

# Healthy Boundaries 101 – Fundamentals

## **COURSE WORKBOOK**

A Course for Clergy and Spiritual Teachers



Working together to end  
sexual & domestic violence

## ***Healthy Boundaries 101 – Fundamentals***

### USING THIS COURSE WORKBOOK

***Healthy Boundaries 101 – Fundamentals*** is a workbook for an individual participant and is to be used in conjunction with a boundaries training course. It is intended to cover fundamental principles of healthy boundaries in pastoral and teaching relationships.

Understanding boundaries can help us manage the difficulties inherent in the role of clergy or spiritual teacher. Knowledge of what is appropriate, what is not, and whether an action is in the best interest of congregants or students can help us avoid possible boundary violations.

This training course workbook, ***Healthy Boundaries 101 – Fundamentals***, is part one of a two-part\* FaithTrust Institute training program designed for clergy and spiritual teachers. This training program uses the DVD series, *A Sacred Trust: Boundary Issues for Clergy and Spiritual Teachers* and is designed with three main objectives:

1. To increase awareness of the need for healthy and appropriate boundaries in the clergy/congregant or spiritual teacher/student relationship;
2. To illustrate the impact of appropriate vs. inappropriate boundaries in promoting effective ministry; and
3. To provide clergy and spiritual teachers with guidelines and suggestions for developing appropriate boundaries and necessary self-care strategies.

\* ***Healthy Boundaries 201 – Beyond Basics*** is part two of the FaithTrust Institute programs and builds on ***Healthy Boundaries 101 – Fundamentals***. It is a more in depth discussion of these objectives.

FaithTrust Institute provides faith communities and advocates with the tools and knowledge they need to address the faith and cultural issues related to abuse. Founded in 1977, FaithTrust Institute is a national, multifaith, multicultural training and education organization with global reach serving African American, Jewish, Buddhist, Latina/o, Muslim, Anglo, Indigenous, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Asian, Pacific Islander, and many other communities.

FaithTrust Institute provides intervention and prevention training, consulting, educational materials and web resources in the following areas:

- Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Healthy Teen Relationships, Preventing Teen Dating Violence
- Child Abuse, Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence
- Healthy Boundaries for Clergy and Spiritual Teachers, Responding to Clergy Misconduct
- Trafficking of Persons

People in crisis often look to their faith leaders for guidance and assistance. Religious values of justice and equality summon us to affirm the dignity and worth of every human being and the right of each person to live without fear or threat of violence. Our religious traditions obligate us to work towards an end to sexual and domestic violence in our communities and in society at large. FaithTrust Institute provides faith communities and advocates with the tools and knowledge they need to address the faith and cultural issues related to abuse.

Numerous victim advocate organizations and faith leaders have spoken to FaithTrust Institute about the great need to strengthen collaboration between faith communities and secular organizations in order to improve community-wide approaches to ending violence against women. FaithTrust Institute provides training and resource materials to strengthen this collaboration. Victims need and deserve the support of both secular and faith communities.



Working together to end  
sexual & domestic violence

[www.faithtrustinstitute.org](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org)

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Course Workbook

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## NOTES

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## “GOD MARKED A LINE AND TOLD THE SEA”

*“It was written as a polemical poem to counter spurious ideas of freedom and undisciplined license, and to affirm how the profoundest liberty involves a sense of boundaries and structure.” Thomas Troeger*

### *Verse 1*

God marked a line and told the sea  
Its surging tides and waves were free  
to travel up the sloping stand  
but not to overtake the land.

### *Verse 2*

God set one limit in the glade  
Where tempting, fruited branches swayed.  
And that first limit stands behind  
the limits that the law defined.

### *Verse 3*

The line, the limit, and the law  
Are patterns meant to help us draw  
a bound between what life requires  
and all the things our heart desires.

### *Verse 4*

But, discontent with finite powers,  
We reach to take what is not ours  
and then defend our claim by force  
and swerve from life’s intended course.

### *Verse 5*

We are not free when we’re confined  
To every wish that sweeps the mind.  
But free when freely we accept  
the sacred bounds that must be kept.

Thomas Troeger 1989 © Oxford University Press  
As appears in the *New Century Hymnal* of the United Church of Christ; Tune: KEDRON L.M.  
Used with permission by FaithTrust Institute  
Troeger was inspired by verses: Job 38:1-11; Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Psalm 104.





## BOUNDARY BASICS FOR CLERGY AND SPIRITUAL TEACHERS

### *A Sacred Trust DVD Part I*

To serve in the role of spiritual leader is a sacred trust. Sometimes, without intending to, we exploit and hurt those we want to teach and nurture by inappropriately crossing boundaries.

#### **What every spiritual leader needs to know about relational boundaries<sup>1</sup>**

- They help us maintain clear professional relationships.
- They are guidelines (usually unwritten) that help us know when and when not to participate in a given activity, especially if we have more power.
- They are not intended to shackle us but to free us in our work as spiritual leaders.
- They help us keep perspective when people's problems seem overwhelming.
- They signal to others that it is safe to trust us.
- They protect congregants/students from our abuse of power. Our power is derived from our education, our position as a spiritual leader, and our resources. The very act of ordination sets us apart as having more power and designates us for leadership.

#### **What boundaries are NOT**

- They are NOT clear rules about where and when we can be friendly.
- They are NOT blocks to authenticity and friendliness.

#### **How can we keep from violating boundaries inappropriately?**

- Be aware of our needs and find healthful ways of having them met other than by the people we are supposed to be serving.
- Ask ourselves these questions: "Is this in the best interests of the other person or does it only satisfy my needs?" "Would I be comfortable if all my acquaintances knew I was doing this?"
- Establish a system of accountability. That is, we should arrange to meet regularly with a spiritual director, teacher, or colleague with whom we can speak honestly.
- Understand that boundaries are not always easy to discern and that there are often no clear guidelines for the best action to take when confronted with an issue.

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<sup>1</sup> Those not mentioned in the DVD are adapted from Rev. John Heagle's "Priestly Ministry and Healthy Boundaries," Priestly Relationships: Freedom Through Boundaries. (Chicago: The National Organization for Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy, Inc., 1997). Used with permission.



## DATING, FRIENDS, DUAL RELATIONSHIPS, GIFTS

### **A Sacred Trust DVD Part 2**

#### **Dating**

Pastors/Rabbis/Teachers who are single must often decide whether to date someone in their congregation/sangha. It is, after all, a place to meet someone with similar values and commitments. To date a congregant, however, introduces myriad complications and opportunities for misunderstandings.

If you find yourself attracted to a member of your congregation/sangha, consider doing the following:

- Inform him/her that you cannot be his/her spiritual leader and have a romantic involvement. Therefore, if the person wants to pursue a dating relationship, he/she should find someone else to serve as spiritual leader.
- Tell your governing body and supervisor about the relationship.

