

# Waverly Road Presbyterian Church Safety Policy

## Introduction and Purpose

The spiritual and physical health of all who enter Waverly Road Presbyterian Church (WRPC) are of prime importance to all church officers and members. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the physical well-being of all who use the WRPC facility, as well as to protect members, visitors, and workers from unwarranted accusations of abuse. This policy is not intended to direct the physical maintenance of the WRPC facility. Safety issues concerning the physical facilities should be directed to the Building and Grounds Committee of the Session for consideration and resolution.

## Operational Definitions

Adjacent Room	A room which is near a room in which a meeting is being held.
Adult	A person whose age is 18 or older.
Background Check	An inquiry into a person's prior history conducted by an outside group or agency.
Child/Children	A person under age 11. Included in this group are infants (birth to age 2), preschoolers (age 2 to 5), and elementary (1 <sup>st</sup> through 5 <sup>th</sup> grades).
Reference Check	An inquiry to obtain input from references given to WRPC by an individual, generally through telephone conversations or by written communications.
Staff	Any employee of WRPC.
Unattended	A person or persons in the building unaccompanied by an adult or youth volunteer.
Volunteer	Any adult working with a WRPC-sponsored activity, either at the church or away from the church, who is or might be in a position of responsibility or authority.
Youth	A person between the ages of 11 (6 <sup>th</sup> grade) and 17 (12 <sup>th</sup> grade).
Youth Volunteer	Any youth, as defined above, with American Red Cross Babysitter Training.

## Physical Safety of Building Occupants

### Sign-In Board

In the event of certain types of emergencies, it is critical that we know who is in the building and where they are located. Therefore, outside normal Sunday church hours (Sunday mornings from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon) and WOW hours (Wednesday evenings from 3:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.), **ALL groups or individuals** who are in the building must use the sign-in board located near the office entrance. This includes employees of WRPC. Groups such as choir rehearsal and committee meeting attendees would

be expected to sign in and out as a group. Waverly Road Child Care Center (WRCCC) employees and children are accounted for separately and are not subject to this requirement.

### **Unattended Children**

Ordinarily, children and youth must have direct supervision while in the church building. An exception to this requirement is when there is a meeting in the library, and children are kept in Rooms 101 or 104 (immediately adjacent) and checked on regularly.

All children using the playground equipment (equipment intended for children 2 years of age and younger) adjacent to the fellowship hall and the WRCCC must have adult supervision. This includes during WOW, IHN, and other uses of the WRPC building, such as scout programs.

### **Severe Weather (Tornado) Warning**

If notice is received that a tornado is expected to impact the area of Kingsport in which WRPC is located, the safest location in the church in which to shelter would be the fellowship hall. The fellowship hall is located on the bottom floor of the church below ground level on the Waverly Road side and has no windows on the side towards Prospect Drive. In the event that a service is in progress, the head usher will be responsible for monitoring weather advisories and will notify the pastor or other person in charge of the service if it is advisable to relocate to the fellowship hall. Parents should pick up their children from the nursery or Godly play room and move to the fellowship hall when those attending the service are advised to relocate.

If there are children in the nursery at other times when their parents are not present in the church building, such as Parents' Night Out, and such a notice is received, the nursery workers should move the children out of the nursery to the fellowship hall and remain there until the severe weather alert is over.

### **Medical Emergencies**

In the event of any medical emergency, a call should be placed to 911 immediately. However, in the case of certain medical emergencies, immediate response while waiting for emergency personnel to arrive can be critical to the individual's survival. This may be the case if an individual suffers a sudden cardiac arrest (SCA). SCA is a condition in which the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating. For this reason, the church is equipped with an automated external defibrillator (AED), which is kept on a rack immediately across from the elevator door just outside the narthex. An AED is a portable device that checks the heart rhythm and can send an electric shock to the heart to try to restore a normal rhythm.

All church staff members know how to use the AED. In addition, the unit contains step by step voice instructions that would allow even an untrained person to use the AED in the event of an emergency. The device will NOT deliver an electric shock to a person whose heart is beating normally.

### **Outside Intruder Threat**

In order to keep outside intruders who may intend harm to persons in the building, all external unattended doors are to be kept locked at all times outside normal Sunday hours. Attended doors (such as the fellowship hall doors during WOW) may be left unlocked because undetected entry would be difficult with so many people present.

Strangers are not to be let into the building except through the office door or the food pantry door during regular food pantry hours (10:00 a.m. – noon on Fridays). Someone who is expecting their arrival should escort all strangers to their destinations, including food pantry clients who are let into the building early due to inclement weather. If no one is expecting their visit, such strangers should wait outside the office area until the legitimacy of their presence is verified.

During regular office hours (Monday – Thursday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Friday 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.), if a threatening unattended stranger is detected in the building, a WRPC staff member should be notified immediately. DO NOT ATTEMPT to confront the person; rather, call 911 and alert the police to assist with the situation.

Church staff members are also equipped with a “necklace or pendant” panic button. By pressing this button, Fleenor Security will be automatically notified. They will call 911 and report that police assistance is needed at WRPC. If someone will be working in the church outside normal office hours, one of these panic buttons can be provided for their use. Please see the Business and Communications Administrator to obtain one of the panic buttons as needed.

### **Active Shooter Threat**

Like so many events for which we try to be prepared, the risk of an active shooter attack is a low probability but very high consequence event. According to statistics provided by a local police department course on this subject, 24% of active shooter events occur in churches and schools. As a church, we want to welcome all individuals to our services and activities. However, it is an unfortunate fact that in today’s society, to protect all those in attendance, we must be alert to the possibility of someone intending harm entering our premises, especially during our scheduled services.

The most important thing that we can do to prevent such an event is to be alert to someone who does not seem to behave appropriately. Experience has shown that a potential active shooter oftentimes is not dressed appropriately for the weather, e.g. wearing a long coat that might hide a weapon when the outside temperature does not justify wearing such a coat. They might have a flushed or pale face. They might be sweating, pacing, and/or shaking. They might have an unnatural gait. Their jacket may bulge showing outlines of a weapon. The question then becomes, “What do you do if you are an usher or a bystander and notice such an individual?” If you believe such an individual is a threat, the first response should be to call 911 and ask for police assistance. To facilitate notification of the police, the head usher will have in his possession one of the emergency notification “pendants” provided to the church by Fleenor Security. Activating the button on this pendant will provide a silent alarm to Fleenor Security who will notify the police to come to the church. This will accomplish the same result as calling 911 and will do so in an unobtrusive manner. An usher should plan to meet the police upon arrival outside the church building and advise of any potential perceived threat situation.

The normal instructions given to individuals in professional training courses on this subject say that if an active shooter event occurs, the priority is to 1) Run-Escape-Evacuate as quickly as possible, 2) Hide-Barricade-Lock Out if you are in a room, and if all else fails, 3) Fight-Take Action to stop the individual.

For many of those who attend our services, both options 1 and 3 would be very difficult due to their age and physical condition. For a large meeting area like our sanctuary or fellowship hall, option 2 is not really practical. These factors make it all the more important that our primary focus should be on awareness and recognition of potential risks before they materialize.