

Australian Christian Foster Care Network

Foster Care Sunday Church Toolkit



There are over 46,200 children in Out-of-Home Care in Australia.¹

The number of children being removed from their families each year is increasing, while the number of Foster Carers is decreasing². Nationally, governments are struggling to recruit and retain carers.

The Church is called to serve the most vulnerable members of our communities. Let's celebrate and support the Foster and Kinship Carers who are living on mission, providing loving homes for children who are unable to live with their birth family. We can all do something to create communities of welcome and support for carers and children with an experience of the Out-of-Home Care system.

Launching on September 10th 2023, we are inviting churches to pick a date that works for them to participate in Foster Care Sunday.

- Celebrate children in care and Foster or Kinship Carers in your congregations and communities
 - Raise awareness of the children needing families and the important mission of Foster Care
 - Play a role in being a safe and supportive space for those involved in the Out-of-Home Care system



¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) Child Protection 2020-21, Accessed: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2020-21/contents/about>

² As above.

On Foster Care Sunday:

- Play the Foster Care Sunday VIDEO You can access it [here](#).
- Pray for current carers, pray for more carers, and pray for children separated from their families. We have created a Foster Care Sunday Prayer you can use. You can access it [here](#).

You may also want to:

- Preach a message on themes related to Out-of-Home Care. We have prepared a Sermon Outline you may want to use. You can access it [here](#).
- Invite the carers in your church to share their story.
- Celebrate carers in your church or community with a handwritten card, coffee or meal voucher, flowers, morning tea after church, or another gesture of appreciation!
- Refer people to an organisation who can engage potential carers and support existing carers.





ARK Australia
arkaustralia.org

ARK Australia is a movement of communities dedicated to providing family and belonging to vulnerable kids through foster care and adoption. They:

- Can bring a biblical message to any church in Australia, free of charge, and connect those interested in care with a local agency
- Host the ['Faith & Fostering' Podcast](#)
- Provide no obligation online information sessions
- Oversee a growing nationwide network of peer-support communities, designed to 'be the village' for children in care



You Parties
youparties.org.au

You Parties is an easy-to-use resource for local churches to help them partner with foster families & celebrate their foster children. Our party-throwing kits are designed specially to communicate love and value to children in out-of-home care by celebrating them in unique and fun ways.



Fostering Hope
fosteringhope.net.au

Fostering Hope exists to reflect Christ's love by supporting at-risk children and those who care for them. They do this by:

- Raising awareness about the number of children growing up in out of home care and shortage of foster/kinship carers
- Recruiting new carers
- Offering ongoing pastoral care and support to carers and their families



The Homeward Project
homewardproject.org

The Homeward Project provides a bridge between the local Church and the child protection system, equipping you to build a ministry of Out-of-Home Care where everyone has role to play.

Other ways to Respond

These are some other ideas to respond in meaningful ways:

- Pray for more homes for children, for children growing up in care, for carers
- Host a movie night at your church and watch a movie about foster care
- Host a trauma awareness training session so you can learn more about how to support all members of your community
- Cook a meal for carers in your church or community
- Provide a freezer of meals and baked goods for carers in your community
- Host a date night for carers, supervising the kids while carers go out
- Explore mentoring options for a child or young person in care
- Host morning teas for carers in your community
- Offer free babysitting for carers (in line with any agency conditions based on the type of care placement)
- Learn more about the impacts of trauma so your church can be a safe place for all children and families



Why Foster Care Sunday?

"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."

James 1:27

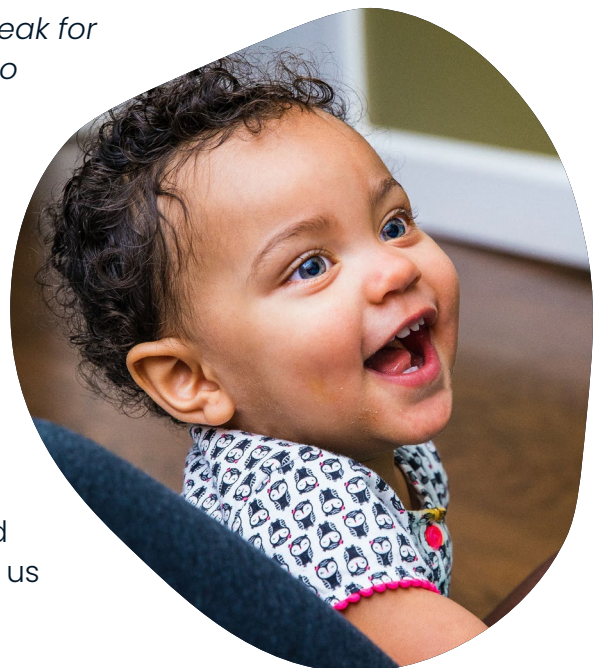
At the heart of Foster Care Sunday is to inspire and equip God's people to live the "pure religion" described in the book of James and expressed throughout Scripture. Our aim as shepherds and leaders is to help the people of God live in ways that are decisively different and set apart (holy) and embody self-giving sacrifice (helpfulness) for the orphan, widow and vulnerable among us. It's the intricate and never mutually exclusive relationship between identity and action - allowing what we do to flow from who we are.