#### **Friends**

Choosing friends from among those one serves and leads also has complications. There is a difference between being friendly and being a close friend who shares confidences. It is better to find friends among colleagues and through organizations that promote your values and interests. However, if you develop a close friendship with a congregant, consider the following:

- Discuss the difficulties of being both spiritual leader and friend;
- Avoid discussing the business of the congregation/sangha with him/her;
- Avoid spending time together at congregational/sangha events.

#### **Dual Relationships**

*Dual relationships* are those in which the spiritual leader has more than one role, for example, if the rabbi is also a client or patient of a congregant. However, if the best person for a specific responsibility is in your congregation/sangha and you choose a dual relationship, consider the following:

- Minimize the number of dual relationships;
- Have a clear understanding with the person involved about what is expected, a contract perhaps;
- If problems develop, seek a solution with the help of your bishop/supervisor.

#### **Gifts**

Where is the line between what is appropriate to accept and what is not appropriate? When presented with gifts, consider the following:

- Let your common sense guide you;
- Be certain you are not expected to do something in return;
- Accept appropriate gifts with a heart-felt thank you;
- Set a dollar limit; (for Buddhist teachers in traditions where *dana* from students is an accepted form of ongoing financial support, be careful not to develop preferences for students offering larger gifts);
- Find a way to graciously decline gifts that are inappropriate.



## DATING, FRIENDS, DUAL RELATIONSHIPS, GIFTS

### Exercise: Gifts

Which of these has a student/congregant offered you? What issues have arisen for you around such gifts? Have you felt uncomfortable or turned down a gift? Why? For Buddhist teachers in traditions where *dana* from students is an accepted form of ongoing financial support, have you developed preferences for the student offering you the gift and noticed yourself devoting more time or energy to this student?

- Cookies
- Holiday gift
- Use of a vacation home
- Services, such as dental care, computer expertise
- A check for an amount over \$25
- A small token gift, such as a candle holder or house plant
- Discount on an expensive item
- Invitation to dinner in the congregant's home with his/her family
- Invitation to dinner with a congregant alone at an expensive restaurant



# THE PULPIT, TRANSFERENCE, HUGGING AND TOUCH, INTIMACY

## A Sacred Trust DVD Part 3

A respect for boundaries protects relationships in which one individual has more power than the other. Four areas in which an understanding of boundaries is essential are 1) the pulpit, 2) transference, 3) touching and hugging, and 4) intimacy.

### The Pulpit

*The pulpit* is a tool that can be used for positive or negative ends. Negative ends include:

- Furthering our own agenda, as when there's conflict within the congregation/sangha;
- Promoting ourselves, as in drawing attention to our keen minds or smooth delivery.

*When we give in to those temptations, we are inappropriately crossing boundaries.*

### Transference

*Transference* is confusing feelings one has about one person with feelings for another, for example, confusing the spiritual leader with an old girlfriend or with the warm, generous father. In this confusion, the congregant may bring the baggage from that earlier relationship to the pastoral or teaching relationship.

We need to be aware that:

- A congregant's/student's interaction with us is often not about us;
- We aren't as wonderful or as terrible as the congregant thinks we are;
- Praise for our leadership, preaching, or teaching is not a sexual come-on;
- Dynamics of transference make congregants/students more vulnerable.

*When we use a transference attachment for our own gratification, we are inappropriately stepping over a boundary.*

### Hugging and Touch Boundaries

Sometimes we think congregants need our touch. They may even ask for it.

We need to consider:

- Is this a transference situation?
- Would touch be in their best interests or is it about our needs?
- Is there a better way to convey warmth and caring?

*While touch is an important part of pastoral care, hugging or touching a congregant/student can be inappropriate boundary crossing.*





## EMERGING ISSUES IN MAINTAINING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

In the early days of addressing the importance of healthy boundaries for faith leaders, some people assumed that all that was needed to prevent boundary violations by clergy and spiritual teachers was to establish a policy, do a basic training, and check that box as completed. This approach establishes the rules, tells people about the rules and the consequences of violating the rules, and assumes that this will take care of the problem.

But the “problem” is multifaceted, complex and nuanced. The risk of violating boundaries in our pastoral and teaching relationships is always before us. The rules can give us clarity about where our faith community stands, what it expects from us, and what will happen if we choose unwise or exploitative conduct. But the work of living out healthy boundaries as a pastor or spiritual teacher belongs to each of us and is an everyday challenge. The work of deepening our understanding of healthy boundaries never ends and one of the reasons is that there are new challenges at every turn. These new challenges are emerging issues: complex boundary situations that we could not have anticipated ten years ago.

The work on healthy boundaries is ongoing because it is at the core of our understanding of ministry and teaching. Many faith groups have begun to realize this and to realize the need to do regular healthy boundary training that expands and deepens our awareness and its application to our work.

So as new issues and situations emerge that raise questions about appropriate behavior, the framework to help clergy and spiritual teachers address these issues is in place. We just need to apply our awareness of and commitment to healthy boundaries to these emerging issues. We need to bring the lens of our theological understanding, our analysis of power and vulnerability, and our strategies for self-care and accountability to these new issues.

One example of an emerging issue is social networking. Like any tool, social networking can bring great benefit or great harm. So how do we bring our sensitivities about healthy boundaries to bear on our use of this tool? How do we bring the resources of our status, knowledge, and experience as faith leaders to the benefit, not the detriment, of our congregants?

Here are some suggestions for framing the topic of social networking in the context of healthy boundaries:

### **Remember the goals and context of healthy boundaries:**

- To maintain the integrity of the ministerial or teaching relationship
- To recognize the realities of power and vulnerability always present

**Self-Assessment:**

How much time each week do I spend:

- Using social networking for ministry?
- On face-to-face ministry?
- Using social networking for recreation?
- On face-to-face social interaction with family and friends?

How does this affect my personal and professional life?

- Am I neglecting areas of ministry because of my time online?
- Am I neglecting personal and family relationships?
- Am I engaging in risky online behavior (sexting, “anonymous” chat rooms or sexual interaction)?

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**Critical Questions:**

- How am I at risk to violate someone’s boundaries when I am using social networking tool in my ministry or teaching?
- How can I minimize that risk, bring the benefit of this tool, and maintain the integrity of the ministerial or teaching relationship?

**Faith Community Considerations:**

- Do we have a church policy on social networking and internet usage? Is it based on transparency?
- Does everyone understand there is *no* confidentiality online?
- Is someone in our organization supervising and monitoring our internet use and content?

