

Ways to Connect with Families

“My vision related to the well-being of Knoxville's families is that churches, school systems, public and private agencies, and government would work together, joining hands and joining efforts, for the betterment of our families.”

~Ron Shuman, Pastor of Counseling at Ball Camp Baptist Church

Make a Difference Through Prayer

- Pray for physical health, mental well-being, and financial stability for the staff and volunteers of organizations devoted to caring for families.
- Pray that struggling families will find the help they need to be healed from trauma and conflicts, to restore healthy relationships and to develop positive lifestyles.
- Pray for families experiencing the agony of loss through death or divorce.
- Pray for single parents struggling to raise and provide for their children alone. Pray for more fathers to embrace the responsibility and discover the joy of their vital role in their child's life.
- Pray for the neighborhoods in Knoxville that are hurting because so many of their families are hurting.
- Pray that the church, the nonprofit sector and public agencies would collaborate to provide families with needed services, to encourage family stability, and to prevent teen and unwed pregnancies.
- Pray that more parents would find the support they need to choose options other than abortion, and that every child born in our city would be welcomed by a loving, nurturing family.
- Pray that every family in Knoxville would become part of God's family.
- Pray that our society would increasingly value the well-being of families, particularly as more families are destabilized by the stresses of unemployment and poverty.

Make a Difference Through Your Life

- If you know of a family that is struggling to survive, financially or relationally, commit to praying regularly for them. Ask God how you might share the healing presence of Christ in their lives. Make yourself available to listen, to help, and to point them toward effective resources.
- Reinforce a family-affirming culture. Reject entertainment or products that undermine families by condoning extramarital sexuality, domestic violence, or divorce.
- Make a commitment to serve together as a family. Find a volunteer opportunity that offers every family member a chance for meaningful participation. Discuss together the importance of sharing God's love with others, and what this means for your family's use of time and treasures.

Make a Difference Through Your Church

- Is your church welcoming of families with special needs (e.g., single parent families, families with disabilities, families struggling with addictions, families in poverty)? Assess the barriers that might prevent "imperfect" families from finding a home in your congregation.

- Affirm the efforts of single parents who are devoted to their children and work hard to hold their family together. Sometimes in upholding the value of two-parent families, churches unintentionally exclude or disparage unmarried individuals.
- Take steps to ensure that families in the congregation are safe families. Become educated on issues of domestic abuse by joining the Clergy Task Force on Family Violence (865-688-3366, www.clergytaskforce.weebly.com).
- Sponsor or support ministries that strengthen families in the church as well as in the community – family nights, pre-marital counseling, marriage enrichment programs, family-based support groups, fatherhood initiatives, programs for non-custodial parents, anger management and conflict resolution, etc. Invest in families *before* they get into trouble.
- Create opportunities for families to serve together in the community. The experience of shared service strengthens family members' relationships with one another as well as with God. Even struggling families have strengths and gifts that will give them joy to offer to others.
- Add a family ministry component to current community outreach programs—for example, make family counseling or parent support groups available to families who come to the church for food aid.
- Make sure that service ministries involving children do not undermine parents' dignity and responsibility. For example, instead of giving holiday gifts to poor children from the church--which can make parents feel like a failure for being unable to provide for their children—open a "Christmas shop" in the church where parents can purchase donated new items for a fraction of their price, and give the gifts to their children themselves.
- Help connect new or struggling families with established, healthy families in the church who can offer friendship, guidance, accountability, and a good example. Provide opportunities to build relationships through shared family activities and service projects.
- Create or partner with programs to help prepare teens and college students to make wise choices about life partners, sexuality and parenting (for example, the Silver Ring Thing Abstinence Program, 865-524-2774; or the JUSTWAIT Community Program, 865-525-4673).
- Surround a family that is homeless or on the verge of homelessness with practical aid, emotional and spiritual support, counseling, connections for employment and housing, and long-term relationships.
- Work with Knoxville businesses to promote workplace resources for family counseling, and to help shape family-friendly employment policies, especially for low-skill jobs (e.g., living wages, flex time, paid maternity/paternity leave, onsite childcare, and sick child leave). For example, encourage policies that allow parents to stay home with a sick child if necessary without losing their job.
- Form a study and advocacy group to help the church grapple with the challenges faced by families, and the ways that public policies (at both a national and local level) may work to strengthen marriage and reduce divorce (such as reforming divorce laws).
- Help build connections among all the organizations and resources in your community that serve families in various ways, so that groups can share information, ideas, referrals, and training opportunities.

- Offer the church as a liaison to help coordinate the various public systems that may become involved with a troubled family—public assistance, child welfare, the court system, Medicaid, schools, etc.

Make a Difference as a Volunteer

Connect with the following organizations that serve families in Knoxville:

Columbus Home Assisting Parents (CHAP) (Catholic Charities of East Tennessee, Inc.): 865-544-0578 x 115, <http://www.ccetn.org>

Provides parenting education, crisis intervention, and case management for families who are experiencing life stressors. Program services reduce stress and increase parents' skills and coping abilities.