Our goal as the Church is not recruitment or activism first; it is discipleship. Ultimately, to see the people of God deeply celebrating the love of God for us through the work of Jesus (identity - who we are) and then widely demonstrating that love in our work on behalf of those around us (action - what we do).

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.

Proverbs 31:8

In any community, children without the protection of their parents are the most vulnerable. As Christians we are called to care for the vulnerable. We are also called to act as advocates, the Bible shows us that we are reflecting the character of Jesus and how he first loved us. Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are referred to as our advocates - Jesus advocates for us



to the Father (Hebrews 7:25, Romans 8:24, 1 Timothy 2:5) and the Holy Spirit advocates for us when we don't know how to pray (Romans 8:26).

On Foster Care Sunday you have an opportunity to advocate for children growing up in care at your church. Speak about the need for more foster and kinship carers, the need for more Indigenous carers, the need to change outcomes for children leaving out of home care ...

Utilise this Sunday focus as a catalyst for further, ongoing, long-term engagement in the lives of vulnerable children and families.



*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion
and the God of all comfort, who
comforts us in all our troubles, so that
we can comfort those in any trouble
with the comfort we ourselves
receive from God.
2 Corinthians 1:3-4*

Foster Care Sunday is just the start. We pray that each year as churches around Australia celebrate Foster Carer's Sunday more people will respond with action.



Resources

1. About Out-of-Home Care in Australia

Find out more information about Out-of-Home care, including definitions and key statistics.

Find out more [here](#).

2. Sermon Outline

The Sermon Outline is a helpful starting point for anyone looking to preach a sermon about foster and kinship care.

Get the Sermon Outline [here](#).

3. Foster Care Sunday Prayer

A helpful prayer about foster and kinship care that can be prayed within or adapted for your congregation or personal prayer time.

Access the prayer [here](#).

4. The Legacy of Stand Sunday

Learn about the global movement of Christians who have been celebrating foster carers in their churches the last twenty years.

Learn more [here](#).

FAQs

What is Foster Care Sunday?

Foster Care Sunday is a national day to celebrate the role of Foster and Kinship Carers, raise awareness of children needing families, and to encourage local churches to play a role in being a safe and supportive space for those involved in the Out-of-Home Care system.

When is Foster Care Sunday?

Foster Care Sunday is celebrated on the second Sunday of September – 10th September 2023.

What Foster Care Sunday resources are available?

We have created a campaign Video, Prayer Points, Sermon Outline, and screen image for you to use in promoting and celebrating Foster Care Sunday in your church.

You can access these in the resources section above or get more information from www.christianfostering.com.au

Do we have to celebrate on the second Sunday in September?

You can celebrate Foster Care Sunday on any date, however we recommend the 10th September 2023 as it coincides with National Child Protection Week and Foster Care in many states and territories and you will be joining in unity with other local churches around Australia on this day.

Who is the Australian Christian Foster Carers Network?

The Australian Christian Foster Carers Network is a coalition of Christian church leaders, foster carers and organisations mobilising and supporting Christian foster and kinship carers in Australia. It includes the following organisations as well as representatives from various churches across Australia.

ARK Australia - www.arkaustralia.org

Fostering Hope - www.fosteringhope.net.au

The Homeward Project - www.homewardproject.org

NAYBA - www.nayba.org/au

You Parties - www.youparties.org.au

Who can I contact for more information?

You can get in touch with each organisation at:

ARK Australia - info@arkaustralia.org

Fostering Hope - hello@fosteringhope.net.au

The Homeward Project - hello@homewardproject.org

You Parties - youparties@qb.org.au