

A Sacred Trust

Healthy Boundaries

A Course for Clergy and Spiritual Teachers

PRE-READING WORKBOOK

Work Prior to Workshop:

1. Choose a Bible verse/s/story that describes your understanding of your call.
 - a. Why did you choose that verse?
 - b. How would you describe your call in a few sentences?
2. Read the articles in this packet from Faith Trust Institute
 - a. briefly reflect on what resonated with you.
 - b. what disturbed you?
 - c. what do you have more questions about?
3. Visit, [A Sacred Trust: Healthy Boundaries for Clergy](#)
 - a. View Part 2 [Dating, Friendships, Dual Relationships, Gifts]
 - b. View Part 3 [The Pulpit Transference, Hugging & Touch, Intimacy]
 - c. Briefly reflect on what resonated with you.
 - d. what disturbed you?
 - e. what do you have more questions about?
4. Read the social statement draft: [Civic Life and Faith](#).

Links to all information, documents, and videos are available at

www.css-elca.org/boundary

SOCIAL NETWORKING AND HEALTHY BOUNDARIES IN MINISTRY: ASKING CRITICAL QUESTIONS

– M.L. Daniel and Marie M. Fortune

There is a sacred trust between spiritual leaders and those who have entrusted their spiritual well being to them. It is a trust that is governed by an appreciation for maintaining appropriate and healthy boundaries that clearly define each party's role. In traditional brick and mortar spiritual arenas, the challenges and benefits of boundaries, at best, can be described as complex. However, in our 21st century world where technology allows for connection 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the complexity of boundary considerations have multiplied exponentially. No matter where you are or turn, people are posting, texting, Tweeting, Facebooking, YouTubing, checking email, or consulting their calendar on their smart phones. In today's society, vast resources of information and social networks are virtually at our fingertips every moment of the day. What it means to be community, in communication or connected to one another is being redefined daily in the fast paced world of virtual reality, as more and more people are embracing the latest technology both in and out of faith communities. It is common for faith communities of all sizes and spiritual leaders of every background to establish a presence in the virtual world. As such, the challenges and benefits of establishing and maintaining healthy and appropriate boundaries in this new frontier pose some critical questions for spiritual leaders and communities venturing into this arena.

Social networking is not new. Not so long ago, social networking implied face to face encounters that created and sustained community. People of faith gathered in public settings, in homes, mosques, churches and synagogues to worship and study together. However, the internet has taken social networking to a whole new level. There are social networks that cater exclusively to faith communities such as Tangle.com, Mychurch.org, and Tuggle.it, and those that target a wider mainstream audience such as Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace. What all of them have in common are memberships that increase every day. On Facebook alone, there are 900 million users, half of which log in on any given day. Additionally, a majority of individuals using social networking are 35 years old and under – the same demographic that is disappearing in most mainstream denominations.

The extensive reach of these social networks is attractive and has enticed many faith communities and spiritual leaders to establish a virtual presence as a ministerial resource. For many, the social networks and the World Wide Web are exciting new tools for ministry. While these tools offer access to fertile grounds and present exciting opportunities for ministry, they are equally fertile grounds for ethical and boundary violations, both intentional and unintentional, by spiritual leaders and by those with whom they share the space. Like most tools, they are in and of themselves neutral and as such, have the potential for good or harm. As such, spiritual leaders ought to enter this new arena having asked critical questions in order to use these tools wisely and preserve their sacred trust.

Certainly, the greatest benefit represented by the internet and social networking is quick and easy communications. The mundane organizing and networking within faith communities can be much more easily accomplished through a congregation's website and email. The second greatest benefit is the potential for "marketing", i.e. letting people know who we are, what we are doing, and how it might interest them. But there are also landmines at every turn that we need to consider.

In the policies and procedures of some faith communities active in the virtual world, it is evident that they have given this issue some consideration, for which they are to be commended. Yet there still remains work to be done, and questions to be asked if ministry in cyberspace is to be done responsibly.

There are some basic questions and considerations for all faith communities and their leadership who are either considering establishing a virtual identity or presence or those who already have. Looking first to organizational considerations:

- Does the faith community have an internet use policy or procedure that addresses employee and leadership engagement in social networks?
 - If so, does it speak to professional and private/individual communications, disclaimers and the organization's expectations?
- Are the organization's rules on public speech and private speech clear?
- Have employment issues been considered in relationship to supervisor or leadership "friending," "unfriending" or seeking access to subordinates within social networks?
- Can the information gained by an organization or supervisor via a social network be used to make employment decisions such as hiring, firing, promotions and demotions?
- Are there employment factors to consider and what is the liability exposure for the organization for the actions, statements, or oversight of its leadership that is engaged in social networks on the internet?
- Does the organization's policy and procedure set up a checks and balances for how oversight will be conducted?
- How does the policy deal with supervision of the leadership that is responsible for vulnerable populations?
- Are there safeguards in place to identify predatory leaders who may have unfettered access to not only your population, but to their social networks by virtue of their position and the organization's virtual presence?