**Visit [www.faithtrustinstitute.org](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org) for these additional resources:**

- “Internet Safety Guidelines,” 2009, 2012, United Church of Christ Connecticut Conference
- “Social Networking and Healthy Boundaries: Asking Critical Questions,” by M.L. Daniel and Marie Fortune
- “Faith Community Considerations: Social Networking,” by M.L. Daniel and Marie Fortune

# PRESERVING BOUNDARIES: PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL HEALTH

## **A Sacred Trust DVD Part 4 Personal Needs & Self-Care – Red Flags – Final Reflections**

### **Guidelines**

1. **To Counsel or Not to Counsel**
  - Do not attempt counseling unless you are trained as a counselor.
  - Do not attempt to counsel victims, survivors, or abusers without special training in this area. REFER, REFER, REFER.
2. **If You Do Decide to Counsel, Set Limits**
  - Avoid counseling in any setting that might suggest dating or other social interaction.
  - Limit the length and number of sessions—in advance.
3. **Sexual Feelings**
  - Be aware of any sexual feelings vis-à-vis congregants, clients, employees, students, staff, etc. (Expect to have these feelings.)
  - Acknowledge these feelings to yourself, to a supervisor, and/or in consultation session—not to the individual who is the object of those feelings, nor to any other congregant/staff member.
4. **Sexualized Behavior**
  - Do not attempt to sexualize any professional relationship.
  - If a congregant/staff member engages in sexualized behavior towards you, do not respond in kind. Rather maintain your role as spiritual leader and consult with a colleague, consultant, or supervisor.
5. **Stress Management and Self-care**
  - Provide for your own physical, psychological, and spiritual self-care with recreational times, time off to care for self or family, retreats, educational leave, etc.
  - As a check to see whether you are doing this, list activities you engage in outside your congregation. (Institutions have an obligation to support individuals' self-care efforts through financial support and generous leave policies.)
6. **Dual Relationships**
  - Do not enter into a dual relationship in which you are both spiritual leader and lover/partner to a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, etc. If, nonetheless, you and one of those persons agree to pursue an intimate relationship, end your role as spiritual leader.
  - Try to avoid dual relationships with congregants, clients, employees, students, staff, etc., in which you relate to an individual in two capacities.
  - Try to avoid dual relationships in which you are both spiritual leader and friend.
  - If a dual relationship is unavoidable (for example, if you work in a small community, if you supervise employees and serve as their spiritual leader, if you are a priest in a seminary where you also teach), discuss the inherent problems and possible consequences with the individual(s) involved, establish whatever boundaries you can to limit the duality, mutually

decide upon strategies for protecting the relationship you have as the other's spiritual leader, and be open about the duality.

**7. Personal Relationships and Intimacy Needs**

- Attend to your personal and familial relationships. Maintain and nurture them.
- As a check, list the relationships you have with people who are not members of your congregation/sangha.

**8. Avoiding Workaholism and Burnout**

- Be clear about your job description and the accompanying expectations. Institutions must take the first step by providing position descriptions and specifying expectations of staff.
- When you encounter situations beyond your expertise, consult and refer. If your workload seems unreasonable or unmanageable, discuss this with a supervisor or consultant and see what can be done.

**9. Supervision and Evaluation**

- Ask a supervisor to meet with you periodically to review your position and work, if your supervisor does not do this on his/her own initiative.

**10. Avoiding Isolation**

- Maintain contacts with colleagues.
- Consult regularly.

**11. Spiritual Practice**

- Engage in regular prayer and meditation.

## PRESERVING BOUNDARIES: PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL HEALTH

### Exercise: Self-Care Inventory

- \_\_\_ I have an exercise regimen.
- \_\_\_ I do not smoke.
- \_\_\_ I am careful how much alcohol I consume.
- \_\_\_ I get an annual physical.
- \_\_\_ I have an interest/hobby that has nothing to do with my job.
- \_\_\_ I am active in an organization that has no connection to my job.
- \_\_\_ I have one close friend with whom I can talk honestly.
- \_\_\_ I take at least a day and a half off each week.
- \_\_\_ I read at least one book a month for pleasure.
- \_\_\_ I play a musical instrument and practice regularly.
- \_\_\_ I have some relaxing music, which I listen to regularly.
- \_\_\_ I practice a spiritual discipline.
- \_\_\_ I meet regularly with a spiritual advisor or therapist.
- \_\_\_ I meet regularly with a colleague with whom I can honestly share.
- \_\_\_ I eat most evening meals with my partner/family.
- \_\_\_ My partner and I get away for an overnight at least once every six months.

### For Those Who Have Children at Home

- \_\_\_ I attend most of my children's extra-curricular activities.
- \_\_\_ Once a month I do something special with my children.

### For Those Who Have Adult Children

- \_\_\_ I maintain regular contact (by visits, phone, or e-mail) with my children.



## PRESERVING BOUNDARIES: PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL HEALTH

### Exercise: A Self-Assessment Checklist

As spiritual leaders, all of us are at risk of crossing boundaries inappropriately, thereby violating our role and abusing those who are vulnerable. But this risk of doing harm to those we serve or supervise can be considerably reduced through self-knowledge and self-care. If we understand our personal history and its effects on us, our behavior and perceptions are less likely to be shaped by that history. If we are aware of our personal needs and are taking care of those needs in appropriate ways, we are less likely to impose those needs inappropriately upon our ministerial relationships. Furthermore, if we are aware of the power implicit in our role and how that power affects those we serve and supervise, we are less likely to misuse that power.

Use this checklist to assess your risk of violating boundaries. If you answer no to the first question in “Personal History,” skip to the questions under “Psychosexual Integration.” An answer of “no” to any question, except the first, indicates an area in which self-awareness and self-monitoring are crucial.

#### Personal History

- |     |    |  |
|-----|----|--|
| Yes | No | Does my personal or family history include sexual abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, or other family dysfunction?                                      |
| Yes | No | Am I coming to terms with the issues and feelings involved in my personal history? Am I able to identify areas in my history where I need healing? |
| Yes | No | Am I taking steps to address the areas where I need healing?   |

#### Psychosexual Integration

- |     |    |   |
|-----|----|---|
| Yes | No | Have I discussed my sexual history with someone (a professional or a friend)?   |
| Yes | No | Am I comfortable with my sexual orientation?  |
| Yes | No | Do I monitor my sexual fantasies for inappropriate persons, such as children, clients, congregants, employees, etc.?  |
| Yes | No | Are my personal friendships and intimate relationships appropriate—namely, age-appropriate and not involving anyone with whom I have a professional relationship? |
| Yes | No | Am I able to identify my emotional/sexual needs and meet them appropriately?  |





## CASE STUDIES: HEALTHY BOUNDARIES AND PEER SUPPORT

**FaithTrust Institute encourages you to set up a collegial peer group of faith leaders with whom you can meet regularly to discuss your everyday boundary challenges. This exercise is an opportunity to practice seeking consultation from professional peers.**

### **Directions**

In your small group, decide who will role play the faith leader for each case study. You will then present to the group one of these situations as your own current dilemma. The other group members are your peers and also faith leaders whom you are consulting.

