



# DT Youth Policies & Procedures Handbook

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# Vision and Values

## VISION of REDEEMER DOWNTOWN

A COMMUNITY EXPERIENCING RENEWAL BY THE GOSPEL, RAISING UP GENERATIONS OF DISCIPLES, LIVING FOR JESUS IN THE CITY

### OUR IDENTITY

#### **'A community experiencing renewal by the gospel'**

In a city often characterized by individualism, we are a community made up of different ethnicities, ages, and backgrounds, yet united in Christ (Eph 2:13-16). We have a dynamic within us of renewal by God's Spirit (John 7:37-39), as we experience the truth of God's grace in the gospel, and work out its implications in all facets of life (Rom 12:2).

### OUR ACTION

#### **'Raising up generations of disciples'**

Jesus' call in the Great Commission is to make disciples; followers who will obey everything that he has commanded (Mt 28:20) and who themselves will make disciples in their generation (Mark 1:17). This is still our calling today. By focusing on raising up 'generations', we recognize that discipling is always done in a broader context impacting not just the individual but cultural arenas of art, technology, work etc. (Gen 2:28)

### OUR IMPACT

#### **'Living for Jesus in the city'**

Many people come to the city, living for themselves, seeking to get something from the city, for a time, and then leave. God has placed Redeemer Downtown *in* the city (Rom 1:7), not to use the city for our own ends, but to be *for* its good (Jer 29:7). God's call on us is to *live for Jesus in the city*. He is the one who gives us a vision for the good of the city, and he is the only one who by His Spirit can change the city to become as it is meant to be. (Rev 21:1-3)

## VALUES

### DEEPLY FORMED

New York is a wonderful but challenging place to live. To flourish in the city requires being deeply formed in the image of Jesus Christ (Col 2:6-7). At Redeemer Downtown we are committed to integrating historic practices of spiritual formation, rooted in the gospel of grace, and applied to city life today.

### INVITING COMMUNITY

The city is a paradox, having so many people living in a tight space, and yet so often isolated and 'alone together'. We want to be an inviting community, both because there should be something intuitively attractive about how we love one another (John 13:35), and because we are actively inviting people who don't know Christ into our midst. (Rom 12:13, 1 Pet 2:9)

### CITY HOPEFUL

Hope is not mere optimism, but is generated by faith that God who raised Jesus from the dead is at work establishing his kingdom 'on earth as it is in heaven' (Mat 6:10). To be city hopeful is to have an orientation towards the city, knowing that God is renewing all things (Col 1:20), and a longing to see God's purposes for the city fulfilled.

# Policies

## CHILD PROTECTION - OVERVIEW AND CODE OF CONDUCT

### Purpose

All of us contribute to the safety of our community. The most effective way to prevent or reduce abuse and neglect among children is to be vigilant and to ensure all of our conduct is observable and accountable. As a community, Redeemer Downtown is committed to protecting the vulnerable, caring for survivors, and holding abusers accountable. These commitments are how we live out our Christian Faith. God is a refuge for the abused and never ignores their cry (Psalm 9:9, 12). A key aspect of following Christ is learning to use power as Jesus does - to serve, bless, and protect - never to exploit or serve ourselves.

The goals of this policy are to protect children and youth from abuse and neglect and promote a safe and respectful environment for all. All adults are expected to interact with minors in a safe and respectful manner. All staff and volunteers are required to interact with children in a mature, capable, safe, caring, and responsible manner, with a high level of accountability. This policy is in agreement with and in support of Overture 6 – Child Protection in the PCA, approved during the 2014 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America.

This Child Protection Policy applies to all people who interact with minors in the Redeemer Downtown ministry environment and provides best practices outside the ministry environment.

### A Biblical Understanding of Safeguarding

Safeguarding our children is vital for ensuring our entire congregation is well cared for and those who are vulnerable are protected from abuse or neglect. For the Christian, child protection ought to be more than just a matter of legal and governance compliance, but a matter of faithfulness to Jesus Christ and loving others as an outworking of the Gospel. In light of the God-given dignity of all people, the reality of sin and abuse, God's commands to care, steward, obey the law, and be a witness for God's glory, all Christians have a moral and ethical obligation to refrain from and prevent child abuse and neglect by whatever means they are able.

#### **1. The Dignity of All People: Genesis 1**

God created the world and humanity as the pinnacle of creation, uniquely made in his image (Gen 1:26-27). All human beings, male or female, adult or child, whatever ethnicity, nationality, background, whether able-bodied or a person with disabilities, are in God's image and of inestimable worth. This is a foundational motivation for human rights and safeguarding. In light of this, Jesus demonstrates the value of children by urging his disciples, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.' (Mark 10:14, Matthew 19:14). Therefore, all Christians have an ethical obligation never to abuse or neglect a child. Specifically, church members are prohibited from all forms of child abuse or neglect in Redeemer Downtown's community as an obligation of their membership vow to 'resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ.'

## **2. Abuse is Real: Genesis 3**

Scripture teaches plainly the consequences and implications of sin; how it causes damage between people and cuts us off from our Creator. Abuse is one outworking of sin. Christians should therefore not ignore or downplay the reality of abuse and the pain, trauma, and hurt that victims of abuse experience.

Being a Christian does not render someone immune to the problem of sin either. Romans 7 explains how the "law" of sin still lives inside us, and we find it constantly at work to cause us to disobey God, even when we want to do good. It is, therefore, naïve to think that abuse could not happen in a Christian context. Sadly, distorted religion can provide some of the worst contexts for sin and abuse to be perpetrated. Therefore, sober vigilance and realism are important in a safeguarding response.

## **3. Care Matters: Luke 10:25-37**

At the heart of the Christian faith is a call to love others as we love ourselves. Ensuring we protect others from abuse by implementing compassionate and robust safeguarding practices is a natural outworking of this command.