Considering just the issues surrounding leadership and vulnerable populations, the bottom line should be transparency. This operating principle rests in the reality that there is no privacy or confidentiality on the internet and that whatever is posted on social networking sites is there forever. With these things in mind, here are some practical applications that faith communities can consider that would be helpful.

1. Social networking pages should be regularly monitored by senior leadership. Senior leadership charged with supervising the site should be looking not only at how the site is being utilized and posted on, but at how the leadership assigned to minister to this population is responding to the posts, interacting with the community, managing the site, and utilizing the internet, and where appropriate, offering training or corrective action. The objective of such is the fostering of accountable and responsible leadership and healthy communities.
2. Every friend request accepted should be accompanied by an electronic copy of the organization's code of conduct that expressly states the expectations for posting, a covenant of understanding, and a clear explanation of how violations, offensive and objectionable material will be addressed. With respect to site participants, the site moderator should have sole discretion to determine what material is objectionable or

offensive and when a violation has taken place. Also, it should be explicitly stated that any and all posts are public information and that there are no expectations of privacy or confidentiality of any party utilizing this method of communication. Further, that no information posted on the site may be used without the written permission of the author.

3. The organization should adopt a policy of screening anyone outside the target demographic that is unknown to the organization before allowing them access to the site. Equally prudent is policy for persons in leadership to only accept friend requests and to prohibit solicitation of them. Additionally, if parents or guardians of the target population are welcomed at in-person meetings or gatherings, the same should be true with regards to any virtual meeting place; this assists in creating a transparent atmosphere. When working with vulnerable populations in an arena that is changing daily, accountability, responsibility, and transparency are foundational.

These limited considerations are in no way exhaustive, but they are the introduction to the more difficult conversation organizations should be having around social networks and establishing healthy boundaries.

Just as faith communities should be taking on the challenge of addressing boundary issues, so should each individual spiritual leader engage in her own self assessment. Here are some points to ponder:

- The very nature and design of social networks tend to contribute to the line being blurred between the personal and the professional. As such, it begs the question: Does the establishment of a public page and a private page solve this dilemma?
- What challenges arise from mixing public and private time, or public and private space?
- What are the implications of doing so when some members/students/followers are friended or granted access to your private page while others are excluded?
- How about when one spouse or partner is friended and not the other?
- Regardless of the character of the virtual identity, how do you manage content on your site, both your own content and the content that others post on your site, and its dissemination?
- Do you engage in political speech on your page and if so, are there guidelines?
- How might your awareness of congregants' private lives through social networking be detrimental to your ability to serve effectively as a spiritual leader? Conversely, what happens to your ability to lead when the protective boundary between the leadership and followers has been effectively removed?
- What can you share and what pushes or violates appropriate boundaries, and how will you know when it happens?
- Is there anything about your engagement that could lead another to believe her/his communications to be confidential in nature?
- Are there legal implications for your community that can flow from what you do and say in the virtual world?
- Does your presence in the virtual world alter the realistic expectations of your community about your availability and or responsibility to the community?
- How do you handle former congregants when you are no longer their minister but they are part of your friend community?
- How much of your time is spent using technology and what might be sacrificed because of it?

Spiritual leaders will benefit from exploring these questions and considerations, especially in the context of boundary training. Today's technology offers the temptation of virtual community and virtual intimacy. Critical questions remind us of the limitations of both.

Regardless of whether you choose to engage or not engage in social networking, an informed decision requires fully entertaining all of the critical issues. Social networks and the internet may very well be the tools for outreach and organizing today; however, faith communities and spiritual leaders have an obligation to engage this new frontier carefully and responsibly, so as to maintain the integrity of ministerial relationships and protect the sacred trust inherent in ministry.

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AN OPEN LETTER TO SPIRITUAL TEACHERS

– Scott Edelstein

To many of us students, your role as a spiritual teacher looks glamorous and exciting – not unlike being a movie star. Some of us, though, realize that your role can sometimes be difficult, painful, frustrating, confusing, tedious, thankless, and lonely.

But whether we're accurate or deluded about your life, all of us want and expect the best from you.

We also want you to encourage the best from us – though you won't always get it. Sometimes we'll project all kinds of things onto you – our hopes, dreams, fears, expectations, and fantasies. It's your job to not buy into any of our projections -and not to do any projecting of your own.

Your role requires you to always act in our best interests. Sometimes this means disappointing or upsetting some of us. Sometimes it means doing the opposite of what we may want, or expect, or ask for. Sometimes it means holding your emotions and actions in check. We need you to take a deep breath and do what's right.