1. You are senior rabbi. Your 24-years-old youth director is a very touchy, feely person. He/she is very physical with the youth, which they seem to like a lot. He/she also seems to spend a lot of leisure time with various groups of the youth. You are somewhat uncomfortable with what you observe and decide you need to address this issue in supervision. What do you say? After the supervision discussion, there is no change in behavior. What do you do now?
2. You are a solo pastor at a small church in a rural area. One of your parishioners is especially friendly. He/she drops by your house unexpectedly 3-4 times a week and is happy to sit and have tea on these occasions. He/she regularly brings you gifts: produce from his/her garden, flowers, books of poetry, CDs of music. At first, you experienced this as hospitality, but lately it has begun to feel intrusive of your private time. How do you handle this?
3. You are a new associate rabbi at a large, multiple staff congregation. You are in your 30s, just out of seminary, and have been single for the past 5 years. Shortly after arriving at this congregation, a member begins to pay you special attention, inviting you to dinner and movies. This person is chair of the Board of Trustees. You are confused about this attention. What do you do?
4. A member of your sangha is on the police force of your medium-sized town. One day, not recognizing your car, she stops you for talking on your cell phone while driving which is illegal. When she sees that you are the driver, she says she'll let it go this time. What do you do?
5. You are co-pastor in a medium-sized church. Your oldest child is now in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. His/her teacher this year is a member of your congregation and has come to you in the past with pastoral concerns about his/her aging parents. Your child has some learning disability issues, and you want to insure that he/she continues to get the assistance needed. How do you handle this dual relationship?
6. You are a middle-aged, single associate pastor. A lay leader of one of the ministry teams that you direct comes to your home, unexpectedly, late one evening, very angry and distraught, claiming their spouse was having an affair. The lay leader wants to come in to talk and pray. What do you do? Why?

7. A woman from your congregation calls and asks you to stop by for a pastoral visit. You arrive on time at 11:00 AM on a weekday. She answers your knock dressed in a negligee and invites you in. You are taken aback; caught off guard, you enter her home. She offers you a glass of wine, which you refuse. You quickly become uncomfortable and get up to leave just saying that you have another appointment. When you encounter this congregant next, what do you say?

## NOTES

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## HINTS FOR A HEALTHY MINISTRY

– Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune

- Get a life/have a life.
- Find colleagues for study and support.
- “Remember who you are and what you represent.”  
– Lina Fortune
- Discover the joy of boundaries.
- “Let go but stand by.”  
– Frances Willard, *How I Learned to Ride a Bicycle*
- Don’t take yourself so seriously.
- Take yourself very seriously.
- “Pray always and do not lose heart.”  
– Luke 18:1

### **Buddhist Code of Discipline**

I vow not to kill but to cherish all life.

I vow not to lie but to tell the truth.

I vow not to misuse sexual energy but to  
be respectful of others’ minds  
and bodies.

I vow not to take what is not given to me,  
but to protect the belongings of others.

I vow not to misuse drugs and alcohol, but to  
keep the mind clear.

### **Texts for Study**

Ezekiel 34

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Exodus 18:13-18

1 Peter 5:1-4

2 Peter 1:3-11

2 Timothy 1:5-14

Hebrews 12: 11-13

2 Corinthians 4:1-18

Galatians 6:1-10



## PARTICULAR BOUNDARY ISSUES FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN FAITH COMMUNITIES

– *Kimberly Day-Lewis, J.D.*

Historically, faith and spirituality have been critical elements of black culture and consciousness. As centerpieces within the fabric of African American communities, churches and other religious institutions have served not only as houses of worship, but also as centers for social interaction and collective action in support of their members and the wider community. Clergy are often called upon to fill the leadership vacuum, and leadership has its privileges. In the African American community, people look up to clergy and give them deferential respect. The power of position and the community's tendency to place the pastor on a pedestal present to clergy particular challenges in exercising restraint in their use of power. The rise in the number of independent churches means that systems of accountability may be non-existent.

The predominance of females and the dearth of males within congregations add to the challenge. This dynamic may contribute to a sensitivity regarding the emasculation of African American males and the need to give them leadership opportunities that society denies because of discriminatory practices. Therefore, ministerial leadership may be predominately male and surrounded by female subordinates. If the leadership style is hierarchical and the congregation is fed a theology that emphasizes obedience to authority, male leadership, and female submission, the congregational system is ripe for boundary violations.

Ministerial leadership may fall into dual relationships without awareness of the complexity of such relationships and the need to give attention to boundary issues. Independent churches founded by a charismatic leader or a family may request professionals among their members to provide pro bono services or may have congregants functioning as volunteer servants to the pastor and his/her family.

There is wide diversity in the amount of formal theological education and training among African American ministers and a broad range of openness to seeking continuing education and training. Making training programs contextually relevant and accessible will be vital in delivering this resource to African American faith communities.

## PARTICULAR BOUNDARY ISSUES FOR ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

– *Rev. Thelma A. Burgonio-Watson*

Boundary issues among Asian and Pacific Islander communities are not unlike those of any other community. However, boundaries must be understood within the context of the culture and traditions of a community. There are several cultural traditions and ways of relating in Asian and Pacific Islander communities that create particular challenges when dealing with boundary issues.

Relational complexities are as much a given as they are in other racial ethnic communities. For Asians and Pacific Islanders, maintaining smooth interpersonal relationships is an especially important value and may be perceived as even more important than keeping appropriate boundaries. Sensitivity to this value is critical. At the same time, we need to understand that maintaining appropriate boundaries and fostering healthy clergy-congregant relationships are complementary, not counter to interpersonal relationships.

Asian and Pacific Islander communities tend to be extremely close-knit. In general, it is natural for these groups to embrace their spiritual leaders as part of their extended family and to relate to their clergy as part of the family. It is, therefore, especially important that there be a clear understanding of boundary issues and of the challenges inherent in dual relationships, so that the best interests of the congregants remain primary in clergy-congregant interactions.

In close-knit communities, hospitality and gift-giving are timeless values, deeply honored and practiced. While these values should not be abandoned, they should be studied in light of their inappropriate potential.

Touching and personal space boundaries vary from one community to another. Clergy and spiritual leaders need to be sensitive to individual differences and preferences within their congregations.