God commands his people to have a particular concern for the vulnerable in society (Micah 6:8, James 1:27), as we are all made in His image (Genesis 1:27) and so have an inherent worth and value. Sadly, because of sin, children are often the most vulnerable to abuse, even in church settings. Therefore, robust and compassionate policies and practices, allied with sober vigilance, are vital to ensure Redeemer Downtown is a safe and nurturing community for children. This means real and immediate attention must be given to recognizing and responding well if abuse is suspected. Christians are warned to not 'walk on by', rather, be like the Samaritan man and care for the needs of others, even if it is inconvenient or difficult. It also means it is important to put preventative measures in place to protect abuse from happening in the first place.

All Christians have an ethical obligation to speak up for the vulnerable, and even many adults are mandated reporters in New York. Therefore, all congregants in the Redeemer Downtown community are strongly encouraged to report instances of possible abuse or neglect. Specifically, church members are expected to report instances of potential child abuse or neglect as an obligation of their membership vow to 'submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church and promise to study its purity and peace.'

## **4. Obey the Law: Romans 13:1-5**

Christians are commanded to comply with legal requirements for safeguarding and child protection. Across the USA and state by state, laws are in place to prevent the abuse of vulnerable people. Christians are commanded to obey the governing rulers and authorities, including laws on harassment, safeguarding, and child protection.

## **5. Be a Witness: 1 Peter 2:12**

By working for the good of others, Christians can bring glory to God. Those who follow Christ ought to approach safeguarding with a desire to implement it in a way that brings God glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). Delivering excellent care and protection for others will bring honour to Him as a key way that we care for the vulnerable in our midst.

# **Who Is Protected? Who Has Responsibilities?**

Everyone in the Redeemer Downtown ministry environment is expected to report any concerns of troubling behavior, crossing boundaries, or possible child abuse or neglect. The Safeguarding Team will take steps to find out what is happening and to determine which next steps are appropriate to ensure everyone's safety and care. Therefore,

- **Everyone** in the Redeemer Downtown ministry environment is expected to report instances of potential child abuse or neglect.
- **Church members** are expected to report potential instances of child abuse and neglect as soon as possible as an obligation of their membership vow to 'submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church and promise to study its purity and peace.'
- **Church staff, officers, and Family Ministries volunteers** are required to report potential instances of potential child abuse and neglect.
  - Book of Church Order (BCO) 8.3. states, *'It belongs to those in the office of elder, both severally and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to his charge, that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enter therein. They must exercise government and discipline, and take oversight not only of the spiritual interests of the particular church, but also the Church generally when called thereunto.'*
  - Similarly, for deacons and deaconesses, BCO 9.2. states, *'It is the duty of the deacons to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress.'* Therefore, both elders by virtue of their responsibility to watch over the flock, and deacons/deaconesses by virtue of their call to compassion and care for the needy, have a duty to exercise vigilance, and report actual or potential instances of child abuse or neglect.

## Behaviors To Report

### Potential child abuse or neglect that involve a child or youth congregant.

Redeemer Downtown, as a mirror of God's concern for justice and protection of the vulnerable, seeks to prevent harassment or abuse of power in the church and ministry environment. The definitions and examples of forms of child abuse and neglect indicated below are intended to show the range of behavior, but do not include every possible instance of behavior that is considered child abuse or neglect.

RDT expects its officers and members to interact with others, including people outside the RDT ministry environment, in a respectful, honoring and lawful manner. Any reports of inappropriate behavior, including reports of past action, will be reviewed and addressed.

**Please note:** you do not need to establish if a boundary has been crossed or an incident of child abuse or neglect has taken place to escalate; this is for the Safeguarding Team and other appropriate parties to determine. If in doubt, escalate it to the Safeguarding Team. This includes but is not limited to: If you witness or have evidence of suspicious behavior; if someone discloses to you an incident of abuse or neglect (e.g. by a child or a perpetrator); or if you see any patterns that raise suspicions of abuse or neglect taking place. It is important to realise that when you report abuse, you are not personally accusing someone of abuse, you are giving the information that may prove vital to the protection of children to professionals who are trained to evaluate and respond in a variety of appropriate ways.

**In general**, if you are not sure whether or not to report something, you should. Cover your bases and help staff support you and the students. You must always report the following behavior to staff via email or text:

- suicidal thoughts
- thoughts or action of self harm (ie, cutting, burning, eating disorder)
- reported or observed physical abuse
- reported or observed emotional abuse

- reported or observed sexual abuse
- reported or observed spiritual abuse

Reporting to staff may feel like a breach of trust if the student comes to you saying "I need to tell you something, but you cannot tell anyone." Your response should be, "I love you and I cannot promise that. Please trust me to make the right decision with whatever you tell me." Do not promise confidentiality and try to handle it alone. Use the moment to ask questions, hear further thoughts from the student, and care for them as a child of God. As soon as you can, notify the ministry manager who will escalate the situation to the Safeguarding Team, church leadership and parent as needed.

Additionally, you agree to report adults who are engaging in inappropriate language, unclean or coarse jokes, secretive or inappropriate touching, immodest dress, or misuse of technology. August trust your gut and if something does seem right, notify a staff member right away.

## Abuse

In general, abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g. pastor, elder, boss, mentor, supervisor, parent, adult, older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone who is more vulnerable (e.g. a child, someone who is sick, elderly, or disabled, student, employee, intern, immigrant, etc.). That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms, such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc.

**Sexual Abuse:** When a person in a place of power and/or trust engages in sexual behavior with a child or an adult under their supervision, authority, mentoring, or spiritual care, including:

- **Sexual Penetration:** Any act or attempted act of vaginal or anal penetration, however slight, by a person's penis, finger, other body part, or an object, and/or any oral-genital contact.
- **Sexual Contact:** Any intentional touching of a person's breasts, buttocks, groin, genitals, or other intimate parts. Touching may be over or under clothing and may include the touching or making the person touch, or making the person touch their own body. This also includes contact with non-sexual areas of the body for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator (such as with certain paraphilic disorders).
- **Non-Contact Sexual Acts:** For example, sending or receiving nude photos, sexual communication, exposing oneself, recording a child changing, etc.

**Physical Abuse:** Non-accidental injury as a result of physically harming a child, that is inflicted by a parent, caregiver, or other person who has responsibility for or power over the child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caregiver intended to hurt the child. Physical discipline, such as spanking or paddling, is never appropriate in the ministry environment. However, it is not necessarily considered abuse in the home, as long as it is reasonable and causes no bodily injury to the child.

