

HELPING CHURCHES HAVE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

A FREE planning guide to help churches bring families, community partners and meaningful conversations together



Practical ideas, resources and planning tools to help you create an event that fits your church and community.

One conversation can change everything

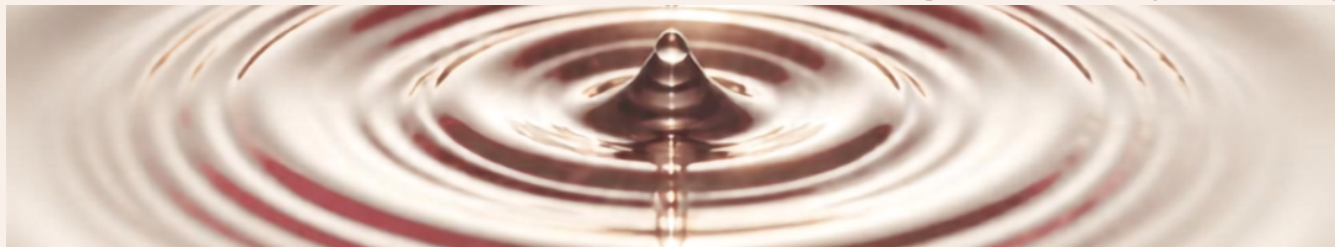


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A MESSAGE TO CHURCH LEADERS

For many years, I believed that difficult issues happened somewhere else—in other families, larger cities, or communities facing different challenges than our own.

I was wrong.

Not because I didn't care, but because I didn't know what I didn't know.

Through personal experience, advocacy, and years of prevention education, I began to understand that many of the challenges families face are not the result of a lack of caring adults. Often, they are the result of isolation, misunderstanding, and simply not knowing where to turn.

Most parents are doing the best they can. Most families want to help their children. And most people would welcome support before a situation becomes a crisis.

The question is: What if our churches could help bridge that gap?
What if one evening could bring families, community organizations, trusted professionals, and local resources together in a way that creates awareness, connection, and hope?

That is the purpose behind *Helping Churches Have Difficult Conversations*.



The desire to belong, be accepted and feel understood is part of being human. But those same needs can sometimes create vulnerabilities. Awareness can help us recognize them—and respond with care.



WHY THIS MATTERS

Churches have always been more than buildings.

They are places where people come seeking hope, guidance, encouragement, and connection.

Families today are navigating an increasingly complex world.

Parents are trying to understand:

- Social media and online influences
- Mental health concerns
- Anxiety and depression
- Healthy relationships
- Consent and boundaries
- Grief and loss
- Substance awareness
- Human trafficking and exploitation risks
- Youth vulnerabilities
- Building resilience in a rapidly changing world

Many parents quietly wonder:

"Am I missing something?"

"Would I recognize warning signs?"

"Do my children feel safe talking to me?"

"Do I know enough to guide them through today's challenges?"

These are not signs of failure. They are signs of caring.

I don't believe families need another evening where they are told everything that can go wrong.

They need an opportunity to learn, ask questions, meet people who can help, and leave knowing where to turn if they ever need it.

◆ Remember: Awareness creates opportunity. Conversation creates connection. Connection creates stronger communities.



A STORY MANY FAMILIES CAN RELATE TO

Imagine a family sitting in church on Sunday morning.

From the outside, everything appears fine.

They smile.

They serve.

They participate.

Yet beneath the surface, they may be carrying questions, concerns, or struggles they don't know how to talk about.

Perhaps a child is struggling with anxiety.

Perhaps a teenager is feeling isolated.

Perhaps a parent feels overwhelmed by the pressures of raising children in today's world.

Perhaps someone simply needs access to resources they don't know exist.

The reality is that many struggles stay hidden—not because people don't care, but because they don't know how to begin the conversation.

Not because people don't care.

But because they don't know where to begin the conversation.

Helping Churches Have Difficult Conversations is about creating opportunities to begin those conversations earlier, when there is still time to learn, listen and respond.



THE OPPORTUNITY

Helping Churches Have Difficult Conversations is more than an event.
It is a simple framework that churches can make their own.

Churches can adapt it to their own needs, resources and budget.

You choose the topics. You invite the people who can help. You decide what your families and community need most.