In Asian and Pacific Islander communities, congregants may look up to their clergy and may have a tendency to place them on a pedestal. They generally address clergy in a formal way, with respect and sometimes reverence. This may be a reflection of how much honor and respect congregants give to their religious leaders, or it may be a reflection of the hierarchical nature of the community.

Culturally competent training can be an invaluable resource in clarifying how values in Asian and Pacific Islander communities may help or hinder the observance of clear boundaries that ultimately facilitate healthy and effective ministry.

## PARTICULAR BOUNDARY ISSUES FOR JEWISH COMMUNITIES

– Rabbi Cindy G. Enger

For Jewish communities, boundary issues are not unlike those faced by any other community. Yet there are some particularities. Jews are a minority population in the United States and throughout the world. While Jewish communities are clustered in metropolitan areas, and often concentrated in particular neighborhoods, Jewish communities also exist in small towns.

Community plays a central role in Judaism. So does the family. For Jewish men and women, dating and marrying a person who is also Jewish is an important value. For rabbis and those seeking to enter the rabbinate, intermarriage (that is, marriage to someone who is not Jewish) is essentially prohibited. Thus, especially for single rabbis living in areas with very small Jewish populations, which are likely to have only one congregation, the question of whether to date a member of the congregation may be a very real issue. On the one hand, the rabbi finds it important and desirable to date a person who is Jewish and involved in the Jewish community. On the other hand, if the person is Jewish and involved in the community, he/she is, in all likelihood, also a congregant. Thus, for a single rabbi who is interested in finding an intimate partner, choosing to live in a community with a small Jewish population raises important boundary concerns, such as those raised in the DVD series, *A Sacred Trust*.

These training and study materials refer to hugging and touch boundaries. For Orthodox Jewish communities, such boundaries are guided by religious principles and practices of modesty, which frequently include the prohibition of any touching or private meetings between men and women (other than that which involves married partners). Therefore, the discussion of touch boundaries needs to be understood within this context for Orthodox communities.



## PARTICULAR BOUNDARY ISSUES FOR LATINA AND LATINO COMMUNITIES

– *Rev. Luis A. Carriere*

Historically, Latina and Latino clergy have been conferred a great deal of authority, responsibility, and freedom over their congregants by their respective denominations, cultures, and nations. Traditionally, this has been conducive to long-term religious and cultural stability, health, and growth as clergy strive to provide in-depth care for the needs of their charges. The role of the Latina and Latino clergy is inadvertently magnified when the worshiping community experiences fluid patterns of migration, or when the community exists as a “culture within a culture,” that is, a minority group coexisting within a dominant culture.

As a consequence, many Latina and Latino clergy find themselves overwhelmed, overworked, and isolated as they attempt to carry out their ever-growing responsibilities. Many feel that their education and training experiences have not adequately prepared them for the complexities of professional multicultural ministry. In addition, it is not uncommon for many Latino and Latina clergy to have limited and infrequent contact with their clergy peers or denominational leaders.

Frequently, professional roles and boundaries are blurred by socio-cultural dynamics. Hierarchically, the clergy person is an ordained leader with power “above” the parishioner. Conversely, both the clergy person and congregant are “ethnic peers” who share the common struggles, experiences, and needs of many Latinas and Latinos who are trying to negotiate their way through the American landscape.

These factors create a high-risk environment, which is conducive to the abuse of clergy power in general, and clergy sexual misconduct in particular. Specifically, male pastors who are prone to acting out sexually quickly learn the ease with which victimization may take place.

The victimization of the Latina congregant is frequently compounded by the inordinate amount of authority the pastor has, the lack of support from denominational leadership, the lack of knowledge of how the adjudication process works, high risk of stigmatization within her family, church, and culture, and limited supportive resources (for example, counseling, financial, translation services, legal) within and without the Latino community. For some victims, fears around migration status may exacerbate their suffering by the real or perceived threat of deportation, thus, silencing and isolating them further.

Latina and Latino pastors are encouraged to pursue culturally relevant continuing clergy education and support: specifically, in areas that address professional relationships, adequate boundary setting, a clergy code of conduct, and awareness and prevention of clergy sexual misconduct. Clergy persons need to find a culturally relevant supportive system that honors their Latino heritage, native tongue and culture, or nation of origin. Finally, pastors need to become informed as to the devastation victims experience. For the Latina victim, clergy sexual misconduct not only threatens to destroy her sense of self as a woman, person, and child of God, but her very culture and heritage as well.

## PARTICULAR BOUNDARY ISSUES FOR LESBIAN/GAY/BISEXUAL/TRANSGENDERED CLERGY OR SPIRITUAL TEACHERS

– *Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune*

On the one hand, the boundary issues are the same across the board for all of us as spiritual leaders, regardless of our sexual orientation. On the other hand, it's never quite that simple. In other words, the ethical norms and expectations are no different. And yet, the context in which a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (LGBT) spiritual leader functions is different. This increases the degree of complexity in addressing boundary issues.

Some may argue that the socio-sexual cultures for LGBT folks (which are certainly diverse within and among these groups) mean that boundary issues or professional ethical issues are different than for heterosexuals. Not so. Sexual attitudes or practices within one's peer group may or may not differ significantly from attitudes or practices of heterosexuals. But in order to insure the well-being of clients, congregants, students, or staff, it is critical that emotional, physical, sexual, and financial boundaries be respected in pastoral or teaching relationships. Any person, regardless of sexual orientation, can be harmed by the betrayal of trust by a pastor, rabbi, priest, or teacher.

For LGBT clergy serving predominantly LGBT congregations, the issues are not unlike those for any other "minority" community or a rural community. It's the problem of the "small town." Dual relationships are common, particularly if one tries to patronize community businesses. Social or dating relationships can also be complicated. There may not be other congregations in the community that are open and affirming, but dating within one's congregation carries all the usual risks and thus is not recommended.

In addition, LGBT congregants may expect a degree of emotional intimacy with their spiritual leader and the congregation because of the need to create an alternative experience of "family," especially if an individual is estranged from her/his family and/or dealing with issues related to those losses. Again the possibilities of the impact of dual relationships, favoritism, petty jealousies, etc., present a challenge to the LGBT spiritual leader.

All spiritual leaders face the complex challenges of building community, participating in that community, and still maintaining a clear sense of role and leadership responsibility. Remembering to consider the following three questions when faced with the possibility of increased intimacy or boundary-crossing can help us stay grounded: 1) How would my behavior impact the other person (and his/her family)? 2) How would my behavior impact the congregation as a whole? 3) How would my behavior impact the viability of our mission as a congregation? In other words, in our public leadership role, we must always consider the effects of our actions on the larger project. Our behavior is never just about us as individuals. This is why we need friends, family, and relationships outside of that public setting (where we are playing a public role) to ground us and meet our personal needs.