**Emotional Abuse:** When a person holding power and trust uses a pattern of controlling and domineering behaviors such as shaming, insulting, degrading, intimidating, threatening, humiliating, and/or domineering. Such a pattern has a substantial likelihood of causing harm to the child's development. Bullying is a common term for a pattern of emotional abuse.



**Spiritual Abuse:** A form of emotional abuse, meaning a pattern of coercive or domineering behaviors using religion, usually by a person who holds power and trust within the ministry environment. Many acts of abuse in a religious environment will have a spiritual dimension. Examples include:

- Use of religious ideology, precepts, tradition, or sacred texts to harm
- Compelling a person to engage in religious acts against his or her will
- Abuse that occurs in a religious context or by a religious leader
- Invoking of divine authority to manipulate a person into meeting the needs of the abuser
- Using spirituality or spiritual authority to dismiss a person's perspective, agency, or value.
- Attempts to use the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality to put their leadership or decisions beyond questioning or accountability.
- Attempts to spiritualize or justify harm using the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality.

## Neglect

**Neglect:** Neglect can take different forms:

- Physical: failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision
- Medical: failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment
- Educational: failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs
- Emotional: inattention to a child's emotional needs including giving love and affection, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs

**Self-Harm / Self-Injury** occurs when a child or youth chooses to inflict wounds or harm upon themselves.

## Other Definitions Relevant to this Process

- "Child," "children," and "minor": In New York State, a minor is a person who is under 18 years old, or whose mental capacity is that of a minor. **Enrolled high school students who have turned 18 are still considered minors for the purposes of this policy.**
- "Adult": any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age (except those whose mental capacity is that of a minor).
- "Youth," "Teenage," or "Teenager": any individual at least thirteen (13) years old or older, but under the age of eighteen (18).
- "Staff": any person on Redeemer Downtown's payroll, including dependent contractors.
- "Church Officers": elders, deacons, deaconesses, trustees
- "Volunteer": any non-paid person given the responsibility for caring for, assisting with, or working with minors or youth.
- "Criminal Background Check": the procedure used to determine if a potential Adult Volunteer has a record of criminal activity.
- "Ministry Environment": any Redeemer Downtown sanctioned gathering of individuals, whether in a ministry location, offsite location, or congregant home, including but not limited to 1:1 mentorship meetings, youth retreats and events, VBS, children's ministry classes, local gatherings, and childcare offerings.

# Screening for Children and Youth Staff and Volunteers

Redeemer Downtown operates a rigorous screening process for Staff and Volunteers who desire to work with minors in children's or youth ministry, which consists of the following:

1. Children or Youth Application
2. Initial Criminal Background Checks and Online Clearance System. Repeated for every 3 years of service  
*Note: Criminal Background Check not required for minors who volunteer in the ministry.*
3. Reference checks
4. Interviews
5. Internet and social media checks
6. Acknowledgement of having read and agreed to the Redeemer Downtown Children and Youth Policies and Procedures Handbook, including the Child Protection Code of Conduct.

## Child/Youth Protection Code of Conduct

Our entire community must take collective responsibility to promote healthy interaction and boundaries with children, committing to keep our interactions with children observable and accountable. While Redeemer Downtown is responsible for ensuring robust prevention and response processes regarding potential instances of child abuse or neglect within the ministry environment, the following protocols are protective best practices for all settings that involve children. Any violation of the following protocols or any other concern within the ministry environment related to child safety should be relayed to the Child Safety team as soon as possible by emailing [childsafety@redeemerdt.com](mailto:childsafety@redeemerdt.com) or by [completing this form](#).

### General Protocols:

- **No one should be alone with a child who is not their own, especially in an isolated area.** Redeemer Downtown prohibits its volunteers and staff (and discourages any adult) from spending time with children or youth alone without a parent or guardian's consent, including in a private home or any other setting. This includes times of structured ministry as well as unstructured times, whether on or off church property (including giving rides). If you enter a restroom and a child is present alone, please wait outside the restroom until they come out.
- **No one is permitted to assist a child in the restroom who is not their own child** (except two adults in a time of structured ministry as outlined below).
- **Appropriate touch must always be welcomed by the child, and all touch between an adult and a child must be observable and accountable to other adults.** Adults must always understand and respect that children do not always welcome touch and must also pay attention to the child's body language. If you are unsure if the child is consenting, just ask. Although most sexual offenses against children are committed in more isolated settings, some child sex offenders will seek to offend in the presence of other adults. Examples of inappropriate touch are listed under "Prohibited Behaviors" below.

### Prohibited Behaviors:

- Sexually or physically abusive touch
- Any touch that is unwanted by a child or not observable by others
- Any intimate touch, such as massage, playing with hair, or any touch under clothing, including a child's thighs, stomach, or lower back (except when following appropriate diapering procedures)

- Tickling, Piggy Back Rides, or other games involving lots of touch with children
- Lap sitting (except for holding children in the nursery or to briefly comfort a child who is 3 or under)
- Full frontal hugs (except for holding children in the nursery or to briefly comfort a child who is 3 or under)
- Any form of physical punishment or correction, such as spanking, slapping, hitting, etc.
- Any form of sexual communication or sharing sexual content. This is a common grooming tactic by offenders. As such, our community prohibits the following, especially directed toward children:
  - Sexually suggestive language or slang, sexual jokes, sexual innuendo, descriptions of sexual experiences/habits
  - Sharing or displaying of any sexual images, videos or other content
  - Music, videos games, and movies with inappropriate sexual themes
- Displaying favoritism towards a child or group of children. Staff may not give gifts to individual children, unless the gifts are:
  - Able to be given to other children at other times for similar reasons (e.g., gifts to graduating seniors; a new Bible for students entering middle school; end of the year thank you gifts to older teens who volunteered in a ministry)
  - Signed from the church rather than the individual staff member
  - Given together with another staff member

#### **Encouraged Behaviors:**

- We encourage healthy affection for children through the following as long as it is welcome by the child and accountable to other adults:
  - High-fives
  - Pats on the shoulder
  - Side-hugs and shoulder-to-shoulder hugs

#### **Communication Protocols:**

Redeemer Downtown prohibits its volunteers and staff (and discourages any adult) from communicating privately with children or youth. Additionally, private communication between any adult and an unrelated child should not take place without a parent or guardian's consent. This includes interaction via text, social media, email, or other forms of electronic communication that are private. (Additionally, any staff or volunteer who becomes aware of private communication between a child and an older child in a different stage of development is required to notify a member of the Child Safety team).

