



# HOW TO SURROUND FAMILIES

## Becoming an FTD-Friendly Church

### LUNCHTIME CONVERSATION REFLECTION

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 Lunchtime Conversations hosted by Sikunye, aimed at equipping churches to become FTD-Friendly.

Listen to audio recording [here](#)

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### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SURROUND FAMILIES AND WHAT DOES IT PRACTICALLY LOOK LIKE?

One of the strengths of the local church is to create community around one another. No other public institution gets it right like the church does and can. Part of becoming an FTD-Friendly church is finding practical ways to come around expecting and new families in nurturing relationships.

When moms, dads and caregivers are surrounded in loving relationships it helps them to feel supported, safe, relaxed and cared for. It also helps them have confidence in their ability to parent well and provide responsive care to their young child. Surrounding families is important to prevent parents from feeling overwhelmed, lonely, isolated, stressed, or fearful.

#### **1 Thessalonians 3:12**

*“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you.”*

Positive supportive relationships are key in surrounding moms and dads so that they feel seen, heard, emotionally and physically supported, and part of a broader community or “modern-day village”.

### THERE ARE VARIOUS PRACTICAL WAYS TO COMING AROUND FAMILIES:

- **Creating safe spaces** for moms and dads to attend - like small groups; facilitating the Sunday morning parents' room; moms' groups; playdates in the park; moms' tea parties; dads' gatherings. These might be once a week or once a month. These spaces are good for parents to support each other, to learn together and feel like

“I am not alone”. Parents can share their joys and struggles with each other and share when they need help.

- **Journeying with a mom individually** to form positive supportive relationships through checking-in regularly or sending words of encouragement as a friend. This could also be more formally through [home-visiting ministry](#); or asking an older man to connect with and mentor a new dad; or older couples to visit mom and dad when baby arrives home from hospital.
- **Practical support** and help for new parents, like putting care packs together for families, or setting up meal rosters after birth, or transport to clinic, or caring for older siblings.
- **Start a WhatsApp group** for new parents to engage with each other.
- **Come around teenage moms** in your community and show them love and kindness.

**Everyone has a role** in a church community to surround young families. Have a look who else is in your church. Avoid only asking people who are in the FTD stage to care for families. Include others – do not try do this all on your own. Create awareness and inspire your church community to create a “modern-day village” to care for and support new moms, dads, singles, teens, and all parents in FTD.



**For example:** The seniors or parents of adult children in your church can also play a part in surrounding families. They can walk with families as the “granny” or “grandpa”, they can mentor new parents. One champion shared the idea of “**rent a granny**” which she did for a recent ‘mom’s tea party’ where she asked a friend’s mom to speak at the tea. It was very well received by the mothers and the ‘granny’ really enjoyed spending time with the young moms. It is good for all three generations.

## USEFUL RESOURCES TO HELP YOU SURROUND FAMILIES

- Resource [Guide for FTD teams](#) and the [Lockdown toolkit](#)
- Mother.ly Blog: [In the absence of the village mothers struggle most](#)
- [TEDx Video: If it takes a village to raise a child](#) – build your own by Liz Lian.

The big idea is that in a time when there are additional needs for families, that the church community moves closer to the families and they do not let new parents drift out of community. It is all about surrounding families in this stage of life.

Get started: ask mom or dad the question:  
**“What can I do to be part of your village?”**

