

Why Do Christians Promote Healthy Timing of Pregnancies?

Healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies saves lives. When parents can ensure the timing of a pregnancy is healthy for the mother, the new baby and other children in the family, they are all more likely to survive and thrive.

Finding Common Ground

Family planning can be misunderstood. The term can sometimes be confused with abortion, and different religions or denominations have varying positions on the topic. But there is common ground. Dr. Mwai Makoka, Executive Director of the [Christian Health Association of Malawi](#) expresses one of the most compelling reasons why religious leaders and others in Malawi support and promote healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies through family planning methods:

“There can be no disagreement about promoting the health of women and children.”



Dr. Mwai Makoka is featured in a video series on faith groups and family planning. Watch [the Video](#)

When births are planned, children and mothers are more likely to survive. Yet, many families do not have access to methods or information to help them time and space their pregnancies. We can change that with support for family planning programs and the organizations that provide them, many of which are Christian.

What is Family Planning?

The term “Family Planning,” as used by Christian Connections for International Health, means enabling couples to determine the number and timing of pregnancies, including the voluntary use of methods for preventing pregnancy - *not including abortion* - harmonious with their values and religious beliefs.



Clients receiving services for healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies in Kenya. Photo: Adrienne Allison/World Vision

Why is Timing and Spacing of Pregnancies Important?

- The lives of [1.6 million children](#) could be saved each year if births were spaced three years apart.
- Family planning prevents unintended and dangerous pregnancies, which reduces abortions and protects the health of mothers.
- Family planning enables families to better care for their children, especially when food and other resources are scarce.

Religious Leaders as Family Planning Champions

The [Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau](#) (UPMB) recognizes the importance of religious leaders, who are highly respected, in influencing their communities.

“We trained faith leaders in family planning, giving them knowledge on all methods. Then they can decide which methods they are comfortable with and are in line with biblical principles.”



In this [video](#) interview UPMB Executive Director Dr. Tonny Tumwesigye explains how UPMB trains religious leaders on healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies. After one year of these trainings, congregation members and religious leaders have reported positive attitude changes regarding timing and spacing of pregnancies, and a noticeable difference in family planning messages “from the pulpit.”

Over time, these leaders go on to train other religious leaders and ultimately become strong champions, advocating for healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies.

CCIH produced a series of videos approximately one to two minutes in length on family planning:

- Support among Religious Leaders for Family Planning in Malawi | [video](#)
- Religious Leaders as Family Planning Champions in Uganda | [video](#)
- Training Religious Leaders on Family Planning in Uganda | [video](#)

What Can Christians Do to Help? U.S. funding for family planning through the foreign affairs budget is a critical, life-saving investment which has improved maternal and child health worldwide. Fully funding these programs would save the lives of thousands more children and mothers each year.

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Perspectives from Faith Groups

While various religious groups may differ on some aspects of family planning, there is wide consensus regarding the benefits of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies.

National Association of Evangelicals

In its 2012 publication, [Theology of Sex](#), the National Association of Evangelicals states: “From the beginning, God established multiple purposes for sex and granted humans a stewardship role over his creation, so there is legitimacy in family planning and the use of ethical means of contraception.”

Catholic Perspective

Catholic doctrine promotes the use of natural family planning through various methods and by encouraging parents to prayerfully consider the size of their families. Several natural options, including simplified and effective fertility awareness-based methods developed by the [Institute for Reproductive Health](#) at Georgetown University, have been incorporated into Catholic service delivery in Rwanda, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, and other locations.



A Catholic priest discusses the Standard Days Method® of natural family planning with other religious leaders. Photo courtesy of UPMB.