Therefore, all communication between a volunteer or staff member and a child or youth must include at least one other adult. If a youth or child messages a staff or volunteer privately, the staff or volunteer will direct the child or youth to an appropriate way to connect. If the outreach occurs a second time, the staff or volunteer must alert the Child Safety team.

#### **Correction Protocols:**

When the correction of children is necessary, staff and volunteers will avoid any form of harsh language, including shaming, humiliation, or yelling. No physical punishment or correction (such as spanking, slapping, hitting, etc.) is permitted, period. Any serious issues of misconduct by children or youth must be brought to the attention of the

parents or guardians as well as the Child Safety team representatives.. Our church encourages positive verbal interactions, including:

- Encouragement
- Kind words
- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes

### **Two Adult Protocol:**

Because a large percentage of child abuse occurs in isolation from others, our church requires a minimum of two, unrelated adults to supervise all ministry involving children and youth, including, but not limited to, Sunday morning classes, mid-week events, and off-site official church events. All adults serving in our ministry with children and youth should set an example to bring transparency and accountability to any close interactions with children. As listed above, Redeemer Downtown prohibits its volunteers and staff from spending time with children or youth alone, without a parent or guardian's consent, including in a private home or any other setting.

One-on-one conversations and mentoring can be an important part of ministry to minors. When these are done within our ministry, they will be done in an area where there is still visible accountability to others.

### **Diapering and Restroom Protocols: [For Children's Ministry]**

**All diapering and assistance in the restroom shall be done by the child's parent/guardian or by one staff member with one other staff or volunteer observing from close proximity.** Redeemer Downtown only hires females for Nursery Staff positions. Only these staff shall change diapers and supervise bathroom visits in the Nursery. All diapering and assistance shall be conducted with disposable gloves to prevent any skin to skin contact and to promote good hygiene.

### **Field Trip or Retreat Protocols:**

Staff or volunteers organizing any field trip or retreat are responsible for communicating and ensuring that the policies of the Redeemer Downtown Children and Youth Policies and Procedures Handbook, including the Child Protection Code of Conduct, apply for the duration of the trip. This must be made known to all participants (including parents or guardians of participants).

### **Self-Harm /Self-Injury Protocols:**

If a child or youth is discovered to have committed or is suspected of committing self-harm, immediately alert the Child Safety Team. If the child or youth is in immediate danger, call 911, then alert the Child Safety team. The Child Safety Team will contact the parent and provide recommendations for a mental health professional. The Child Safety Team will help coordinate safety plans for the child between the parent, mental health professional and Redeemer Downtown staff and volunteers for use within the ministry environment.

# Reporting Process

## Reporting Channels

Redeemer Downtown takes all concerns related to child abuse or neglect seriously. **Everyone** who experiences, observes, or learns of potential instances of child abuse or neglect is **expected** to report the situation by using the following reporting channels:

1. Report to **Law Enforcement** or child advocacy (details below).
2. Use the [Child Protection Reporting Form](#). RDT has a Safeguarding Team with Child Safety representatives who are responsible for responding to any concerns or reports involving a minor.
3. Report to a Pastor or staff member, as these individuals are required to report the incident to the Safeguarding Team.
4. Email [childsafety@redeemerdt.com](mailto:childsafety@redeemerdt.com).

## Reports to Law Enforcement

If a child is in immediate danger, call 911. Otherwise,

- Call the New York State Central Register (SCR) at 1(800) 342-3720
- If you are a mandated reporter call the SCR's Mandated Reporter hotline at 1(800) 635-1522.<sup>1</sup> Mandated reporters must also follow these steps to complete the written report after making an oral report:
  - Submit a signed mandated reporter form within 48 hours of making an oral report.
  - Mail the completed form to the ACS Borough Office where the child resides.
  - Download the mandated reporter form (LDSS-2221A) or visit your local Child Protection Borough Office. Find your ACS Borough Office.
  - If you have questions about making a report or would like to follow-up with a report you made, visit the Mandated Reporter page.

DO NOT try to investigate the matter. Any delay in reporting could result in a loss of critical evidence, potentially be a violation of the law, and worst of all, enable the continued abuse of vulnerable children or adults. **After a church member has reported abuse, Redeemer Downtown asks that they notify a member of the Safety Team as soon as possible.** Do not inform anyone who is suspected of abuse (or anyone else within the household, if the suspected abuser is within the household) that a report has been made.

The closest child advocacy center to Redeemer Downtown is:

- Manhattan Child Advocacy Center (1-800-621-HOPE). You can chat with an advocate here: <https://www.safehorizon.org/location/manhattan-child-advocacy-center-cac/>.
- If anyone has questions concerning a child's safety or about indicators of abuse, reach out to the child advocacy center or the helpline of the Office of Advocacy of the New York State Central Register at (212) 676-9421.

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<sup>1</sup> While not all adults are mandated reporters in New York, many professionals are legally mandated to report. Furthermore, all Christians have an ethical obligation to speak up for the vulnerable. For information see <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/child-welfare/how-to-make-report.page>

## Privacy

Those involved as a reporting person, reported victim, accused person, or witness are entitled to privacy, except to the extent information about the report or the involved parties must be shared with others, on a limited basis, to facilitate an effective investigation, provide care, or prevent harm to the reported victim or others.

## No Retaliation

Redeemer Downtown does not tolerate acts of retaliation against anyone who reports a complaint of child abuse and neglect, cooperates in the investigation of a complaint, or serves as an investigator of a complaint. Retaliation includes any adverse action that someone takes against another person because he/she reported potential child abuse and neglect. Any negative action that would deter a reasonable individual in the same situation from making a complaint qualifies as retaliation.