For the LGBT spiritual leader who is "closeted," that is, not public about his/her sexual orientation or gender identity, issues of self-care and health are exacerbated. If one's professional standing as clergy

or spiritual teacher is possibly jeopardized by being out of the closet, how does one sustain healthy social relationships and sense of self? It is possible but not easy. Whether able to be “out” or not, the oppression of homophobia and heterosexism impacts anyone who is LGBT every day. This fact does not suggest that LGBT spiritual leaders be afforded special ethics. Rather it simply heightens the need for having solid support systems in place to help manage the complexities. For the LGBT spiritual leader who is comfortably “out” and supported by her/his religious community, issues of self-disclosure and good boundaries still apply. This is a problem for every clergy or spiritual leader. It’s just a variation on the theme for LGBT folks. For example, it may be important for a religious leader to share his/her coming-out story with congregants in order to build trust. Sexuality issues brought by a congregant in pastoral care need to be addressed openly and honestly without sexualizing the conversation to meet our own needs. This is particularly challenging with young people. They need a safe place to explore their sexual feelings, questions, and confusion, trusting that the adult clergy or spiritual leader will not take advantage of their vulnerability and cross sexual boundaries. In other words, we need to create non-sexualized settings in which sexual issues can be discussed.

We also must consider the context of social meanings and the overlay of cultural particularity, especially in regard to touch boundaries. Do we deal with affection differently based on the sexual orientation of the congregant or student? What about an individual whose cultural background is more affectionate or less affectionate than our own? How can we be aware of avoiding misunderstanding at the same time that we don’t let homophobia set the agenda? These are the challenges all clergy and spiritual teachers face in our work. Generally speaking, it is wise to be more reserved than not—regardless of orientation or gender—yet, as much as possible, accommodating to the congregant’s or student’s comfort zone. At the same time we need to stay within our own comfort zone. The clergy or spiritual teacher has his/her own boundaries to deal with in terms of the affection or come-ons of congregants or students. A single person should not be regarded as “available” to the congregation or as in need of “match making” by well-meaning congregants. Privacy in one’s social life is a legitimate expectation.

The keys to healthy boundaries are awareness and intention. We should never rationalize that “this time is different” or that “we are different” and the rules don’t apply. Being aware of the risks involved in any dual relationship means that we can successfully manage boundaries in ways that meet the needs of the person who asks for our help without taking advantage of his/her vulnerabilities. Our awareness and our intentions to respect boundaries can both be supported by consultation with trusted colleagues who can help us see our blind spots and potential for self-deceit. Such individuals and groups can help us remain accountable as we navigate the often confusing waters of ministry and teaching.

## SACRED TRUST: A VITAL CONCERN FOR LAY LEADERS

– *Rev. David Parachini*

The material contained in this training program is designed primarily for clergy leaders in faith communities of various traditions. However, the understanding and observance of appropriate boundaries by all those called to leadership, lay as well as ordained, is critical to assuring that programs, ministries, and those who offer them are safe. Lay leaders need to understand these issues as part of their responsibility to assure that their fiduciary responsibilities for the safety of ministries are met. Boundary violations represent one of the most significant betrayals of trust that can occur in the offering of ministry of any kind. As such, great care must be taken to insure that all those who offer ministry in the name of the congregation understand and observe appropriate boundaries.

As a lay leader, you need to understand these issues, not only to make your own ministry safe, but equally importantly, to be able to assist ordained leaders in being accountable for their own self-care and boundary maintenance. Clergy are often so focused on the ministry demands placed on them that they overlook their own needs for self-care and avoid being in supervisory or accountability relationships. This can lead to disastrous consequences in terms of boundary maintenance and/or violation. Lay leaders are in a very good position to assist clergy in attending to self-care and accountability issues, especially if this is done in a positive and supportive way as part of a mutual ministry review or performance evaluation.

Finally, it is imperative that, as a lay leader, you understand the dynamics of power and vulnerability in the giving and receiving of ministry. The covenant of trust, which is an essential part of the effectiveness of all ministry, depends for its effectiveness on the maintenance of clearly understood boundaries and standards of ministerial behavior for all those, lay as well as ordained, who are called to serve in the name of their faith community.

Please consider how this material can be used with all of those in your faith community who share in ministerial and leadership responsibilities. Boundaries are not just a clergy issue. They affect all of those in leadership and can dramatically impact the ministries to those who come seeking solace and support, especially in times of crisis.



## “THIS IS NOT ABOUT YOU”

– Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune

**ABSTRACT.** Often these days, reflections on the nature of ministry begin with a critique of the dysfunction or failure of an individual ministry or of an institution which has all too often resulted in abuse or harm to someone else. This article was originally delivered as a Commencement Address on May 29, 1998, at Bangor Theological Seminary in Bangor, Maine. In it, the author addresses those persons going into ministry and suggests a framework for healthy ministry with a clear sense of self and boundaries which serve to enhance a ministerial vocation. As such, it provides a positive opportunity to reflect on the doing of ministry with an emphasis on preventing the violation of boundaries and avoiding doing harm.

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Graduating from seminary is sort of like being called up from the minor leagues to the majors. You spend a lot of time and energy preparing and suddenly you find yourself standing at home plate in Yankee Stadium with a bat in your hand and somebody is throwing a 98 mph fast ball at you. It can be exhilarating, but it is also terrifying.

A seminary education usually involves spending at least three years preparing to enter or to extend the vocation of ministry. This formal education is necessary but insufficient to prepare you for your vocation. Its purpose finally is to teach you how to think critically and how to integrate your head and your heart in making yourself available to others through ministry. Your exegesis of Romans Chapter 2, your brilliant paper on Niebhur, Harrison and Post-modernism, your grade A sermon on the Transfiguration are only means to an end; that end being preaching the Good News and empowering your people on their spiritual journeys in their real lives.

So when you are called upon to explain to an 8-year-old child why her mother is dying of cancer; when you are asked to accompany a battered woman to court to finalize her divorce and escape her batterer; or when you are blessed to be present with the 80-year-old man who is passing into death with dignity and at peace, I doubt that the brilliant lecture you heard in New Testament will leap to your consciousness. Yet these years of study and living will have helped prepare you for your ministry.

Over a hundred years ago, Frances Willard wrote a book titled *How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*.<sup>2</sup> Frances Willard was a 19<sup>th</sup> century feminist and vegetarian reformer who lived with her companion, Anna Gordon, for twenty years, and who founded the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Now before you dismiss the importance of her organizing and reform work out of hand, I would remind you that the WCTU was originally founded by women out of their concern that their husbands would get drunk on Saturday night, come home and beat them and their children. Their reasoning was that the alcohol was the problem and if they could limit its availability, their husbands would not beat them. Their analysis, it turns out, was off the mark. But their efforts to organize a social movement to deal with a social problem like domestic violence were right on. The WCTU became

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<sup>2</sup> Frances E. Willard, *How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle* (Sunnyvale, California: Fair Oaks Publishing, 1991).

the largest national women's organization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Willard came to her political and social reform efforts from a Christian family life. Her agenda was broad; it included economic reform, prison reform, kindergarten for children, day care, and support of abused children.

