

Settings for Faith Formation Checklist

The aim of this checklist is to help ministry leaders thoughtfully consider logistical, safety, and faith formation implications of their meeting spaces. This could be a physical space on a church campus, an outdoor venue, a home for a small group, or even a video conference room. With each of these scenarios, there are Safe Sanctuary implications. See our Safe Sanctuary resources to ensure compliance. For specific items related to DisAbility Ministries, review the resources at www.umcdmc.org.

If you are a Sunday school superintendent, director of Christian education or discipleship, or a staff or ministry leader who equips others to teach and facilitate groups, you might ask each of your leaders to complete the appropriate checklist. You might also collect pertinent observations to bring to the trustees, church council, and/or senior pastor to facilitate conversations about possible improvements to the facilities. These improvements could include improving the space for hospitality, Safe Sanctuary compliance, disability compliance, or faith formation efforts. Work in collaboration with other work teams and committees to keep participants safe, provide Christian hospitality, and help them grow in Christian discipleship.

A helpful place to begin using this resource is to pretend that this is your first time to this space. Print out the appropriate checklist below. Use the paper copy or an electronic notebook to write down notes and observations.

Physical Room

For a physical room on a church campus, start as any other participant would. That might mean driving to the parking lot. Pretend that you are new to this space. Look with new eyes as you park in the parking lot and find your way around the campus. Use the checklist questions for arriving on a church campus.

Once inside the building, walk down the hallways and toward your room. Go to the specific area or room where your group will be meeting. Take a careful first look and use the checklist when you arrive at your room. Use the appropriate checklist questions below and note your observations.

If you are a ministry leader with young children, get down on your knees or lie down on the floor. (If the floor is too dirty for you, it is also too dirty for children.) Or if you are a ministry leader with older children, sit in the doorway in a chair that puts you at their height. Look around the room. Sit, as best you can, in one of the chairs. If there are multiple ministry leaders, you could swap rooms to offer a fresh perspective.

If you are a ministry leader with youth or young adults, think about their needs. Begin by pausing and standing in the doorway. Then, using the checklist below, ask those and similar questions as you move about the room. Find a place to sit where a youth or young adult might sit. Try to observe the room as if you were a youth or young adult. You might even ask another ministry leader along with a select number of young adults to help you answer the questions on the checklist.

If you are a ministry leader with adults or older adults, think about the specific needs of your group. Bring another ministry leader or participant or two to help answer the checklist questions.

Outdoor Settings

Outdoor settings can be a great way to change the environment, make use of great weather, and connect with God as creator. (A fun lesson is to read Genesis 1 and 2 under a cloudless night.) However, outdoor settings can present unique issues. Due to the potential issues, it is advisable to notify your trustee chair and even invite that person or another representative from the trustees to help ministry leaders think through any potential issues. Walk (or drive if needed) to the location and use the checklist below (and any other questions) to note your observations.

Home for Small Group

Homes can create an informal and relaxed feel for a small-group setting. In-home groups provide extra measures of hospitality in the way of comfort, bathrooms, and food. Yet homes can come with their own set of challenges.

It can be difficult to look at your home through the lens of a first-time visitor. You might invite a friend to help you walk through the checklist. Begin by walking to the front of your driveway and slowly work your way into the room that will be used to host the small-group participants.

Videoconference

Many churches have begun using videoconferences as a way to maintain small groups and supplement in-person meetings. If used thoughtfully, videoconference rooms can also be spaces to encounter hospitality and faith formation. They do require at least some technical know-how but are becoming more user friendly. It is advisable to have a practice session with those who are anxious about or unfamiliar with the technology. You might also appoint one person in the group to be the go-to person for technology related issues.

Checklist Questions for Arriving on a Church Campus:

- What did you observe?
- Do you feel safe? Are there lights if the meeting is at night?
- Were there signs to guide your way?
- What door(s) would you enter?
- Will they be unlocked at the time you need?
- Did you feel welcomed and wanted?
- If this was your first time, would you want to come back?
- Would you feel safe exiting the church the way that you came in?

Checklist Questions for Arriving at Your Room:

- What did you observe?
- Were there signs to guide your way?
- Are there physical challenges (stairs, steps, lack of handrails, etc.) that need addressing?
- Do you feel welcomed and wanted?

Checklist Questions for a Room with/for Children:

- What do you observe?
- What draws your attention?
- How would you feel if you were a child? A parent or guardian?
- Is the room clean yet energizing?
- Is there room for activities?
- Is the space set up like a classroom or in a U-shape or in a circle? Where do children sit?
- Is there a space for the large group to gather as well as for individual and small-group activities?
- From your knees for perspective, what do the children see at their visibility sightline?
- Listen. What do you hear?
- Shut your eyes and take a deep breath. What do you smell?
- Pay attention to temperature. Is it too hot, too cold, or too humid?
- Are the tables and chairs the correct height? Is the space accessible for children who have disabilities?
- Does the room invite the children to learn about Jesus, the Bible, and what it means to be a Christian, yet not overstimulate the senses?
- What might be done to improve any specific learning goals?
- What is the sign-in/sign-out procedure for children in the classroom? Is there a way to indicate food allergies and/or other medical issues? Is there parent/guardian emergency contact information?
- Are there windows in the room and door? Is visibility blocked in the windows (i.e. artwork, curtains, etc.) that would deter the Safe Sanctuary “roamer” from seeing into the room?
- Are there locks on the doors? Who has access to unlock the doors if they are locked?
- Where is the nearest restroom? Can you see the restroom from the classroom door?