The goal is not to create another program for your church to manage. It is to create an opportunity for people who already care about families to come together and share what they know.



RESULT:

Families leave informed.

Churches strengthen relationships.

Organizations connect with the people they serve.

Communities become stronger.



WHAT DOES THE EVENT LOOK LIKE

Four workshops. Four groups. One rotating schedule.

Attendees are divided into four groups when they register. Each group begins in a different workshop and then rotates to the next room at the scheduled time.

Everyone has the opportunity to attend all four workshops.

Allow approximately 5 minutes between workshops for participants to move to their next room.

Workshop Format	What Parents Experience
Four rotating sessions	Parents attend four 20-25 minute workshops throughout the evening
Expert facilitators	Learn from trained professionals and community experts
Resource tables	Connect with local organizations and discover support services
Take-home materials	Receive practical guides and resource lists

Sample Evening Schedule

6:00–6:20 — Workshop 1

6:20–6:25 — Transition

6:25–6:45 — Workshop 2

6:45–6:50 — Transition

6:50–7:10 — Workshop 3

7:10–7:15 — Transition

7:15–7:35 — Workshop 4

7:35–7:50 — Community Booths / Resource Tables

7:50–8:00 — Closing & Door Prizes

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A few important things to consider

Because these events may involve sensitive subjects, a little preparation beforehand can help create a safe and respectful experience for everyone.

✓ **Approval**

Confirm any school-board, church leadership, organizational or venue approvals required before inviting presenters or promoting the event.

✓ **Presenters**

Choose knowledgeable, qualified presenters and review their topics and materials in advance.

✓ **Sensitive Conversations**

Know how your organization will respond if an attendee raises a serious concern or discloses something that requires support.

✓ **Referral & Crisis Resources**

Have appropriate local crisis, mental health, abuse and support resources available for anyone who may need them.

✓ **Privacy**

Only collect registration information you genuinely need, explain how it will be used, and keep it secure.

✓ **Photography & Recording**

Let attendees know if photographs or recordings will be taken and obtain appropriate consent.

✓ **Age-Appropriate Participation**

If children or youth are participating, ensure activities, discussions and materials are appropriate for their age and needs.

✓ **Accessibility**

Consider accessibility, language, transportation, dietary needs and other accommodations that may help families participate.

✓ **Community Tables**

Ask participating organizations to focus on education, resources and connection rather than sales or solicitation.

✓ **Have a designated person or team available during the event**

Designate a quiet/private space and identify in advance who will respond if an attendee needs to step away or requests additional support.

When in doubt, involve the appropriate professional, organization or authority before moving forward.



EVENT REGISTRATION & WORKSHOP SIGN-UP

A simple registration process can make the evening run smoothly.

Consider using an online registration form to collect:

- Name
- Email address
- Number attending
- Age/grade of children, if applicable (to assist in the child care planning)
- Workshop preferences
- Accessibility or accommodation needs
- Any questions attendees would like addressed

Workshop Registration

Because workshops have limited space, participants can select their preferred sessions when registering.

A simple registration system can help organizers:

- ✓ Plan room sizes
- ✓ Balance workshop attendance
- ✓ Prepare materials
- ✓ Organize workshop rotations
- ✓ Follow up with attendees afterward

At the Door

Have a registration/check-in table where attendees can:

Check in • Receive their schedule • Pick up a name tag (optional) • Ask questions •
Check out vendor/community info tables • Find their rooms

Keep It Simple

A free online form such as Google Forms can be enough to get started. You do not need an expensive registration system.

Privacy.

To be professional and responsible: because you're collecting names and email addresses, add:

Privacy Note: Only collect the information you genuinely need, explain how it will be used, and store it securely.



TOPIC IDEAS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

**We've done the groundwork for you.
Explore these ideas and choose the conversations
that best fit your community.**

For a single evening, consider choosing 3–6 topics that best fit your community.

Other topics can become future workshops or events.

