

# the conversation project

## Hosting and Organizing Events for Faith Communities

Faith communities are natural environments for talking about tender and vital topics related to illness and wishes for care at the end of life. People gathering in familiar places with people they know and trust seem open and willing to talk about mortal matters. With guidance from their clergy leaders, congregants are better prepared to embrace the reality of their mortality. With education, appropriate tools, encouragement and support, congregations are strengthened to share their wishes and give their loved ones the gift of knowing what matters most to them when it comes to end-of-life care. The Conversation Project is able to reach a very diverse population where they live and pray and gather. Hosting events at various congregations is one of the best ways to get the message of TCP out to a lot of individuals who share similar values.

## Tips For hosting TCP events in faith communities

- **Embrace the time you are given.** We have found that we can have meaningful presentations and conversations on TCP in just 5, 10, or 15 minutes. However, if the community calendar permits, when scheduling a Conversation Starter Kit workshop, 75-90 minutes is ideal as it allows for group conversation.
- **Invite a member of the clergy** (or other recognized teachers, scholars, or ethicists) from your faith community to offer a brief theological context for the importance of having these crucial conversations as part of your program. We have noticed that when clergy preach or teach about The Conversation Project at a service in advance of a Starter Kit workshop, attendance at the workshop increases.
- **Split up the couples.** We've found that it can be helpful to split up couples when walking through The Conversation Starter Kit. People need time to think through their answers about what matters to them about care. Talking about specifics can be easier to do first with a friend--or even with a stranger--than with partner.
- Suggest that congregations **offer a follow up session 2-6 weeks later** so people can come back together to share how The Conversation went (or didn't go). A second session provides folks with an opportunity to be accountable for having The Conversation by specific date, as well as a space for processing their experience and getting support to keep going.

Having The Conversation unleashes **lots of questions** about next steps and forms. Congregational organizers of TCP might be alerted to that so they can be thinking about scheduling a program with legal and/or medical advisors who can coach them on the state- specific forms people need to record their wishes so they can be respected. Similarly, you may want to provide information about funeral and burial options available as part of your faith's traditions.