Checklist Questions for a Room with/for Youth and Young Adults:

- What do you observe?
- What draws your attention?
- Are there negative distractions in the room?
- Are there positive distractions in the room that help them youth/young adults on God, their faith, and relationships with others?
- Does this space shout, “Youth belong here”?
- Is there room for activities?
- Is the space set up like a classroom or in a U-shape or in a circle? How does the physical arrangement of seating benefit or detract from group conversations and full participation?
- Are there areas for conversation, for play, and for creativity?
- Is there an area clean enough for food and drink distribution (an essential for youth)?
- Are the chairs in your room appropriate for their growing bodies?
- Listen. What do you hear?
- Shut your eyes and take a deep breath. What do you smell?
- Pay attention to temperature. Is it too hot, too cold, or too humid?
- What might be done to improve any specific learning goals?
- Does the space meet Safe Sanctuaries guidelines for visibility?
- Are there safety hazards or technology that pose a threat to creating safe spaces?

Checklist Questions for a Room with/for Adults:

- What do you observe?
- What draws your attention?
- Is there room for activities?
- What are adults’ needs?

- Is the space set up like a classroom or in a U-shape or in a circle?
- Is the lighting good for reading?
- Are the chairs comfortable without being too low?
- Are tables and chairs free from splinters that snag good clothing?
- Is the temperature of the room appropriate?
- Does the room invite learning?
- Is the room conducive to breaking into smaller groups?
- Is this a room where Christians can discuss, share, learn, and grow together?
- Does the room invite adults to learn what it means to be a Christian?
- What might be done to improve any specific learning goals?

Checklist Questions for a Room with/for Older Adults:

- What do you observe?
- What draws your attention?
- What are the needs of older adults?
- Is the space set up like a classroom or in a U-shape or in a circle?
- Is the lighting good for reading?
- Are the chairs comfortable without being too low?
- Are tables and chairs free from splinters that snag good clothing?
- Is the temperature of the room appropriate?
- Does the room invite learning?
- Is this a room where Christians can discuss, share, learn, and grow together?
- What might be done to improve any specific learning goals?

Checklist Questions for In-Home Small Groups

- From the front of your driveway, will participants easily be able to locate your home? (Is the street number clearly visible on the mailbox or other place?)
- Where will people park their cars?
- How will people enter the house? (Doorbell? Knock? Unlocked door? Opened door?)
- Will those in your group need any special accommodation for physical limitations?
- Will there be enough seating for everyone?
- If the home has pets, how will participants who have pet allergies be accommodated?
- Do any of the participants have food allergies? (Gluten, Dairy, Nuts, Vegan, etc.)
- Will childcare be necessary? What steps will need to be taken to be compliant with the church's Safe Sanctuary policy?
- What other arrangements need to be considered for hospitality? (Is there easy physical access to the room where participants will gather? Is the bathroom accessible?)
- What might be done to improve any specific learning goals?

Checklist Questions for Ministry in an Outdoor Setting

- What do you observe?
- What draws your attention?
- Were there signs to guide your way?
- Will there be enough room for the activities you plan?
- Will there be people who need different accommodations?
- Are there potential danger points for slipping, tripping, or falling?
- Will there be a need for ushers or spotters?

- How will this setting help you accomplish the learning goals? What unique features are in this setting that you can use to enhance the learning experience?
- What might be done to improve any specific learning goals?

Checklist Questions for Videoconferencing:

- Will participants need technical help? Who will help them?
- How might you create hospitality for participants? (Invite them to share their favorite drinks or snack recipes.)
- Perform a practice session to check your lighting, sound, and background for potential distractions.
- What mood will you hope to achieve on the conference call? (Informal and lighthearted or serious and reflective? A combination of both?)
- What features will your platform allow that might increase participation? (Sharing screens, polls, breakout rooms for smaller group interaction, etc.)
- Will you need to turn off or mute notifications?
- Will participants be automatically muted when they enter the room? (For larger groups, this is advisable.)
- Will you be sharing your screen to show videos, websites, or a PowerPoint slide show? Make sure these work and display as you hope.
- Might there be any copyright issues with a video or images that you share?
- What might be done to improve any specific learning goals?
- Will you password protect your gathering? If so, how?
- If your online gathering includes children or youth, how will you protect them and meet Safe Sanctuaries guidelines as you gather?

Additional Resources

- [Making the Most of Online Small Groups](#)
- [6 Simple Tips to Improve Your Youth Group Videos and Live Streams](#)
- [20 Questions for Zoom \(A Virtual Spin on a Classic Youth Game\)](#)
- [29 Ways to Do Ministry when Church is Cancelled by Coronavirus](#)