



Power and Boundaries Workshop

Southeastern Minnesota Synod

"Boundary Basics for Rostered Ministers"

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 are boundaries?

- They empower us to become more self-aware.
- Boundaries let me know who I am versus who you are. Boundaries enable me to keep being me without merging into you.
- 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.
- Boundaries are a way of cultivating the church as a safe space for everyone.
- "What's the life I want to live and what boundaries do I have to set to do that?" - Sara Franti
- Boundaries are not just for rostered ministers; they are for everyone. When we model healthy boundaries, it inspires others to develop this awareness, too.

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.
- They are NOT a burden or an inconvenience.

How can we keep from crossing boundaries inappropriately?

- 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?"
- Understand that boundaries aren't always easy to discern & that there are often no clear guidelines for the perfect response when confronted with an issue.
- Establish a system of accountability. Recognize patterns of isolation and secrecy.

This tool is adapted from pg. 7 of the participant workbook of "Healthy Boundaries for Clergy and Spiritual Teachers" (2008).