Mental & Emotional Well-Being

- Mental Health Awareness
- Anxiety, Stress & Overwhelm
- Grief & Loss
- Building Resilience
- Self-Esteem & Self-Worth
- Recognizing When Someone Needs Support
- Helping Children Talk About Their Feelings
- When to Seek Professional Help

Digital Life & Online Safety

- Online Safety
- Social Media Pressures
- Cyberbullying
- Online Relationships & Peer Pressure
- Digital Privacy & Footprints
- Online Manipulation & Grooming
- Gaming & Online Communities
- What Parents Should Know About the Apps Their Children Use
- AI, Deepfakes & Digital Manipulation

Relationships Consent & Family

- Healthy Relationships
- Boundaries & Respect
- Age-Appropriate Consent
- Communication Within Families
- Conflict Resolution
- Recognizing Controlling Behaviour & Manipulation
- Parenting Through Difficult Conversations
- Talking With Children & Teens

Safety, Exploitation & Abuse Prevention

- Understanding Domestic Human Trafficking
- Recognizing Vulnerabilities & Risk Factors
- Grooming, Manipulation & Coercion
- Abuse Prevention
- Recognizing Warning Signs
- Healthy Boundaries
- Responding When a Child Discloses Something Concerning
- Creating Safer Communities



TOPICS MAY INCLUDE con'd

Choose the conversations that best fit your community.

Youth Development

- Building Resilience
- Self-Esteem & Self-Worth
- Identity & Belonging
- Peer Pressure
- Making Healthy Decisions
- Developing Independence
- Asking for Help
- Finding Trusted Adults
- Healthy Friendships
- Handling Rejection
- Managing Expectations
- Preparing Youth for Adulthood

Family & Parenting

- Parenting in a Digital World
- Parenting Through the Teen Years
- Setting Healthy Boundaries
- Difficult Conversations With Children & Teens
- Building Connection & Communication
- Recognizing When a Child Needs Support
- Supporting Youth as They Become Independent

Substance & Risk Awareness

- Substance Use Awareness
- Vaping, Nicotine & Alcohol
- Cannabis Awareness
- Understanding Risk-Taking
- Supporting a Family Member Experiencing Addiction
- Social Isolation & Belonging
- Accessing Community Resources
- Supporting Families Before Crisis

Faith & Community

- Creating Safe Church Communities
- Building a Culture of Belonging
- Supporting Families Before Crisis
- Recognizing When Someone May Need Help
- Responding With Compassion
- Creating Safe Spaces for Difficult Conversations
- Connecting Families With Community Resources
- Knowing When to Refer to Professional Support

Not sure where to begin?

You could build an evening around one area, such as:

Digital Safety — social media, cyberbullying, online safety and grooming awareness.

Youth Well-Being — mental health, resilience, substance awareness and knowing when to seek help.

Healthy Relationships & Safety — consent, boundaries, healthy relationships and exploitation prevention.



POTENTIAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS

These are thought starters—not a checklist. Look around your community and think about who is already helping families, children and youth. Those may be the people you want at your event.

Health & Wellness

- Public Health
- Community Health Centres
- Family Health Teams
- Hospitals & Health Programs

Mental Health & Crisis Support

- Mental Health Organizations
- Youth Mental Health Services
- Counselling & Crisis Services
- Addiction & Recovery Services
- Bereavement & Peer Support

Safety, Abuse & Victim Support

- Police & Crime Prevention
- Victim Services
- Child & Family Services
- Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services
- Anti-Human Trafficking Organizations

Family & Youth Services

- Family Resource Centres
- Parenting Programs
- Youth Services & Mentoring
- Recreation & After-School Programs
- Youth Employment Services

Service Clubs & Community Organizations

(Excellent Financial supporters for you even as well)

- Rotary
- Lions
- Kiwanis
- Optimist Clubs
- Legion Branches
- Volunteer Centres
- Community Associations
- Community Foundations



POTENTIAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS con't

Community & Family Support

- Libraries
- Community Centres
- Volunteer Centres
- Service Clubs
- Community Foundations

Legal & Advocacy

- Community Legal Clinics
- Legal Aid
- Family & Victim Advocacy
- Settlement & Immigration Services
- Human Rights Organizations

Food, Housing & Financial Support

- Food Banks & Community Kitchens
- Housing Services
- Financial Counselling
- Employment & Job Training
- Emergency Assistance Programs

Other Organizations to think about

- Newcomers
- Cultural Organizations
- Accessibility Organizations
- Seniors



Local Businesses

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Restaurants | • Family Businesses |
| • Grocery Stores | • Printing Companies |
| • Pharmacies | • Local Employers |
| • Banks & Credit Unions | • Chambers of Commerce |
| • Local Retailers | • Business Improvement Areas |

Business could also provide items for your event:

Such as food, refreshment, door prizes, supplies, sponsorship, printing, promotional support, volunteers



ENHANCE YOUR EVENT

Choose what fits your community.