In 1893, at the age of 53 and not in good health, her doctor recommended exercise out-of-doors, and a friend gave her a bicycle. Although women didn't ride bicycles in those days owing to the fact that they had to wear long skirts and that doctors recommended against it, Willard would not be denied. She was determined to learn to ride. It was a daunting adventure. I commend her book to you, especially those of you who are looking at a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> career.

Willard wrote: *"That which caused the many failures I had in learning the bicycle had caused me failures in life; namely, a certain fearful looking for of judgment; a too vivid realization of the uncertainty of everything about me; an underlying doubt-at once, however . . . matched and overcome by the determination not to give in to it."*<sup>3</sup> That about sums it up for me. Especially in the beginning of my ministry, I was certainly afraid of judgment because I was trying to do work that had not yet been tried; and there was plenty of judgment to go around. Still is. And plenty of uncertainty because no one really wanted what I was selling. So the doubt of myself and my mission were very real. But as Willard says, "matched and overcome by the determination not to give in to it." I hope that you bring this determination to your ministry.

I rarely have the opportunity to reflect on what healthy ministry looks like. I spend most of my time cleaning up messes that unhealthy ministry has created. So I want to reflect with you today on the nature of ministry—in its many forms and locations—in the parish, in the hospital or military, in a domestic violence shelter, on the street, or in the academy. And so I have titled my reflections: "This Is Not About You."

Of course it *is* about you. Ministry is about who you are and what you bring in service to others. It is about your gifts, skills, and experiences—the unique contribution that you can make. But hear my word of caution: "This Is Not About You."

- If you are going into ministry assuming that you have the answers, you don't.
- If you are going into ministry to work out your issues or your salvation, don't.
- If you are going into ministry to satisfy your ego, to find people who will adore you and follow you wherever you lead, don't.
- If you are going into ministry expecting to do your own thing, don't.
- If you are going into ministry looking for a romantic partner, look elsewhere.

Here is the paradox:

- You do have some answers. Don't hesitate to share them. One of my clergy mentors in her 80s, when I asked how she would describe ministry replied: "I just tell them what I know." Don't hesitate to tell them what you *know*; use your authority to bring release to the captives and sight to the blind. When I visited a battered woman in a shelter, she needed someone who represented the church to say, "This is not what the Bible means. This is not God's will for you to be in an abusive relationship. You don't have to stay there."

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 28.

- You will learn about yourself and, God willing, you will work on your salvation. These are the perks of the job, however, not its purpose.
- You will find people who adore you and will follow you anywhere. Don't let them. It's not good for them or for you.
- You may have a sense of your call that takes you outside the lines of traditional ministry. I certainly did. But you need to be in relationships of accountability with your church and your colleagues. We don't need lone rangers. Find the team players who can support and challenge you in your particular ministry.
- And you certainly deserve to find a loving partner with whom you can share your life. Just don't expect your congregants, students, etc., to fill that role.

This is the paradox: Your ministry is not about you—and it is all about you.

People trust us. They think we know what we are talking about! This is probably the scariest part of ministry. This is why we should always speak with some degree of fear and trembling. Somebody might just be listening!

We are invited into the intimacy of others' lives: birth, death, and everything in between. We are there with them, yet it is not our experience. We have the opportunity to play a role in their lives that makes all the difference. An old retired priest once said to me, "I do what I can and then I hurry along." And this is an enormously satisfying experience for us. To be able to bring a word, a gesture, an idea that is healing, empowering, transforming, compassionate. But it is not our experience still. "I do what I can and then I hurry along." It seems that this was Jesus' ministry also. Ministry is by definition itinerant—and not just for the United Methodists. Now this doesn't mean that we don't plant ourselves somewhere, make a commitment to a group of people, hang in there through the good times and bad. And it doesn't mean that we don't benefit enormously from these relationships—even though they are transient. I simply mean that we must stay clear: this is not about us.

If we forget who we are and why we are there, we can cause enormous harm. If we seek to meet our own personal needs in ministry, we can cause enormous harm. This is not about you.

Here's the other side of this caution. When your folks start to act crazy with you, don't take it personally. This also is not about you! Remember that you represent a lot of things to people—some of them flattering, some not so flattering. Their past experiences with clergy, with men/women. Whatever. Their interactions with you are not necessarily about you!

Now all of this may get confusing and you may begin to feel frustrated and powerless at times. In her novel, *Robber Bride*, Margaret Atwood describes the experience of a character who is a college professor:

She unlocks her office door, then locks it behind her to disguise the fact that she's in there. It's not her office hours but the students take advantage. They can smell her out, like sniffer dogs; they'll seize any opportunity to suck up to her or whine, or attempt to impress her, or foist upon her their versions of sulky defiance. *I'm just a human being*, [she] wants to say to them. But of course she isn't. She's a human being with power. There isn't much of it, but it's power all the same.<sup>4</sup>

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4 Margaret Atwood, *The Robber Bride* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993) 24.



I find in listening to women and men in ministry talk about power, both seek to deny the power they have. Men say they don't "feel" powerful, which means they don't feel in control. Women say they don't want power because power is a bad thing. Both are being unrealistic. We all have power primarily by virtue of our roles. Most of you will complete your degrees in seminary in order to complete your credentials for ministry, ordained or otherwise. These credentials give you access to institutions, communities, and people's lives. Whether you like it or not, believe in it or not. You have power and authority because of these credentials. What you do with this resource is your choice.

When I was in seminary, I studied with Henry Nouwen. This was about the time that Henry was teaching about the "wounded healer." He helped us understand that it is not our perfection that we bring to ministry but our brokenness. It was an important contribution to our understanding of ministry. But today we must go further. We must realize that woundedness doth not a healer make. Woundedness (and there is plenty to go around) does not in and of itself make an effective minister. An effective ministry requires some healing of our wounds.

In other words, VICTIM ≠ HEALER. Rather, SURIVOR = HEALER. Judith Herman describes this point in the healing process in her excellent book, *Trauma and Recovery*.

