

Individual and Team Pledge & Mission Statement

The quality of nurturing care that children receive during the first 1,000 days of life affects them in ways that last a lifetime. That's why investing in parents, caregivers and young children during the critical 0–3 age is so important. We are all a part of the global village, and our entire village benefits from the wellness of every generation. The whole community has an essential role to play in the growth and development of its young people.

You may already have a ministry team working with very young children and their caregivers. It might be those who guide your nursery, teach in your classrooms, lead intergenerational worship and fellowship, or possibly convene a parent's support group. You may also have an early childhood center affiliated with your church, school or organization who would benefit from your making early childhood development a priority.

Inviting these existing leaders and others into working teams to make an intentional pledge to prioritize early childhood development can help you set goals and begin your work. It might even inspire the entire community to join in for a season, partnering with other community organizations and Episcopal Relief & Development, to expand the impact they can make in the lives of children near and far.

Here are sample pledges you are invited to modify and take privately, and/or share with your ministry teams and faith community.

Pledge for an Individual:

As a committed advocate for early childhood development, I (*name*) pledge to pay attention to the needs of very young children and their caregivers in my family, neighborhood, and at (*faith community*). Seeking out volunteer and giving opportunities, I will actively support others in leadership, caregiving, and advocacy roles, providing a supportive environment for them and those they serve. I will propose and support initiatives like observing Children's Sabbath, Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday, and other local events and campaigns to expand awareness of this essential work.

(Name)

(Date)

Pledge for an Early Childhood Development Ministry Team and/or Faithful Community:

We (*ministry team and/or faithful community*) are committed to protecting the very youngest children, and their caregivers near and far. Guided by the wisdom and research of Episcopal Relief & Development, we will focus on their five key areas of making a difference for lasting change. In partnership with other local faith institutions and community leaders, we will set goals for our (*ministry team and/or faithful community*) team and community that serve as building blocks for a child's full and healthy development by:

- **Equipping and supporting parents and primary caregivers** to deliver the highest quality care, ensuring their children are reaching important physical, mental and emotional milestones. This includes supporting programs like Parents as Teachers and other training opportunities for caregivers, and being intentional about the environments and positive support the programs we offer our youngest community members.
- **Preventing disease and protecting the health of children** by practicing high safety and wellness standards with our youngest members, including a regular inventory of furnishings, nutrition, hygiene practices and adult supervision. Looking for ways to connect with other organizations who also provide healthy guidelines for the very young, including possibly hosting childcare classes, infant CPR training, and volunteering at local clinics and shelters for very young children.
- **Creating opportunities for families to increase their income** by learning more about Episcopal Relief & Development's [community-led savings](#) and loan groups so caregivers can better provide for themselves and their children.
- **Improving food security and nutrition for children and families** by making sure any food distributions (fellowship, outreach, community events) take into account the needs of children aged 0-3. Making our kitchen available for healthy cooking classes, identifying families with young children to participate in vegetable gardens, and encouraging healthy options as snacks (in addition to the fun stuff) when collecting special holiday and school food items.
- **Protecting children and families by equipping community leaders**, including faith leaders, to support families and caregivers while using their status in the community to reduce unhealthy factors like neglect and exposure to violence, and promoting positive behaviors. Join with local foster care agencies, children's shelters, and crisis nurseries to provide support for families in need.

We will also support and partner with agencies supporting this work, including [Episcopal Relief & Development](#), [Episcopal Church Creation Care](#), and the [Episcopal Public Policy Network](#).

Using the *Joy & Wonder* toolkit, and learning from those who collaborate with us on this goal, we will spend (*a year, a season, a triennial etc.*) making early childhood development a priority in our faithful community.

(*ministry team and/or team chair*)

(*Date*)