## Response Process

**The Safeguarding Team with Child Safety representatives will process reports of potential child abuse and neglect that take place both within or outside of the Redeemer Downtown ministry environment.** The process is designed to be Biblical, fair, and to provide care for all involved. As needed, RDT will also seek support from consultants, trained investigators, or others experienced in responding to concerns of harassment and abuse of power in the church environment.

Certain elements of this process reflect the guidance found in the Presbyterian Church of America [Book of Church Order \(BCO\)](#), Part II, *The Rules of Discipline*, and others reflect the Biblical mandate to seek the peace and purity of the Church, while also upholding justice and protecting the victims in our midst. (Isaiah 1:17, Psalm 82:3, 89:14, Eph. 1 - 2)

RDT is committed to providing a timely and effective response to any report of child abuse and neglect within our ministry environment as well as an environment in which anyone can feel comfortable raising questions and concerns, knowing that all situations will be taken seriously, and responded to professionally and with care.

## Safeguarding and Child Safety Team

The Safeguarding Team with Child Safety representatives will **process** reports involving minors. Any concerns about the Safeguarding Team or Child Safety representatives should be directed to the [Session](#).

- a. The role of the Child Safety representatives on the Safeguarding Team is to receive and respond to any reported child abuse and neglect. The representatives have the primary responsibility for ensuring such reports are handled thoughtfully, timely, and with care.
- b. The Safeguarding Team consists of Megan Dishman (Executive Director), Ashley Spilker (Director of Women's and Family Ministries), and Reggie Kyle (Ruling Elder).
- c. The Child Safety representatives to the Safeguarding Team are Ashley Spilker (Director of Women's and Family Ministries), and Karen Girard (Director of Children's Ministry).
- d. The Child Safety representatives meet with the Safeguarding Team whenever there is a Child Safety report to discuss.
- e. The Safeguarding Team reports to the Redeemer Downtown session.

- f. The Safeguarding Team and Child Safety representatives receive annual training from outside consultants.

## REGISTRATION AND CHECK-IN

- At the beginning of each ministry year, parents will register youth or youth will register themselves to attend activities and programs. The registration will record who may (or may not) safely pick-up a child from an event, allergies, and medical concerns.
- Middle School Students will check-in to register attendance for in-service Sunday School class.
- Children in sixth grade and older can be released without parental sign-out at the end of on-site activities. Dismissal from off-site activities will be handled on a case by case basis.

## WELLNESS

1. Youth must be symptom free from the following illness without medication for 24 hours before attending a retreat or off-site activity:
    - Fever of 100 or higher
    - Vomiting or diarrhea
    - Conjunctivitis (pink eye or other eye infection)
    - Rash
    - Nasal drainage that is green or yellow
    - Sore throat
    - Open sores
    - Cold
    - Excessive coughing
    - Lice
  2. If a Youth develops any of these symptoms while in class, the student will be dismissed back to the parent and the parent will receive a text with the medical concern.
  3. Youth with allergies should list all allergies in their registration. Also, youth should be aware and able to manage their own allergies, unless otherwise discussed by parents and youth staff.
- **Practice good hygiene** — Employees/leaders should clean their hands often, either with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water. Hand sanitizers should contain at least 60%-95% alcohol, and employees should wash their hands with soap for at least 20 seconds. In addition, employees should avoid touching their face and cough into their elbow.

## INJURY AND FIRST AID

1. **We can administer only Band-Aids and Ice Packs.**
2. For youth with severe allergies requiring an epi-pen, please coordinate with the staff on a case by case basis on where the pen will be kept and who is responsible for administration.
3. If there is an injury in the classroom, the teachers and/or volunteers should immediately tell the supervisor. Any injury must be reported since some trivial injuries can turn out to be serious.

## SAFETY AND SECURITY

We believe that it is of utmost importance that our children are nurtured in a safe and responsible environment. We also desire that our staff and volunteers be protected from any false allegations of misconduct.

1. Each volunteer in our ministry is required to complete an application process, which includes a personal interview and background check.
2. Each volunteer is required to read and agree to follow the stipulations in this comprehensive manual

regarding Child Protection and the Youth Ministry Policies and Procedures.

3. We hold comprehensive, mandatory teacher training annually to (1) ensure our volunteers understand and follow our policies and to (2) enable them to nurture our children.
4. There is a Two-Adult rule in place for all classrooms. This means there should *always* be two adults, **at least one of whom is a woman in a co-ed environment**, present while youth are there. This is to protect youth from the possibility of abuse and to protect the adults from false accusations. If there is a situation in which there is only one adult, the door to the room should be open.
5. Youth are **NEVER** permitted to be in any area of any building of the Salvation Army unsupervised. This includes Railton and Mumford Hall, passageways and elevators leading to the 7th floor, as well as passages and stairways leading from the CMT downstairs to Mumford and Railton.
6. If there are last minute volunteers who have not been screened, they will be approved by the supervisor or greeter and placed with a volunteer or staff member who has had a background check.

## EVACUATION

1. If an emergency alarm sounds while parents are in the service, they are requested to know the evacuation directions out of the auditorium. Parents flooding the childcare area would cause congestion and prevent the children from being safely evacuated from the building.
2. All volunteers/teachers/supervisors have been made aware of the plan to follow in the event of an emergency. The supervisors will be responsible for getting everyone out of the building and helping people to follow through with the plan according to their particular areas.
3. In the event of an emergency, the Youth Ministry evacuation plan is as follows.

### From Mumford Hall: Youth Band, Youth End of Year Party

1. All Volunteers/Staff should have attendance sheets and youth should line up in an orderly fashion.
2. Walk with the students, with one teacher at the front, and one at the rear to the emergency exit located on the south side of Mumford Hall, adjacent to the kitchen. Proceed through the doors, and exit through the doors marked "exit" onto W 13<sup>th</sup> street.
3. Once at street level, walk east across 6th avenue to the **Starbucks located at 510 6th avenue**.
4. A volunteer is responsible to take attendance to ensure that everyone in the activity is present.

