenting events** and invite guest speakers to talk about relevant topics, such as [The Parent Centre](#) or [FAMSA](#)
- Run an **expecting parent's course** to discuss marriage and the arrival of a new baby

- Or offer [Flourish Antenatal and Postnatal classes](#). Find a volunteer in your church to be trained to become a Flourish Host or find a host in your area that you can refer moms to or who can use your venue to run a class for moms
- Train in [Khathalela](#) which is for church leaders and key volunteers you want to be training in how to visit mom and dads and caregivers who are in the first thousand days of their child's life at significant times in those 1000 days.
- [Home-Visiting ministry](#) to visit expecting and new moms in their homes, connecting with moms to feel supported whilst encouraging dads to engage with baby and breaking the myths in culture

build parents confidence through informal ways such as:

- Set up a **WhatsApp Group** for new moms or dads for group peer learning and support – such as **Moms & tots WhatsApp group** or **Dads & tots WhatsApp group**
- **Life groups or Bible Study groups** with families with children of the same age: on one-week moms meet, next week dads meet, another week it is joint group so that relationships build between the moms, dads and families
- **Share quality trusted information.** Such as:
 - [Side-by-Side](#);
 - [Messages4Mothers](#);
 - [Do More Parenting](#) Resource page;
 - [How to raise a healthy and happy child](#)
- Follow [Embrace](#) movement for mothers
- **Grandparents** to connect with their grandchildren, especially grandfathers – and including the extended family to engage and be involved in the early years of a child's life
- **Older dads or men mentoring young fathers** – this can be done informally or through a formal programme (see above)
- **Older women** to walk a journey with young moms
- **Create spaces for shared peer learning** to take place like a mom's or dad's or an expecting parent's group to connect
- **Read blogs, [Afrodaddy](#) and [The Dad Dude](#)**



Your church can help parents feel confident and prepared to positively go through this new season of life.

What we know is: Parents who feel connected and cared for are better equipped and connected to care for their children. And this has a positive impact on the child's brain growth - with lifelong impact.



1 Corinthians 12 v 27 - 31

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts."