

SAFE SANCTUARIES FOR VIRTUAL SMALL GROUPS

***Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World
(Even in a Pandemic & in a Virtual World)***

Boundaries are still needed.
Relationships are still important.
Jesus is still calling.
We are called to respond, not react.

REGARDING TECHNOLOGY

- What constitutes technology for your context?
 - Social media
 - Interactive multi-media platforms
 - Sharing videos and photos (Remember: Do no harm with copyright.)
 - Interactive audio platforms
 - Static modes (E.g., eNewsletters or other one-way communications)
- Invitations, Open Access, Passwords
 - How best can you protect your participants from uninvited guests (hackers)?
- Leader/Host Access and Responsibility
 - Who is comfortable enough with technology to lead in this way?
 - Who has access to form small groups or distribute passwords?
- Communication
 - Leaders
 - Participants
 - Parents/Guardians



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REGARDING RELATIONSHIPS

- Covenant with one another is vitally important.
 - What can participants and leaders expect from one another?
 - Do you include location boundaries, even for online small groups? (E.g., we covenant not to log on from our bedrooms.)
 - How will participants and leaders be held accountable if they break the covenant?
- Safe Sanctuaries is still primary to our safety.
 - How are we doing our best to prevent abuse from happening in any form?
 - Today, abusive relationships often begin online.
 - We still recommend two unrelated adults be present for virtual ministry gatherings with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
 - Develop a covenant with clear with digital boundaries. What are the communication boundaries among participants, between leaders and participants, and among leaders?
 - Texting, Snapchat, Google Hangouts, Instagram, Tik Tok, Zoom, etc.
- Gossip vs. Confidentiality vs. Reporting
 - We keep confidences until we have suspicion or knowledge that someone is being harmed or intends to harm themselves or others. We live in a mandatory reporting state.
- Responsibility of Relationships
 - What will our response be if we uncover stalking or bullying online?
 - How will we elevate any concerns?
 - We are responsible for what happens when participants gather in a digital platform provided by the church, even if we aren't present.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Western NC Conference Safe Sanctuaries resources: <https://www.wnccumc.org/safesanctuaries>
- Discipleship Ministries: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/equipping-leaders/safe-sanctuaries>