- Tutor a child or help with homework assignments.
- Groups: Organize clothing, food, or pharmacy/gas station gift card drives.
- Families: Mentor participating CHAP families to provide relationship, support and accountability.

Hope Initiative (Cokesbury United Methodist Church): 865-246-0437, <http://www.cclive.org>

A mentoring and tutoring program that offers families in challenging circumstances hope, healing, and redemption through faith in Christ and the development of healthy relationships.

- Mentor a child or an adult for a 22-week commitment: 10 weeks of attending the program with the family on Tuesday nights and 12 weeks of weekly follow-up phone calls.
- Tutor to help children with schoolwork or to assist adults with GED preparation.
- Groups: Help with the dinner ministry by planning a menu, shopping, cooking, or serving the meals.
- Families: Create a loving and welcoming atmosphere by serving as greeters and interacting with the children during the program.

Hope Resource Center: 865-525-4673, <http://www.hoperc.org>

Offers health, hope and healing to women and men who find themselves in difficult situations related to sexual activity. Provides free STD and pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, and classes that teach young adults basic parenting and life skills, as well as a post-abortive Christian counseling program.

- Facilitate a weekly class that equips people facing an unplanned pregnancy to become good parents.
- Serve four hours per week as a greeter or counselor for one of the medical clinics.
- Serve as a church liaison to keep congregations aware of special events.

The Restoration House: 865-300-6806, <http://www.therestorationhouse.net>

Helps restore single mothers and their children back to God's good intent for their lives by providing supportive transitional housing, mentoring and a personalized plan.

- Assist single mother families by providing childcare, financial literacy training, or vehicle or facility maintenance.

- Donate personal and household items needed by mothers moving into or out of The Restoration House.
- Individuals, families, or groups: Join a team of mentors that walk with single mother families for up to two years. Time commitments include weekly contact, a social activity once a month, and quarterly participation in Family Nights.
- Churches – can you provide one complete mentor team of 8-12 mature Christians to minister to a single mother family?
- Families / groups: Sponsor a quarterly Family Night dinner party or a work day for the housing units.

Single Mom Outreach (Fellowship Evangelical Free Church): 865-803-7039

A ministry to inner city single moms and their children who face difficult economic, social and emotional challenges. Shows the love of Christ and invites a love for Christ that produces changed lives for moms and their children.

- Offer a craft or Scripture lesson for the moms or the kids at a bi-monthly meeting.
- Groups: Commit to meet clothing, transportation, or childcare needs for a particular single-mom family for a specified time period.
- Families: Spend time with a single mom with children about the same age as yours.

Additional organizations that work with families in the Knoxville area:

Many of the organizations listed below that work directly with families would appreciate volunteers to provide administrative and fundraising support to the organization; to help with special events; to help provide needed services to families; or to care for children while parents are at appointments.

ACTS 12 (hosted by Calvary Baptist Church): 865-224-1212, <http://www.acts12.com>

A ministry for men and women with unwanted feelings of same-sex attraction who desire to follow Christ and share the conviction that acting out sexually with members of the same gender is contrary to Scripture.

Child and Parenting Skills (CAPS) (Florence Crittenton Agency): 865-602-2021, <http://www.fcaknox.org>

An educational and supportive program for first-time teen parents with high-risk factors. Each parent and child are recognized as unique individuals worthy of love, as parents are assisted in nurturing the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development of their child. Participants attend weekly group sessions during school hours at Fulton, Carter, Central, South Doyle, Karns, and Powell high schools.

Child Support Employment and Parenting Program: 865-291-0685

Helps non-custodial parents work through barriers to become employed, stable and have positive involvement in their children's lives.

Healthy Families East Tennessee (Helen Ross McNabb): 865-637-9711,

<http://www.mcnabbcenter.org>

A voluntary home visitation program to strengthen first-time parents and prevent child

abuse or neglect. Begins during pregnancy if possible to provide support, education, and a full range of case management services.

Partners (Child & Family Tennessee): 865-524-7483, <http://www.child-family.org>
Promotes child safety and development through educational and supportive services for parents and families, including free parenting classes and workshops for first-time fathers. Participants build up the knowledge and self-confidence to be nurturing caregivers.

Relative Caregiver Program (Foothills Care): 865-483-9111
Supports children not living with their parents to keep them from entering state custody. Services to relative caregivers include information and referral, support groups for caregivers and for youth, educational workshops, respite and recreation, family advocacy, and emergency financial assistance.

Tennessee Department of Children's Services: 865-329-8879,
<http://www.state.tn.us/youth>
Empowers families and supports community involvement, education, and partnerships to help ensure safety, permanency, and well-being for children.

The Well (First Baptist Concord): 865-966-9791, <http://www.fbconcord.org>
Encourages and strengthens single moms through monthly meetings that equip single parents to deal with the challenges of parenting alone.