

# Standing Firm on Family

As sex-education battles rage across the continent, pro-family groups are launching their own programs that will be taught in home, church and school settings.

by Renae Jarrett

Two sexual risk avoidance programs through Public Education Advocates for Christian Equity (P.E.A.C.E.) are breaking out in Ontario and Manitoba, bringing an unparalleled response in midst of the current battle over sex-ed in schools.

“It’s a fantastic resource for parents to know how to engage their children and for children to have a biblically-modelled sex-ed curriculum,” said Pastor Noel Muscutt of Newcastle Fellowship Baptist Church. “I think it is second to none in the world. I was blown away at how good it was,” he said, having just hosted an event for the program.

The two programs – Building Family Connections (BFC) for parenting adults and Heritage Keepers (HK) – for ages 11-17 have come to Canada through P.E.A.C.E. – an organization that for 20 years has been aiming to “to empower families to positively disciple and mentor their children on difficult conversations such as sexuality.”

“The most effective agents of influence on the sexual decisions of kids are parents and the Church, and our job now, instead of criticizing the government is to empower parents and the Church to take that responsibility,” said P.E.A.C.E. founder and current president Phil Lees who worked in the public education system for 30 years. For years the public education system has adopted a sexual risk reduction approach, but during that time sexually transmitted diseases have dramatically risen along with oral cancer. But for the Church, Lees says it has often “lacked clarity and instruction.”

“We need to teach the science not just



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‘God says so’ and that’s the one thing we try to do in our conferences,” said Lees.

BFC & HK are scientific and medical-based programs developed in the U.S, which have both been tested and “stamped non-religious and LGBTQ-friendly.

*Building Family Connections* is “training available to parenting adults, covering topics like the biblical vision of sex, parenting strategies, effective communication techniques, sexual risk avoidance vs. sexual risk reduction, supporting abstinence in your family & community.”

*Heritage Keepers* is “training for youth,

aged 11-17 that empowers them to resist negative peer pressure and protect their goals and values by making healthy, medically accurate, biblically-aligned sexual decisions, and protective boundaries and resist negative peer pressure. Through the

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program the goals are to: determine and protect personal values and goals, develop their refusal skills, make sexual decisions that are healthy, medically accurate, and biblically-aligned among other things.”

P.E.A.C.E. Director and HK Coordinator and Instructor Dana Hanna said, “It’s so good that entire counties in the U.S. – what we would call school boards in Canada – have actually taken this curriculum on, and it’s actually being taught in the schools, so it’s a very solid curriculum.”

The creator of both programs agreed to partner with P.E.A.C.E. because of its own proven track record.

“They heard about P.E.A.C.E. because of the work we’ve been doing – mostly Phil for the past 30 years. Phil has worked tirelessly and just had amazing results, a lot of international support and a lot of people reaching out,” said Ms. Hanna.

“HK – the people who created *Heritage Keepers* – reached out to Phil and they basically said if we were to have this in Canada, they would only want to work with P.E.A.C.E. because we trust you. We trust the way you do things.”

Their partnership has taken off. Since coming together P.E.A.C.E. has created the Stand Firm, Love True conference that allows parents to attend the Building Family Connections training while youths attend the Heritage Keepers part. They complete the conference by having parents and youths come together and share their experiences with many committing to steward what they’ve received all in the name of accountability.

“When I went to Heritage Keepers, I learned to respect mine and other people’s bodies,” said ten-year-old Emma. “And I made a promise to myself to keep sex until after marriage. The instructors were very real, easy to understand and they left out no details. The classes were very well planned, organized, and fun. I’m glad I had the opportunity to go.”

It’s been reported that 78% of youths don’t know how to say no with their own



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sexual boundaries. “Kids actually want to engage on this issue. They want someone to lead them and guide them,” said Ms. Hanna, a former youth pastor.

Both Emma and her mother Jaime attended PEACE’s conference. “I walked away completely inspired almost overwhelmed. It was amazing in every way!” said Jaime. “After taking the program, it inspired me to reflect on my own parenting and how in the past I had avoided talking in depth about certain sexual topics with my children because I wasn’t sure how to share that information or how much to share, so the program gave me the resources and then the confidence to share more openly with my children, and it helped me to realize the importance of speaking the truth about sex into their lives.”

This type of feedback is only increasing. The Durham Region of the GTA became P.E.A.C.E.’s pilot project of sorts for the conference and programs and now, through the partnership of churches, there is a Sexual Integrity Initiative in the region with growing invitations for it to be brought elsewhere, including Winnipeg by the ministerial there. “It’s time to “improve the narrative” (of the Church),” said Lees.

**Upcoming Events**

This fall and winter, there will be various events where youths, parents and churches can come on board, including an overview

of the programs through **Toward a Culture of Sexual Integrity** at Southside Worship Centre in Ajax, Ont. on Nov. 19, 2018.

With increasing demand for the two programs, certified presenters are also needed. Certification training events for both programs will be held at Embassy Church in Oshawa. Professional Certification Training for the **Building Family Connections** program (for equipping parenting adults) will be held Nov. 29-Dec 1, and the training for the Heritage Keepers program will be held Dec 2-3. Student materials are available in English, French, and Spanish.

“We need to join arms in combating the alternative worldview. It is just taking too much ground,” said Pastor Muscutt. “So it’s been a blessing over the course of the past few weeks to speak with churches that are saying, ‘We’re on board with you, guys.’ Churches that are very different – still Christian and evangelical, but very different.”

To support these initiatives, both P.E.A.C.E. and Pastor Muscutt propose that individuals and churches that think this is an important issue, seek to help financially to put on the next regional **Stand Firm, Love True conferences**. With this, the Body of Christ could partner in their stance financially to see youths attend for free that possibly couldn’t do so on their own.

For more information on P.E.A.C.E., the programs, the Stand Firm, Love True conferences, certification or to bring these initiatives to your church, ministry or school, please contact their team at 905-869-6334 or [info@peaceontario.com](mailto:info@peaceontario.com).

*Renae Jarrett is a freelance reporter with The Christian Herald, currently covering news and features.*

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

# Markham Peoples dedicates new 750-seat building



Thanksgiving is a time to be reflective of all the blessings in our lives. For Markham Peoples Community Church, this last Thanksgiving marked a very important day in church history.

On October 7th, MPCC’s new building was dedicated to God. The church was filled with music, love, and a sense of community. The professional worship band led the congregation in worship energetically, the choir inspired on-lookers, and the orchestra filled the room with high sense of joy. This landmark moment in church history celebrated the faith and dedication of the congregants.

The church is located at 22 Esna Park Drive in Markham.

Many members from the surrounding community attended the service, as well as guests of congregants. Councillors and government officials from three levels of government attended the service and celebrated on that glorious day.

During the service, a monument was

unveiled by Senior Pastor Dr. K. K. Leung commemorating the church dedication. This reminded the congregation that it was through God’s grace and glory that the building was constructed, and that through obedience to Him, all things were possible.

After the service, the attendees were greeted with a large cake in honour of the festivities, as well as a wide variety of food and desserts. It allowed the community to greet one another, and to celebrate this wonderful day with their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

It was impossible not to feel God’s presence over His people on that day. The joyful singing during worship, to the heartfelt testimony of Irene So, and communion of community within the church foyer, the building was filled with thanksgiving.

*Renata Acuña is the English Pastor for Markham Peoples Community Church*

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