Report on Lab 2 – Parenting in a difficult time

What we learn from OneHopes Gen Z / Gen Alpha and Parents studies and discussion of participants

Parenting and Faith: Four Tensions Facing Families

EEA session • 7 October 2026 • Presentation and discussion summary

Drawing on three OneHope studies—**GYC, Gen Alpha, and Family Matters**—the presentation explored four tensions shaping family life and the discipleship of the next generation: **faith, mental health, influences, and parental insecurities**. The discussion considered how churches can respond by equipping parents and building supportive relationships across generations.

1. Faith: responsibility and everyday practice

Parents are recognised as central to their children's faith formation, yet accepting responsibility does not always translate into practising faith at home. The presentation highlighted a gap between parents' stated responsibility and the smaller proportion praying, reading Scripture, or talking about faith together. Participants recognised a similar tension in churches: leaders affirm parents' role, while programmes often emphasise camps and events over equipping families. The opportunity is to connect church activities with everyday discipleship through simple, manageable practices at home.

2. Mental health: pressure and the need for belonging

The session raised concerns about anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts among young people, including those identifying as Christian. Participants discussed online comparison, identity pressures, isolation after COVID, and changing patterns of childhood freedom as possible contributors to complex struggles. Personal stories underlined that children can withdraw even in loving, committed families. Churches therefore need to combine a hopeful vision with compassionate support, creating spaces where young people feel heard and parents can share their pain without shame or blame.

3. Influences: a changing world and the power of relationships

Children are growing up amid digital and cultural influences that parents may struggle to understand. Participants noted how rapid change, particularly in Eastern Europe, can widen the gap between generations. Yet parents and other trusted adults continue to have meaningful influence. Practical examples included one-to-one meals, shared interests, car conversations, and outings tailored to individual grandchildren. Listening,

showing genuine interest, and entering a child's world help build trust. Grandparents, mentors, and welcoming families can extend this circle of belonging through relationships that grow naturally, with parents involved.

4. Parental insecurities: from inadequacy to confidence and support

Parents may feel outpaced by technology, uncertain about their influence, or ashamed when their children struggle. The discussion called for humility and encouragement: parents need people who listen, pray, and walk alongside them. Churches can begin with practical concerns—screens, discipline, routines, and relationships—and connect that support with faith formation. Small steps and intergenerational friendship can help parents regain confidence without adding another burden.

A shared direction for churches

The discussion pointed towards intentional, ongoing support for families: equip parents alongside children's and youth programmes; connect camps and events with conversations at home; create compassionate spaces for struggling families; and nurture trusted relationships across generations. Resources mentioned for follow-up included OneHope research, *Walk With*, and *Generational Awakening* family conversation tools.

The central invitation was to help parents recognise their influence and use it with love, presence, and confidence—supported by a church community that shares responsibility for nurturing the next generation.