

Children *SAFE* Families *TOGETHER*



PREVENTION **Baskets**

SAFE FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN



Partnership in Prevention Why the Baskets

How Churches Can Rally Around Prevention

This basket is an opportunity for Safe Families for Children to connect or reconnect with your church. Churches are a vital part of our communities and strong communities are built on strong families. The goal is to provide your church with concrete ways to strengthen your connections with families in your community.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. This month is set aside to draw attention to at-risk children and the importance of strengthening families. This nationwide campaign helps to educate communities and churches about the importance of supporting vulnerable families with the belief that intervening early is key to building family resiliency and strength over time.

The symbol for child abuse prevention is the blue pinwheel. The display of pinwheels communicate a visible sign to the community that you love and serve families in the community. We believe the church can and should be a place where families turn for love, help, support, and guidance. Prevention is essential to help keep children safe and families together. Would you consider displaying the pinwheels as a visible sign of support to strengthening families?



When a parent faces a crisis with no support system, they become vulnerable. When a parent becomes vulnerable, their children are at an increased risk of trauma. Together, we can partner to ensure that children and families are supported when facing life challenges.

When churches champion children and families, they communicate a strong message of hope and commitment to the community. Churches can be the bridge between resources in the church and the needs in the community. This enables the church to be a part of an extended family opening their hearts and homes to those facing crisis alone and in isolation.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE PINWHEELS?

In 2008, Prevent Child Abuse America launched the Pinwheels for Prevention campaign as a grassroots effort for individuals and organizations across the US to take action. The campaign promotes family strengthening while raising awareness to prevent child abuse and neglect – before it ever happens.

Why Pinwheels?

Prevent Child Abuse America introduced the blue pinwheel as the nationally recognized symbol for prevention because it represents the great childhoods all children deserve and the prevention efforts that help them happen. Today, it inspires all of us to play a role in providing the best possible environment for families to flourish and thrive. The Pinwheels show your support for the community and serve as a visible sign that families are loved and supported in your congregation.

Displaying your Pinwheels

Plant a pinwheel garden outside your church entrance. get more information on planting a pinwheel garden, reach out to your local Prevent Child Abuse chapter.

Place pinwheels around the church in a vase, planters, or in bouquets to show your support



Create pinwheel bouquets to display in community spaces in your church

Where to Get More Pinwheels?

The Pinwheels for Prevention campaign shares awareness and shows support for prevention efforts in your community for family strengthening. Churches can order additional pinwheels from your local Prevent Child Abuse Chapter is by visiting: <https://preventchildabuse.org/where-we-work/>.

The Church and Child Protection:

The Role of the Church in Keeping Children Safe and Families Together

Throughout history, the Church has played a significant role in protecting children. It stems from the commands in the Gospel and throughout the Bible to care for the most vulnerable people group in our society. For example, the Bible states that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and thus, should be treated with care and respect. It also states that special care should be provided to those in need.

The early church was fully involved in engaging society and significantly supporting the "least of these." The practice of offering care to strangers (hospitality) became a distinguishing characteristic of the early church. As described in detail by Christine Pohl in her book, *Making Room – Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, Christians became known for their acts of kindness and service. For example, babies born "deformed" or of the "wrong" sex were discarded on the waste heaps outside the city in a practice called exposing. The Christians would gather the unwanted babies and raise them as if they were their own. In *The Trouble With Jesus*, Joseph Stowell cites writer Tertullian (AD 200): "It is our care of the helpless, our practice of loving-kindness that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents."

Among the groups identified in the Bible as being in special need are children. Care for and protection of children has been a central expression of the Christian faith throughout history. In the early church, care for vulnerable children was to be the responsibility of the entire Christian community, from financial support to adoption. Still today, many religious organizations are engaged in nurturing and protecting children.

Prior to the development of government-run child protection systems in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s, many of the organizations involved in child welfare were church- or denomination-based ministries. With the advent of government-run child protection systems, law and policy dictated that state child welfare agencies provide services to abused and neglected children. Most of these services, however, are provided only to children who have suffered blatant abuse or neglect. Thus, millions of children and their families remain in difficult situations without prevention or intervention services.

Many families, even when they are doing "all the right things" are just one crisis away from major instability in their lives. Under-resourced communities leave families in the throes of hospitalization, unemployment, incarceration, substance abuse recovery, and other crises related to poverty without the resources and support to care for their children. These children are then at risk for trauma, abuse, and neglect. The foster care system is overloaded with an estimated 438,000 youth and climbing, 70% of which may not even need to be there. The number of incoming children is outpacing the number exiting, with 270,000+ children entering every year, more than half of whom are never reunited with their families as they were removed because of neglect.