### From Railton Hall: Youth Lunch and Activities

1. All Volunteers/Staff should have attendance sheets and youth should line up in an orderly fashion.
2. Exit as directed by the supervisor through the doorway leading towards the bathroom.
3. Descend to 14th street using the internal staircase, directly to the right of the bathroom and storage room.
4. Once at street level, walk east across 6th avenue to the **Starbucks located at 510 6th Avenue**.
5. A volunteer is responsible to take attendance to ensure that everyone in the activity is present.

### From 8th Floor: Middle School classes, High School Lunch and Discussion

1. All Volunteers/Staff should have attendance sheets and youth should line up in an orderly fashion.
2. Exit as directed by the supervisor. **DO NOT** use the elevator. Proceed to the internal staircase, exiting onto 14th street.
3. Once at street level, walk east across 6th avenue to the **Starbucks located at 510 6th Avenue**.
4. A volunteer is responsible to take attendance to ensure that everyone in the activity is present.



# Curriculum

*"From infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."*

2 Timothy 3:15

## MIDDLE SCHOOL

The middle school curriculum is designed to deepen students' biblical literacy and understanding of core Christian doctrines. Our goal is to help students see the beauty, wonder, power, and love available to them through a relationship with Jesus Christ, rooted in the gospel of grace.

As middle schoolers grow in their ability to think critically, we aim to nourish their faith with a balanced study of both Old and New Testament books, exploring a wide range of biblical genres.

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### Fall Semester: 3 year rotation

#### Year 1: The Lord's Prayer

*"Lord, teach us to pray..." (Luke 11:1)*

- Prayer is central to our relationship with God.
  - Each week, we focus on a specific phrase of the Lord's Prayer (e.g. "Our Father who art in heaven") and unpack its meaning using supporting Scripture.
  - Students learn not just what to pray, but how prayer shapes our desires and hearts toward God's kingdom.
- 

#### Year 2: The Apostles' Creed

*"I believe in God, the Father Almighty..."*

- The Apostles' Creed outlines the essentials of Christian belief.
  - We break it into sections (God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Church, etc.) and explore each through the lens of Scripture.
  - The semester includes introductory apologetics, helping students understand what makes the Christian faith unique and why it endures.
- 

#### Year 3: The Ten Commandments

*"You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3)*

- The Ten Commandments reveal both God's character and his call to holiness.

- Each week, we explore one commandment, considering both what it prohibits and what it positively commands for us to do.
  - Through this study, students gain a clearer understanding of sin, grace, and the life Christ calls us into.
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## **Winter/Spring Semester: Exegetical Bible Study**

The winter/spring semester shifts to a more exegetical approach, equipping students with tools to read and interpret Scripture faithfully. We teach them to consider the original context and intent of the biblical author, understand how each passage fits into God's overarching narrative of redemption through Christ, and apply its truths to their lives today.

Together, we walk through a selected book of the Bible, chosen with an eye toward both the current sermon series of our larger church community and a balanced exposure to various biblical genres and testaments. This shared journey through Scripture helps students grow in both knowledge and love of God's Word.

## **HIGH SCHOOL**

The high school curriculum is designed to challenge students and deepen their ability to apply biblical texts and truths to everyday life. It is meant to bridge students into a faith that will continue to mature into adulthood. High school students participate in the full Sunday worship service, including the sermon, and then gather afterward for their own time together. Modeled after Redeemer Downtown's adult community group discussions, the format is more conversational than that of the middle school classes.

The curriculum shifts based on the felt needs of each year—some semesters focus on apologetics, addressing students' specific questions grouped by theme, while others explore systematic theology and how those doctrines take shape in daily living. Throughout, students are given space to wrestle with their faith and explore how it intersects with real life.

## **MENTOR MEETINGS**

We create space for mentorship in two primary ways:

1. **Communicant Mentorships**
  2. **High School Mentorship Groups**
- 

### **1. Communicant Mentorships**

Our desire is for every communicant student to experience the prayers, attention, and encouragement of a thoughtful, loving Christian adult as they explore the basics of the Christian faith and consider making a personal profession of faith in Christ.

Each spring, students going through the Communicant Class are paired with a same-gender adult mentor. These mentors may be youth volunteers, elders, deaconesses, or parents. Mentors will meet

with their student **three times** over the course of two months—once early in the process, once midway, and once after the course ends.

These meetings are meant to be **casual and relational**—think grabbing a hot chocolate, bubble tea, or a snack together in a **public place**. Here's what each meeting should focus on:

### **Meeting 1: Build Relationship & Begin Spiritual Conversation**

- Show curiosity and care: Ask about school, hobbies, family, sports, music, books, vacations, challenges, etc.
- Transition to faith: Ask about their devotional life and whether they've been wrestling with anything spiritually.
- Pray together: Ask how you can pray for them. Invite them to pray first, then close in prayer yourself. Listening to their prayer can offer valuable insight into where they are spiritually.

### **Meeting 2: Go Deeper & Engage Course Content**

- Continue building relational trust.
- Discuss topics covered in the class so far.
- Ask about family discussions (a key part of the class)—How are they going? What are they learning?
- Again, invite them to pray first, then pray for them.

**Note:** If you're mentoring **two students**, consider meeting with them **together** for this second session. A small group setting often makes it easier for students to open up and begin forming spiritual friendships.

### **Meeting 3: Discernment & Encouragement**

- This meeting happens after the course content is complete and during the discernment period.
- Help them process whether they feel ready to make a profession of faith and become a church member.
- Explore any lingering questions or concerns. Questions are not a sign of unreadiness if the student understands and believes the core of the faith.
- Remind them that it's okay if they're not ready this year—taking their time shows maturity. Some students need a year or more before they feel ready.
- Close your time in prayer, again inviting them to lead if comfortable.

## 2. High School Mentorship Groups

High school students and adult volunteers are placed into small mentorship groups—typically **3 students and 2 adults**.

