

Why Families Matter Reflection

A REFLECTION FOR NETWORK CO-ORDINATION TEAMS

GOD

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

Romans 8:23 New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

Statement

God is in relationship with Himself—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—what we understand as the Trinity. The greatest expression of His love for humanity came through His Son, Jesus. God the Father sent God the Son to save the world, revealed by God the Holy Spirit. This is the language of ‘family’ ‘Family’ describes the God that Christians worship and follow.

We will only understand how important families are to our emotional wellbeing when we understand that God created families as an expression of himself. Since we are created in His image, we will only thrive when we reflect His nature. This is why raising children in families is crucial for their emotional, social and physical wellbeing. If families are in crisis, we need to help the family to know God’s intention for them to be together and to help them to prevent family separation. For children who do not know the love of a family, we need to help them to know God’s love and care.

Key Principle

Because God has adopted us, and is father to the fatherless, he is at the centre.

Fact

The Bible is very clear about God’s call on us to serve the needs of those children who are vulnerable, specifically those who lose parents. The word ‘orphan’ appears 30 times in scripture where we are asked to be kind and generous to fatherless children. In the Bible, there is no precedence for a model, which removes children from their communities in order to respond to their needs. Instead throughout scripture, there is emphasis on the importance of relationships and of family. “He sets the lonely in families” Psalm 68:6

Reflect

1. How do I feel about the concept that God’s intention is that all children belong in families
2. How do I begin to promote this concept to network members?

CHILD

Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.

Psalms 127:3 New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

Statement

Every one of us started life as a child. God made us as children, created in his image. Being created in his image means that every child has intrinsic value and worth.

Children are a gift from God. They bring joy to life. Since they are the smallest and the weakest, they are the most vulnerable and therefore deserve the highest levels of protection and support. Loving parents are the best protectors of a child, and if the parent is not able to do this, then a child needs to be found an alternative family as soon as possible. As Christians, we need to think about how we can play our part in protecting children from harm and to provide support and care to children in crisis.

Key Principle

Every child has inherent value and an unconditional right to holistic development.

Fact

Each of us was created with a capacity to receive love from a mother and father. Unconditional love is the most important need of every child. This is most easily expressed where one or two parents can respond to the individual needs of the child. Strong emotional and physical attachment to at least one primary caregiver (usually a child's mother) is critical to a child's development.

Reflect

1. How are about families in my network location enabling their children to develop and thrive?
2. How can we work with families through the network to ensure that children are being brought up in safe caring homes?

FAMILY

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

Ephesians 3:14-15 New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

Statement

When a family is working well, it brings great joy, love and security. A child who lives in a dysfunctional family or who has no family at all will always be at a disadvantage. That is why it is so important for every child to know what it is to live in a loving family. As Christians, we need to open our families to children who need to experience what a loving family is and how strong families work so that when they grow up they are able to build strong families.

Key Principle

A healthy family is the best environment for a child to develop and thrive.

Fact

Children who are cared for by families within communities are more likely to thrive than those who are separated from their families. This is because children growing up in families generally receive the kind of love, attention, and care essential to their wellbeing. Children and young people who are removed from their family suffer separation and feelings of loss, even if they have been maltreated and children who have experienced repeated traumatic separations often become permanently damaged

Reflect

1. Raising children in families is critical for their healthy emotional development. What implications does this have for how we educate our children and how we care for orphans?
2. What can our network do to promote the strengthening of families?

CHURCH

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. 'Come now, let us settle the matter,' says the LORD. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Isaiah 1:17-18 New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

Purpose Statement

Christians together--The Body of Christ—the Church—is called by God to reflect his heart for the vulnerable, disadvantaged and powerless.

The Church is the spiritual family for people who believe in Jesus and are seeking to follow him in a path of discipleship. The Church can provide a place of hope and healing for children and adults who have not had a positive family environment. The Church can help to embrace the lonely child who does not know the love of a family, and we need to support families in the church who are willing and able to embrace one more child into their families.

Key Principle

The body of Christ is commissioned to care for all children including children without parental care and has the capacity to lead the local and global effort to end the situation of children living outside of family care.

Fact

There are increasing numbers of children unable to live with their own families that need to be accepted and cared for by alternative families that can offer them the love, individual attention and stability that they require. The Church is uniquely placed to offer its help to meet this need. This is by families or caregivers from the church offering alternative family care for children, while other church members supports them in what they are doing

Reflect

1. How can we be working with churches to help keep families together ?
2. How can organisations and churches in the network collaborate together to find alternative families if both parents have died or if it is not safe for children to stay with their families.

COMMUNITY

Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

Purpose Statement

Faith communities do not exist in isolation from the communities around them. Even though some in our communities may ignore our faith—or even oppose it—the Bible calls us to model God’s values in everything we do.

As we put into practice God’s commitment to children and families, so we can draw others – of differing faith or none at all – into shared action on behalf of children and families.

Faith communities do not exist in isolation from one another. Individual churches and Christian organisations must find ways to work together as ‘networks of kindness’, so that we can see God’s heart for children and families worked out in our communities

As such, the Church should engage with its community, embracing those in need, and especially reaching out to children and families in crisis, helping them to recover from trauma, isolation and a lack of love. We need to do this in the right way by working with the authorities who have the responsibility to manage the social welfare of those who need help and support.

Key Principle

Broad scale collaboration is required to transfer these core values across societies and see transformation occur.

Fact

The most common reason quoted as why children become separated from their families is lack of access to education or poverty, while disease, abuse domestic violence, child labour or trafficking are some of the reasons that children may leave home. Of the estimated 2 million children living in institutional care, 80% of them have one living parent.

Reflect

1. How can we get involved in local child protection provision or providing emergency care for children at risk?
2. As a network, how are we engaging with authorities and other organisations working with separated children and child protection issues.