These ideas are optional—not requirements. Use them to make your event more welcoming, engaging and useful for families.



Local Media & Community Promotion

Invite local media and community outlets to help promote the event and highlight the resources available to families.

- 🧑‍🍼 Childcare
- 🎨 Children's Activities
- 🎯 Youth Activities
- 🍕 Community Meal
- ☕ Sponsored Refreshments
- 📦 Family Resource Packages
- 🤝 Community Resource Booths
- 🎫 Door Prize Draws
- 🙏 Prayer Team Availability
- 🎤 Student or Community Performance
- 📚 Take-Home Resources
- 📝 Parent Feedback Forms
- 📅 Registration table
- 🏆 Youth Leadership Opportunities
- 💬 Question & Answer Session
- 🤝 Volunteer Opportunities
- 💰 Local Business Sponsorships
- 🏢 Community Partner Sponsorships
- 🎤 Additional Guest Speakers
- 🩺 Health & Wellness Stations
- 🧩 Family Wellness Activities
- 📖 Book or Resource Display
- 📧 Community Resource Follow-Up
- 🌱 Ongoing Support or Small Groups



GETTING STARTED/BUILD YOUR TEAM

You don't have to do everything yourself.

Start by gathering a few people who believe this could benefit your community. Choose the conversations that matter most, divide the tasks, and begin reaching out.

1.

BUILD YOUR TEAM

Choose an event lead, and a small group to share the work

2.

DECIDE WHAT YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS

Choose your topics, speakers and community partners

3.

BUILD THE EVENT

Confirm workshops, resource tables, registration, food and activities

4.

BRING EVERYONE TOGETHER

Host the event, connect families with resources and create space for conversation

5.

GET THE WORD OUT

Promote the event, confirm participants and make final preparations

6.

KEEP THE CONNECTION GOING

Thank your partners, follow up and look for opportunities to continue the conversations

IMPORTANT NOTE

This resource is provided free of charge.

Every community event is different. Some presenters may volunteer their time, while others may charge a fee. Food, childcare, venue costs, printing and other expenses may also vary.

While this guide is provided free of charge, hosting an event may involve some costs.

The good news is that there are often ways to reduce those costs through community partnerships, donations, sponsorships and potential funding opportunities.



◆ **ONE EVENING**

◆ **MULTIPLE CONVERSATIONS**

◆ **COUNTLESS OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**





GETTING STARTED con't

HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU NEED?

**If you want to host your event in approximately 2 months:
Plan for 4–5 short planning meetings, plus brief check-ins between meetings.**

Week 1:

Form planning team • Choose date • Identify audience • Select 4 topics

Weeks 2–3:

Contact speakers • Contact community partners • Begin sponsorship/funding requests

Weeks 3–5:

Confirm speakers and booths • Arrange food • Arrange childcare/youth activities • Set up registration

Weeks 5–7:

Promote event • Finalize workshop groups • Confirm volunteers • Gather materials

Final week:

Confirm everything • Send reminders • Prepare rooms and registration materials

If you have approximately 6 months:

Plan for 5–6 planning meetings, approximately once a month, with additional communication as needed.

Months 1–2

Build planning team • Identify needs • Choose date • Explore funding

Months 2–3

Select topics • Invite speakers • Contact community partners

Months 3–4

Secure sponsors • Food • Childcare • Door prizes • Registration

Months 4–5

Promotion • Registration • Volunteer coordination • Workshop planning

Month 6

Finalize details • Confirm everyone • Promote heavily • Host the event



◆ **Keep meetings focused.**
Give each person a task, a deadline and a clear next step before you leave.





THE IMPACT

Imagine a parent leaving your church with a question they now feel comfortable asking.

Imagine a family discovering a resource they didn't know existed.