### Purpose:

- Build deeper spiritual friendships
- Provide a welcoming space for newer or unconnected students to connect in a smaller setting
- Bridge the gap between "Sunday church" and everyday life

### What These Meetups Look Like:

- **Outside regular programming:** Meet when it makes sense for your group—outside of typical youth group or Sunday rhythms.
- **Balanced activity & conversation:**  
Volunteer together or do something fun—go to a movie, visit a museum, play board games, attend a concert, support a student's performance/game, etc.  
Pair the activity with time for real conversation—perhaps over a meal, coffee, or a snack.
- **Spiritual discussion:**  
Ask open-ended questions like:  
*What's been on your mind spiritually?*  
*How are you experiencing God in your life right now?*  
*Where do you feel challenged or encouraged in your faith?*
- **Prayer:**  
Always include time for prayer—simple, honest, and student-led when possible.
- **Frequency:**  
Aim to meet **once a month**. This strikes a balance between relational consistency and sustainability.
- **Scheduling & attendance:**  
Coordinate meeting times and locations that work for most of your group. Full attendance isn't always possible, but aim for what's reasonable.
- **Public spaces:**  
All meetups should take place in **public locations**, and **parents should be informed in advance**.

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Your presence, prayer, and intentionality play a vital role in helping young people grow in their faith and connect deeply with their church community.

## **PARENT PARTNERSHIP**

Parents will be notified in advance of any education about gender or sexuality, and the content will be reviewed and approved by the Child Safety team and church leadership. Additionally, Child Safety representatives will conduct regular safety talks on various aspects of prevention, including appropriate boundaries and consent with staff and volunteers.

# Parent Responsibility

For the safety and well being of your student, please adhere to the policies and procedures that are outlined in this manual.

Children must be symptom free from the following illness without medication for 24 hours before entering the classroom:

- Fever of 100 or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye or other eye infection)
- Rash
- Nasal drainage that is green or yellow
- Sore throat
- Open sores
- Cold
- Excessive coughing
- Lice

If a child develops any of these symptoms while in class, the student will be dismissed back to the parent. The parent will receive a text as to the nature of the medical concern.

## ALERTS AND REQUESTS

1. **Allergies:** If your child has any allergies or special conditions, please explain them to the staff member. For allergies, make sure that a note about the allergy has been made in the check-in account. Youth should be aware and able to manage their own allergies, unless otherwise discussed by parents and youth staff.
2. **Drop off:** Middle school youth will check-in prior to attending in-service programming.
3. **Security:** Youth 6th-12th grade may self-dismiss from both on and off site activities. When RDT Youth events end, unless an alternative check-out process has been arranged with staff, youth will self-dismiss with no formal check-out process in place.

## SECURITY FOR CHILD PICK UP

**Once a youth is dismissed from a youth activity, they are no longer the responsibility of the Youth Ministry staff or volunteers.**

# Volunteers

## REQUIREMENTS TO SERVE

1. Each volunteer in our ministry is required to complete an application process, which includes a personal interview, background check and reference checks.
2. Each volunteer will sign an acknowledgement of having read and agreed to the Redeemer Downtown Children and Youth Policies and Procedures Handbook, including the Child Protection Code of Conduct.
3. We hold comprehensive teacher training to (1) ensure our volunteers understand and follow our policies and (2) enable them to nurture our children.
4. Volunteers are entrusted to teach the students of Redeemer about the Gospel. We ask that volunteers commit themselves to the responsibility of building a strong spiritual foundation in the hearts of the students.
5. In the event that there are last minute volunteers who have not been screened, they will be approved by the supervisor and placed with a volunteer or staff member who has had a background check.

## GENERAL

1. Volunteers must take seriously their role as a leader and model for our students through conduct in and outside of youth events.
2. During programming, we will try and set you up for freedom to engage with students and focus on building connections between and with them. We ask that you come prepared to engage in games and lessons alongside students.
3. Volunteers are asked to be in prayer for students specifically for one hour during the week.
4. Volunteers meet with youth staff once a semester (or as needed) to discuss feedback and to develop as a leader
5. Volunteers are encouraged to seek creative ways to use your specific gifts with students. If there are areas you would like to explore or grow in through leading, let us know and we would love to support you.
6. **Be wise in your use of your phone. Encourage face to face connection rather than connecting over digital content.**

## TWO IN A ROOM

1. For any private space there should always be 2 non-related adults in a room with kids. If there is only one adult they should move to a more populated space or meet in a common area.
2. Sometimes it is important for you to have a private conversation with students. We encourage these times so that you can hear the heart behind the student's struggle or experience. However, NEVER be in a private room one to one. If you find yourself in a private room with limited visibility or access, move somewhere else. No exceptions.
3. Always meet in a public place that is visible. Parents and staff should be made aware of where you intend to be and who you are meeting.

## COMMUNICATION

1. Redeemer Downtown prohibits its volunteers and staff (and discourages any adult) from communicating privately with children or youth without a parent or guardian's consent. This includes interaction via text, social media, email, or other forms of electronic communication that are private.
2. All communication between a volunteer or staff member and a child or youth must include at least one other adult (If this does not happen organically, please add Will Anderson for males, Ashley Spilker for females).

3. If a youth or child messages a staff or volunteer privately, the staff or volunteer will direct the child or youth to an appropriate way to connect. If the outreach occurs a second time, the staff or volunteer must alert the Child Safety team.
4. Additionally, any staff or volunteer who becomes aware of private communication between a child and an older child in a different stage of development is required to notify a member of the Child Safety team.
5. Best practice is to give your number generally to the group and allow students to reach out as they feel comfortable. Initial conversation may feel awkward to double check that the parent is aware of the communication and that an additional adult is added, however we want to keep our actions observable and accountable at all times.
6. As noted in the Code of Conduct, the following behaviors are prohibited:
  - a. Any form of sexual communication or sharing sexual content.
  - b. Sexually suggestive language or slang, sexual jokes, sexual innuendo, descriptions of sexual experiences/habits
  - c. Sharing or displaying of any sexual images, videos or other content

## PHYSICAL TOUCH

1. Touch should always be open rather than secretive.
2. Touch should be in response to the need of the child and never out of need of the adult.
3. Touch should be age appropriate and only be with the student's permission to communicate respect for a student.
4. Members of the team should monitor each other and other students in the area of physical contact to help one another by pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted.
5. As stated above in the Code of Conduct, the following are strictly prohibited:
  - a. Any touch that is unwanted by a child or not observable by others
  - b. Any intimate touch, such as massage, playing with hair, or any touch under clothing, including a child's thighs, stomach, or lower back (except when following appropriate diapering procedures)
  - c. Tickling, Piggy Back Rides, or other games involving lots of touch with children
  - d. Lap sitting (except for holding children in the nursery or to briefly comfort a child who is 3 or under)
  - e. Full frontal hugs (except for holding children in the nursery or to briefly comfort a child who is 3 or under)
  - f. Any form of physical punishment or correction, such as spanking, slapping, hitting, etc.