It means belonging to a society, having a public role, being part of that which is universal. It means having a feeling of familiarity, of being known, of communion. It means taking part in the customary, the commonplace, the ordinary, and the everyday. It also carries with it a feeling of smallness, of insignificance, a sense that one's own troubles are 'as a drop of rain in the sea.' The survivor who has achieved commonality with others can rest from her labors. Her recovery is accomplished; all that remains before her is her life.<sup>5</sup>

She is describing the process of integration—bringing experience and learning gained through healing to our efforts to be a healer for others.

So what does it take to have a healthy ministry? I hesitate to try to prescribe, and I do not pretend to be definitive here. But I will offer some of the things I have learned as I have navigated ministry over the years.

1. *Get a life.* If you have one already, protect it. If you don't, get one. In other words, have a life in addition to your ministry: physically, emotionally, intellectually; family and friends who are not part of your ministry setting; a hobby; exercise; days off; a vacation. I walk my dog twice a day. I get a massage every week. I go to baseball games and women's basketball games. Most of my friends are unrelated to the church. I work in my yard and spend real time with my family. Have a life in addition to ministry.
2. *Find colleagues for study and support.* And meet with them regularly. It is very easy to get isolated in ministry. Don't wait for someone else to do this for you. Find those people with whom you can consult and take your questions and struggles there. Make sure that you include some people you can count on to challenge you as well as support you.
3. When I went away to college, my mother said to me: "*Remember who you are and what you represent.*" In order to *remember* who we are, we must *know* who we are. Take the time to reflect on who you are: what is your social location and what does it mean? I hope your time in seminary is helping you do this. If because of your accident of birth you have privilege and

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<sup>5</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992) 236.

access to resources, how do you use these resources to empower others and challenge injustice? What is your personal and familial history? If you recall being abused as a child or growing up in a dysfunctional family, how have you worked on those wounds to find healing for yourself? What are the stresses in your life now, and how do you manage them so that they don't put you at risk to do harm to someone else?

"Remember who you are and what you represent." At this time in history, some of us do represent particular realities and communities. Whether as people of color or women, as gays and lesbians or persons with disabilities, whether we like it or not, we do represent our particular communities. And we have the potential to bring leadership where it is sorely needed.

"Remember who you are and what you represent." And remember who your people are. Who are those who have gone before you, who have carried you, taught you, guided you, cried with you, laughed with you. These are the people that Paul is lifting up in 2 Timothy: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now, I am sure, lives in you."<sup>6</sup> They are the cloud of witnesses who go before us. Name them for yourself. "Remember who you are and what you represent."

4. *Discover the joy of boundaries.* When we have "the boundary discussion," I always worry about the heavy negative connotation that some people feel towards boundaries in relationships. I find that boundaries are a great gift, both personally and professionally. I am not talking about building walls. Rather about boundaries that give shape to relationships and help to build trust; they are built on respect for the other person. So when you consider pushing the boundaries in relation to a congregant or client, I encourage you to consider three things:
  1. What is the likely impact on or potential harm to the individual congregant? How will he/she be affected by relaxing these boundaries, by increasing the mutual intimacy of our relationship? Are you attempting to meet your needs at his/her expense? What about her/his family? And what about yours?
  2. What is the likely impact on or potential harm to the congregation itself? How will others react? Will this appear to be some kind of favoritism? Will it stimulate jealousy or dissension? Will others expect the same degree of mutual intimacy with you?
  3. What is the likely impact on or potential harm to the mission of the church? Will your actions undermine the common mission you share? Will others be distracted from their ministries by your actions?

We must consider each of these questions because our choices and actions regarding ministerial boundaries affect much more than just ourselves and the other person involved. If our mission as a faith community is to sustain ourselves so that we might be able to carry our efforts forth to make justice and bring healing, if we believe that our faith communities should embody the values of justice, protection of the vulnerable and shared power, and if we affirm the need for persons called forth from among us to sustain, teach and lead, then we need leaders committed to clear boundaries and a willingness to be accountable for their actions. Good boundaries make effective ministry possible; effective ministry sustains the faith community and carries forth its message and witness.

5. *'Let go, but stand by.'* More wisdom from Frances Willard, reflecting in middle age on her experience of learning to ride a bicycle. " 'Let go, but stand by'—this is the golden rule for parent and pastor, teacher and friend; the only rule that at once respects the individuality of another and yet adds one's

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6 2 Tim. 1:5 NRSV.

*own, so far as may be, to another's momentum in the struggle of life.*"<sup>7</sup> Picture this 53-year-old woman in a long skirt sitting on a bicycle, and picture her teacher/supporter with a soft hand at the back of her bicycle seat, giving balance and a little push. "Let go, but stand by."

6. *Lighten up. Don't take yourself so seriously.* After all, this is not about you. This is about God's work. We may plant the seeds, water the garden, and even harvest on occasion. We may bring the yeast and the salt; we may pass along the light; we may even taste the bread and the cup on occasion. But we are contributing to a foundation for a future which we will not see. God is at work in ways we may never comprehend.
7. *Take yourselves very seriously.* Ministry is a privilege and a public trust. What we do matters a great deal because people should be able to trust us. As the writer of Hebrews reminds us, "One does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron [and Miriam were]."<sup>8</sup> If you are called by God and by the community of faith, you are fortunate to bear the yoke that Jesus promises is easy to bear.
8. *Finally, pray always and do not lose heart.* This is Jesus' teaching in chapter 18 of Luke's Gospel, which he illustrates with the parable about the persistent widow who goes back time and again to the unjust judge to seek vindication. To pray always and not lose heart doesn't mean that we should spend all our time on our knees with our hands neatly folded. Rather that we should persist in our communication with God—asking for what we need and being thankful for what we have.

I hope these suggestions can help bring balance, self-discipline, and satisfaction in your ministry. I offer all of this in a context of challenge and possibility. As you pursue your vocation at this moment in history, you will encounter:

- The fruits of postmodernism and cynicism eating away at our collective soul;
- Political apathy in the midst of economic good times for some, despair for others;
- A resurgence of hate crimes and the isms which fuel the hatred;
- Violence still targeting those most vulnerable among us;
- Turmoil and confusion in our churches still struggling with sexuality and missing opportunities for ministry;
- A leadership vacuum desperate for strong, grounded, faithful leaders;
- And a longing among our people for spiritual and ethical guidance.

So be sustained by Paul's words to Timothy: "For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline."<sup>9</sup> And be assured by the Prophet Jeremiah: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for there is a reward for your work . . . there is hope for your future . . . your children shall come back to their own country."<sup>10</sup> We need your leadership. We need your energy. We need your courage. We need your creativity. We need you in the big leagues.

My prayer for you is that the spirit of God living within and among us will instruct you, will inspire you, will carry you, and will richly bless your ministry among us.

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<sup>7</sup> Willard, *How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*, 61.

<sup>8</sup> Heb. 5:4 NRSV.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Tim. 1:7 NRSV.

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