Over and over, breath by breath, we need you to return to your commitment to serve. If what you're about to do isn't in a student's best interest, don't do it. If you're already doing it, remember your commitment, stop what you're doing and help keep everyone safe.

To help us not lost our own way, we need you to admit your limitations – publicly, straightforwardly, and often. You will help us the most if you frame each admission not as a confession, but as guidance for what we can and can't (or shouldn't) expect of you. Each admission will also serve as a model for us to follow.

When you don't know something and say "I don't know," this increases, rather than reduces, our trust in you and in your ability to have a positive effect on our lives.

You are an alpha figure – and perhaps the only alpha figure – in our spiritual community. We trust you and depend on you to be honest with us, to guide us, to provide safety (but not comfort), and to consistently put our interests before your own.

Yes, some of us want to have sex with you. A few of us may try to seduce you; others may offer themselves to you. Still others may flirt with you or try to envelop you in sexual energy. Some of us are very aware of our sexual power, and very skillful at using it. Some of us will be enormously aroused by your very ability to rebuff our attempted seductions. Some of us will be turned on by your clothes, your mannerisms, your resemblance to our parents, and other things that have nothing to do with you.

If you are single, some of us will find your availability a huge turn-on, even though we know you're not available to us. If you are celibate or have a partner, some of us will be turned on by your status as forbidden fruit.

A few of us may try to seduce you as a test. In these cases, we see you as a surrogate parent: we trust you deeply, but need to make sure that our trust is deserved. We may try hard to get you to violate that trust, yet what we actually want is for you to keep the sexual boundary in place.

A few of us seek high drama, and will go for the thrill of becoming (or declaring ourselves to be) your victims, no matter what you do or don't do.

When all of this starts to drive you half crazy, we still expect you to love and support us.

You can't stop some of us from doing these things – but you can help us (and yourself) stay safe. You can set clear boundaries, and you can anticipate and avoid potentially dodgy encounters. You may even need to avoid socializing with us outside of large community gatherings such as picnics, fundraising events, and potluck suppers.

As you get older and better known, these temptations and difficulties will probably grow. As a result, over time you will need to make your boundaries continually stronger and clearer.

You cannot do all this along. No one can. While some of us don't understand this, many of us do. We realize that you can best support us when you ask for the support of our tradition, the wisdom that underlies it, and the people you trust. We also understand that when you turn to your partner, to friends and relatives, to colleagues, to helping professionals, and to your own teacher for this support, you are not turning away from us.

If you have a partner, we need you to love and appreciate them, even though this may make some of us jealous – and even though some of us will project things onto them, just as we do with you.

We want and need you to be in top form. This means we need you to take good care of yourself. Regularly do things that feed and support you – spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Good self-care is far more noble than working yourself sick. It also provides a wholesome and inspiring example for us.

We are always eager to take all you can give, plus much more. So don't expect us to notice when you've reached your limit. You're the one and only person who can keep yourself from becoming depleted. When you pull back, set a boundary, or take a break, we may not like it, but it ultimately helps all of us. So, no matter what we say or ask for, the reality is that we want you to say "no" to us when your health and sanity require you to.

If you lost your way sexually, don't try to keep the truth from us. You will do the least damage if you go public about it immediately. The sooner you do this, the less pain and harm there will be for everyone, and the easier and more quickly you will find your way back to a centered life. And if you're currently in a secret sexual relationship, don't make us wonder and gossip and worry. Tell us what's going on and face the consequences. This helps everyone – especially us, your students and members of your spiritual community.

If, at some point, your role or situation or obligations genuinely become too much to handle, the best thing you can do for us is to say, "I can't do this any longer," and step down. There is nothing shameful – and much that is noble – in this. You will of course disappoint us. But you will disappoint us far more if you pretend to be someone you aren't – or if you try to do the impossible and fail.

We need you to love us. Not sexually, and not in some idealized, storybook way, but as someone whom we can trust to act in our best interests, over and over. Without this love, you cannot serve wisely.

We also need you to love yourself, for the same reason.

“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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<http://www-intra.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=t792306954>

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 Niebhuur, 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*.¹ Frances Willard was a 19th 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

¹ Frances E. Willard, *How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle* (Sunnyvale, California: Fair Oaks Publishing, 1991).

the largest national women's organization in the 19th 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 2nd or 3rd 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."*² 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."

² 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.³

³ 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 \neq 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.⁴

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

⁴ 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."⁵ 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

⁵ 2 Tim. 1:5 NRSV.

own, so far as may be, to another's momentum in the struggle of life."⁶ 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]."⁷ 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."⁸ 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."⁹ 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.

⁶ Willard, *How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*, 61.

⁷ Heb. 5:4 NRSV.

⁸ 2 Tim. 1:7 NRSV.

⁹ Jeremiah 31:16-17 NRSV.

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 worshipping 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.