During these crises, many parents are not capable of providing a safe and caring environment for their children. In the past, extended family often stepped in to support parents by taking care of children for short periods of time. Also, neighbors came alongside families during crises. Today, however, many families in poverty are socially isolated and their extended family is non-existent or not available.

Given the volume of families at-risk, child protective services (foster care) cannot be the only entity addressing these problems and certainly are not able to intervene upstream to prevent the problem. Before an initial child abuse allegation is filed or between the initial unsubstantiated report and subsequent re-reports lay opportunities to support these struggling families and to stop the trajectory of pressure that leads to abuse and neglect.

If social isolation (parent has no one to call for help) is the primary driver of child abuse, the Church holds the primary solution, radical hospitality, and disruptive generosity. The simple acts of befriending parents who have no one to turn to, opening your home to a child that is in a risky situation, sharing our time and possessions can prevent child abuse and change the entire trajectory of a family.

We have seen this done over 50,000 times. Churches have joined Safe Families to build this massive safety net in over 120 communities in the US and hundreds more in the UK and Canada. Through Safe Families, the Church helps weave a strong safety net that catches children and their families before child abuse occurs and forced removals are required. Families in churches are one of the most powerful change agents in our society when living out the discipline of radical hospitality and disruptive generosity.

By Dr. Dave Anderson
Founder of SFFC

Children *SAFE* Families *TOGETHER*



Caring for the Community

Churches can be excellent sources of support for those who experience hardships and crises. They can help build resilience as they walk with families to provide care and compassion through a community of believers. Churches are uniquely positioned to care for the vulnerable and overlooked as they love their neighbor and share their resources.



SCAN ME



Safe Families
for Children

Protective Factors for Family Strengthening

Strengthening Families is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. The Strengthening Protective Factors are conditions in families and communities that, when present, increase the health and well-being of children and families. Research has shown that protective factors are linked to a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect.

PARENTAL RESILIENCE

Parents who can cope with the stresses of everyday life, as well as occasional crises, have resilience; they have the flexibility and inner strength necessary to bounce back when things are not going well. Multiple life stressors such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness—may reduce a parent's capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day stresses of raising children.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN

Children's early experiences of being nurtured and developing a positive relationship with a parent affect all aspects of behavior and development. A child's relationship with a parent in the early years is associated later in life with better academic grades, healthier behaviors, more positive peer interactions, and an increased ability to cope with stress.

PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND PARENTING SKILLS

There is extensive research linking healthy child development to effective parenting. Children thrive when parents provide not only affection, but also communication and listening, consistent rules and expectations, and safe opportunities that promote independence.

CONCRETE SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

Many factors affect a family's ability to care for their children. Families who can meet their own basic needs, and who know how to access essential services such as childcare, health care, and mental health services to address family-specific needs—are better able to ensure the safety and well-being of their children. Providing concrete supports may help prevent the unintended neglect that sometimes occurs when parents are unable to provide for their children.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Parents with a social network of emotionally supportive friends, family, and neighbors often find that it is easier to care for their children and themselves. Most parents need people they can call on once in a while when they need a sympathetic listener, advice, or concrete support.



Safe Families for Children

Devotional Guide to Pray through Protective Factors

Factor One - Parental Resilience

Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma (Philippians 4:5-7).

- Stress = worry = fear = anxiety. If our families are to grow in the ability to manage stress, what does it look like for them to successfully, regularly, leave their stress with God in prayer?
- What ways of thinking aid in the rejection of stress, anxiety, and reliving the past?

Prayer

"Thank You, Lord Jesus, that You have been tempted in all ways that the world, flesh, and devil have to offer, but without sin. Thank You that we can come to You with all the challenges, adversity, and trauma we have faced and will face. Thank You that we have an opportunity to comfort others with the same comfort we have received from You – comforting, being there, and praying for the parents whom we connect with through Safe Families for Children. Help us encourage and be used to help strengthen them in their healing journey; ultimately to You."

Factor Two - Social Connections

Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental, and spiritual support (II Timothy 2:1-2).

- What empowerment has God made available to our families to progress through their current circumstances and how do we live in that empowerment?
- How do we skillfully pull someone into discipleship relationships as well as into community?

Prayer

"Thank You, God, that You model the Triune Relationship for us and to us. You have created us for You and for relationship one with another, in the body of Christ. Help us to have and to model positive, supportive relationships within the body. And to offer relationship(s) to the parents and families we connect with through Safe Families for Children."

Factor Three - Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development (Psalm 127:3-5).