## SCHEDULING

1. Volunteers are expected to be at 75% of scheduled youth programming and events.
2. All volunteers are asked to commit to serving for 1 ministry year once committed to Youth.
3. Volunteers are asked to attend in-service Sunday school classes on a rotating basis.
4. In case of an emergency that causes the volunteer to run late or be unable to serve, it is imperative to **call or text** Will Anderson.
5. When a volunteer is no longer able to serve with the Youth Ministry, we ask that you give one month's notice.

## FOOD

Lunch is generally served at all post service youth events and activities free of charge to volunteers and youth. Allergens are labeled.

## CLASS TIME

1. Assist the Youth Director or Assistant with check-in and attendance.
2. Assist the Youth Director or Assistant with classroom activities and discussion.



3. Enjoy being with the kids! Remember that this is not babysitting, but ministering to these children and guiding them closer to the Lord.

# Classroom Management

## For Students:

### CLASSROOM GUIDELINES

1. Show grace to one another and the teacher.
2. Don't throw things
3. Use appropriate language (don't curse)
4. Don't scream over people while they're talking
5. Listen to other people's ideas

### TECHNOLOGY FREE ZONE

- No phones or smart watches.
- If they come out, they'll be collected until the end of the class.
- If the class has difficulties consistently, all phones and watches will be collected at the beginning of each class period and returned at the end.

### BATHROOM

- Raise your hand with crossed fingers if you need to go to the bathroom.
- The teacher may ask you to wait, but will let you go if there's no one else using the bathroom and the timing is appropriate.

## For Volunteers:

### PROACTIVE STEPS FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

1. Communicate the guidelines at the start of class the first several classes of the ministry year and periodically throughout the year as needed..
2. Make eye contact when speaking to the student.
3. Catch the student being good. **Use positive reinforcement.**
4. Have the student repeat what you have asked them to do.
5. Try to redirect the student if they are doing something they shouldn't be doing.
6. Discipline should always be given in love, not in anger.

### PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS

1. Create a loving, caring atmosphere.
2. Establish and communicate realistic expectations for students.
3. Focus on positive actions.
4. Be fair and consistent with students.

### DISCIPLINE STEPS

1. **If the need to discipline arises in the case of gossip, a fight, comments that cross-the-line, racist remarks or disruptive behavior,** remind students of both the expectations in youth group and the Gospel. Use this opportunity to remind students of God's love and how he desires we treat others made in his image. We can use this moment to reflect Christ in how we set boundaries and communicate in order to encourage change that will benefit the student and others.

2. **If the behavior continues, give a verbal warning:** If possible, *speaking quietly* to the student in order to not draw attention away from the teaching and onto the inappropriate behavior.
  3. **If the student continues to be disruptive, speak to the staff. They will work together with parents to devise a strategy going forward.**
- We desire for every student to have a successful time in Youth with us, and will work with parents to support their student. We will work with the parents to make a plan for their student, and will communicate it with all staff and volunteer teachers so we are all on the same page with our approach.

## SELF-EVALUATION

1. Pay attention to how you feel
  - If you are stressed, youth will sense that. Try to focus on the present moment and the students in front of you rather than outside stresses and circumstances.
  - We only have about an hour with these kids each week to give them our all and teach them about the depth of God's love for them, which we can demonstrate through our actions and our undivided attention.
  - Take a minute away if needed.
2. If you are struggling with a student, pass him or her off to another staff member or volunteer. You are never alone in the classroom, so let those around you help you through the difficult moment
3. Arrive prepared for the morning, in heart and mind. Arriving on time enables you to have time to prepare for the morning.

# The Gospel of Jesus

1. God is the Sovereign Creator of all things
2. God created people for His glory.
3. God is Holy and Righteous.
4. Man is sinful.
5. God is just and is right to punish sin.
6. God is merciful. He is kind to undeserving sinners.
7. Jesus is God's Holy and Righteous son.
8. God put our punishment on Jesus.
9. God offers the free gift of salvation to those who repent and believe in Jesus.
10. Those who trust in Jesus will live to please Him and will receive the promise of Eternal Life—Enjoying God forever in Heaven.

*From Children Desiring God, Children's Leadership Conference 2007*

*"Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous,  
that He might bring us to God."*

1 Peter 3:18

## GOSPEL-CENTERED VS. MORALITY CENTERED TEACHING

Morality Based	Gospel Based
You must try for Jesus	You must trust in Jesus
What YOU do	What Christ has done for you
Obey out of obligation and duty	Obey out of gratitude and love
You are the hero of the story	God is the hero of the story
The story is about you	The story is about God
Aims at action	Aims at heart
Stays small with the story	Applies to the big story of redemption

*Yancey C. Arrington, Gospel-Centered Curriculum*

Our volunteers are a valuable part of our ministry!

The information in this manual should help you understand our role in ministering to children at Redeemer Downtown. If you have any questions, please contact our Director, Will Anderson, [will.anderson@redeemerdt.com](mailto:will.anderson@redeemerdt.com). Welcome to Youth Ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church Downtown!

# Policy Acknowledgment Forms for DT Youth Volunteers

Thank you for volunteering with Downtown Youth! Once you have read, understand, and agree to the Redeemer Presbyterian Church Downtown policies and procedures outlined in the "DT Youth Policies and Procedures Handbook", follow the links below to complete the two following forms.

## [Youth Policies and Procedures Acknowledgement Form](#)

Click above or follow the QR Code to Log  
Your Signature



## [Redeemer Downtown Child Protection Code of Conduct](#)

Click above or follow the QR Code to Log  
Your Signature

