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.
  o What can participants and leaders expect from one another?
  o Do you include location boundaries, even for online small groups? (E.g., we covenant not to log on from our bedrooms.)
  o How will participants and leaders be held accountable if they break the covenant?

• Safe Sanctuaries is still primary to our safety.
  o How are we doing our best to prevent abuse from happening in any form?
  o Today, abusive relationships often begin online.
  o We still recommend two unrelated adults be present for virtual ministry gatherings with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
  o Develop a covenant with clear 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
  o 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
  o What will our response by if we uncover stalking or bullying online?
  o How will we elevate any concerns?
  o 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