- What are we fighting for and what are we fighting against in the way(s) we guide our children?
- How do we bring our children into a way of life that equates to our entire family living in a unified victory?

Devotional Guide to Pray through Protective Factors

Prayer for Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

"Thank You, Lord, that You are Our Perfect Parent. Thank You that You have made a way for those of us who are parents, to learn and grow in You, as a parent. And for us to share parenting and child development through what we've learned – mistakes and triumphs - with parents whom we come alongside of in Safe Families for Children. And those of us who aren't parents, we can share what we've learned that is helpful through being parented and our connections with parents. We are all on a journey and we can encourage and cheer parents on!"

Factor Four - Concrete Support in Times of Need

Access to concrete support and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges (Ruth 2:1-2).

- How do we intentionally live as the kind of Christian community where those who come into our community know-how and where to get physical needs met?
- How do we intentionally live as the kind of Christians that relieve the stresses of life off of one another?

Prayer

"Lord, thank You that you call us to 'do to the least of these as it is actually done to You! We don't' fully understand how that is, but we know You call us to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, cloth the naked, and invite the 'stranger' in. Help us to view others, like You – giving to you, loving on, and giving tangible help through relationships. Thank You, Lord, for giving to us in abundance, that we might give to others."

Factor Five - Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Family and child interactions help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships /Philippians 2:12-15/.

- What are some good strategies for helping children be consistent, whether a parent is present or not?
- How does complaining and disputing /or grumbling/ affect emotional health and what are some things you can do to replace complaining and disputing in your daily life?

Prayer

"Thank You, Lord, for Your patience, kindness, and long-suffering with us. Help us Lord to go and do likewise – to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger – teaching and modeling this to the children we encounter with Safe Families for Children, and come alongside parents to help them do the same."

Next Steps

Intentional Ways to Show your Support and Care for the Community

Whether you are a new church or an existing church partner, we want to provide concrete ways to support and engage your community and with Safe Families for Children.

- Display the blue Prevention Pinwheels you received in your basket as a way to show your love and care for the community. Pinwheels gardens represent a community effort that supports families and prioritizes prevention for family strengthening. You can contact your local Prevent Child Abuse chapter.
- Invite your local Safe Families chapter to meet with leadership and staff to share the many opportunities to provide support to vulnerable children and strengthen families. The goal is family preservation.
- Present Safe Families 101. We would love the opportunity to share our mission and movement to help keep children safe and families together with your congregation.
- Provide additional training for staff and/or church congregation on evidence-based Family Strengthening Protective Factors in order to better care for families inside and outside your congregation. Isolation has had a collective impact on so many families, and it is important for churches to better understand community needs and opportunities.



Safe Families Sunday

APRIL 24, 2022

Safe Families Sunday is purposely celebrated in April to coordinate our efforts with National Child Abuse Prevention Month and National Volunteer Appreciation. This designated Sunday is set aside as a time to both recognize our faithful volunteers and bring awareness to the many families facing crisis alone in your community.

Ways Churches Can Participate:

- **Five-Minutes on a Sunday:** Use this time to celebrate and acknowledge volunteers and your church's efforts to strengthen families. Have the volunteers wear their t-shirts and share a local story (If you are a new church partner, spotlight SFFC and host a Safe Families 101).
- **Show Appreciation Video:** Hear from our founder, Dave Anderson, and parents who want to express their gratitude to the volunteers who reach out to families facing crisis and hardship.
- **Social Media Campaign:** Share our provided social media images and messaging on your church's platforms to thank volunteers
- **Small Group Discussion:** Use our prayer and devotional guide for Life Groups or small group discussion.
- **Have a Designated Prayer Time:** Support in prayer the volunteers and families you are/or will be serving.
- **Plan A Safe Families 101 :** Announce a designated time for congregants to hear about how they can get involved with Safe Families.
- **Host a Special fundraiser or Offering** to help support local efforts to keep children safe and families together.



Safe Families for Children



Safe Families for Children

WHO WE ARE

Safe Families for Children is a national family preservation movement committed to keeping children safe and families together. We desire to prevent child abuse and decrease the number of children unnecessarily entering the foster care system.

WHAT WE DO

Safe Families hosts children and provides family-like support to parents through a community of devoted volunteers. This allows parents the space to get back on track until they are in a better place to care for their children again.

WHO WE SERVE

We help build social support systems around families who are experiencing:

- Isolation
- Unemployment
- Hospitalization of a Parent
- Homelessness
- Domestic Violence
- Incarceration
- Substance Abuse Treatment



www.safe-families.org