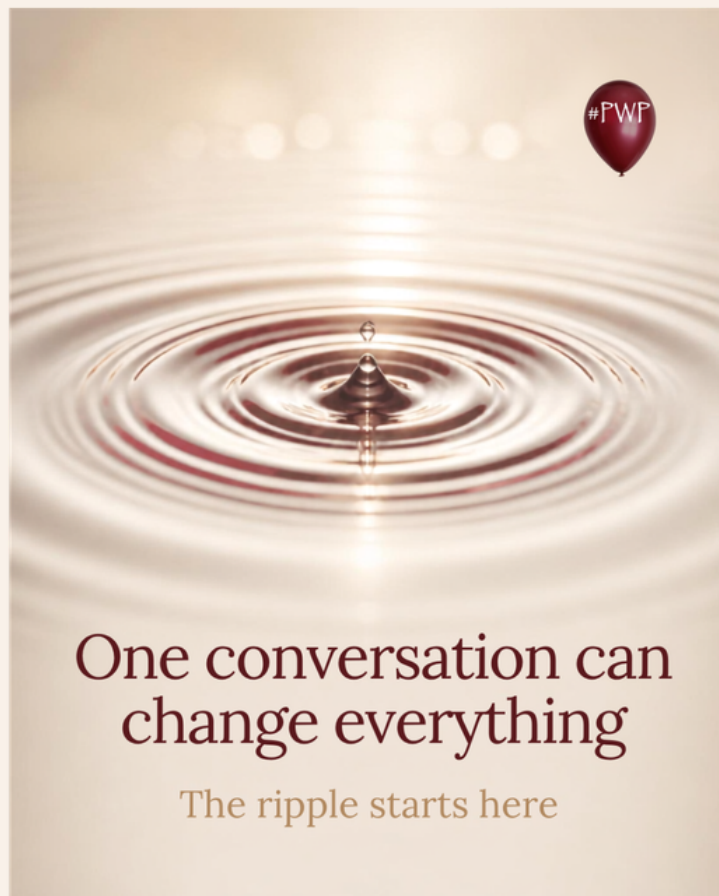
Imagine a church building a relationship with an organization that can help one of its families.

Imagine difficult conversations becoming a little easier to have.

That is where change can begin.

One conversation may seem small.

But sometimes, it is the beginning of something much bigger.





FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Many of the topics included within this event align with funding priorities that support:

Start by looking for funding that supports:

- Youth mental health
- Family wellness
- Prevention education
- Violence prevention
- Human trafficking prevention
- Abuse prevention
- Community safety
- Youth development
- Parent engagement
- Community connection
- Food security
- Community wellness

Search using terms such as:

“Ontario community grants”
“youth wellness grants”
“family support funding”
“violence prevention grants”
“human trafficking prevention funding”
“mental health community grants”
“community engagement grants”
“municipal community grants”
“local foundation grants”

Don't overlook local funding.

Check your municipality, local community foundations, service clubs, charitable foundations and businesses for smaller grants or sponsorship opportunities.



LET'S START THE CONVERSATION

**Every Church is Unique
Every Community is Unique**

This resource has been created to give you a starting point, practical ideas and tools to help you create an event that fits your community.

The planning guide is free.

There is no obligation and no cost to explore the possibility.

If questions come up as you work through the guide, I'm happy to help clarify the framework or resources.

◆ **Sometimes all it takes is one conversation to begin building something meaningful for your community.**

Because when churches, families, and communities come together, everyone benefits. Especially our children.

- ◆ You have the tools
- ◆ You have the framework
- ◆ Now make it your own

If questions come up as you work through the resource, I'm happy to help clarify the framework, resources or planning ideas.

-  Email: parentwithpurpose.ca@gmail.com
-  Questions about the resource? Book a 20-minute conversation.
-  parentwithpurpose.ca

**Together, we can help every child thrive in a supportive,
informed community.**



ABOUT PARENT WITH PURPOSE

Parent With Purpose was created from a simple belief: awareness can
change what happens next as
Prevention is easier than Rescue!

Through prevention education, advocacy, speaking and practical
resources, Lynda Harlos works to help adults better understand the
vulnerabilities and challenges facing children and youth.

Helping Communities Have Difficult Conversations grew from that
work — and from a desire to make prevention conversations easier for
schools, churches and community organizations to bring into their own
communities.

The goal isn't to have all the answers.
It's to help people know where to start.

ParentWithPurpose.ca

Scan for More resources & planning support

