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Healthy Boundaries 101 – Fundamentals
Training for Clergy & Faith Leaders

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Welcome!

Hostages

Cynics

Tourists

Explorers

Survivors

All are welcome here . . .

Psalm 119: 10-16

10 With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your commandments.

11 I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin against you.

12 Blessed are you, O Lord;
teach me your statutes.

13 With my lips I declare
all the ordinances of your mouth.

14 I delight in the way of your decrees
as much as in all riches.

15 I will meditate on your precepts
and fix my eyes on your ways.

16 I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

Boundaries are a Gift

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5OJGlaUxow&list=PLTWkWVNslIGzTwE_bwaYmkYmxbYKmUbmY&index=5&pp=iAQB

Boundary Basics

- **What every spiritual leader needs to know about relational boundaries**
 - Help to maintain clear professional relationships
 - Guidelines (usually unwritten) to help us know when and when not to participate in a given activity
 - Help us keep perspective when peoples' problems seem overwhelming
 - Signal to others that it is safe to trust us
 - Protect congregants from an abuse of power

Boundary Basics

- **Boundaries are NOT**
 - Clear rules about where and when we can be friendly
 - Blocks to authenticity and friendliness

Questions: How do we keep from violating boundaries inappropriately?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fCQbQQEIGw&list=PLTWkWVNslIGzTwE_bwaYmkYmxbYKmUbmY&index=6&pp=iAQB

Boundary Basics

- **How can we keep from violating boundaries inappropriately?**
 - Be aware of our needs and find healthy ways of having them met other than by the people we are supposed to be serving
 - Ask ourselves: “Is this in the best interests of the other person or only meet my needs?” “Would I be comfortable if others knew I was doing this?”
 - Establish a system of accountability
 - Understand that boundaries are not always easy to discern and that there are often no clear guidelines for the best action to take

Power: The Heart of the Matter

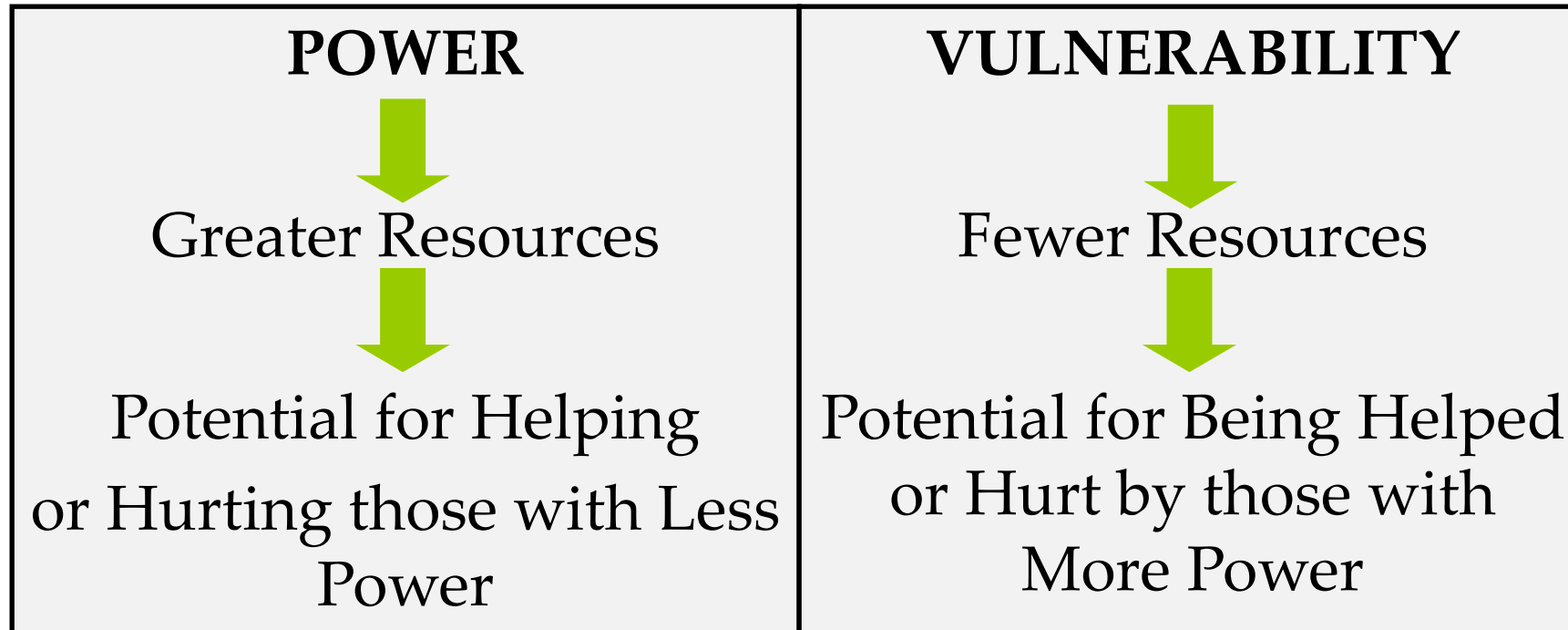
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KcU8OPb9Sr4&list=PLTWkWVNslIGzTwE_bwaYmkYmxbYKmUbmY&index=7&pp=iAQB

Definition

“Ministerial Relationship” applies to anyone in a leadership role:

- Clergy
- Lay Ministers
- Youth Ministers
- Choir Directors
- Sunday School Teachers
- Church Camp Counselors
- Seminary Faculty
- Seminary Administrators
- Spiritual Directors
- Spiritual Teachers
- Etc.

Concepts of Power and Vulnerability



Aspects of Power and Vulnerability

	Aspects of Power	Aspects of Vulnerability
Role	minister; professional	congregant; client
Sexual Identity	heterosexual	lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer
Age	adulthood	youth/old age
Class	upper-class, upper-middle-class	working-class, poor
Citizenship Status	documented	undocumented
Physical Resources	ability, large physical size, physical strength	disability, small size, physical weakness
Race	white	person of color
Gender Identity & Expression	Male; cisgender	Female; non-binary or transgender
Intellectual Resources	educated; information and knowledge, access to information	uneducated; lack of information and knowledge

Ethical Analysis

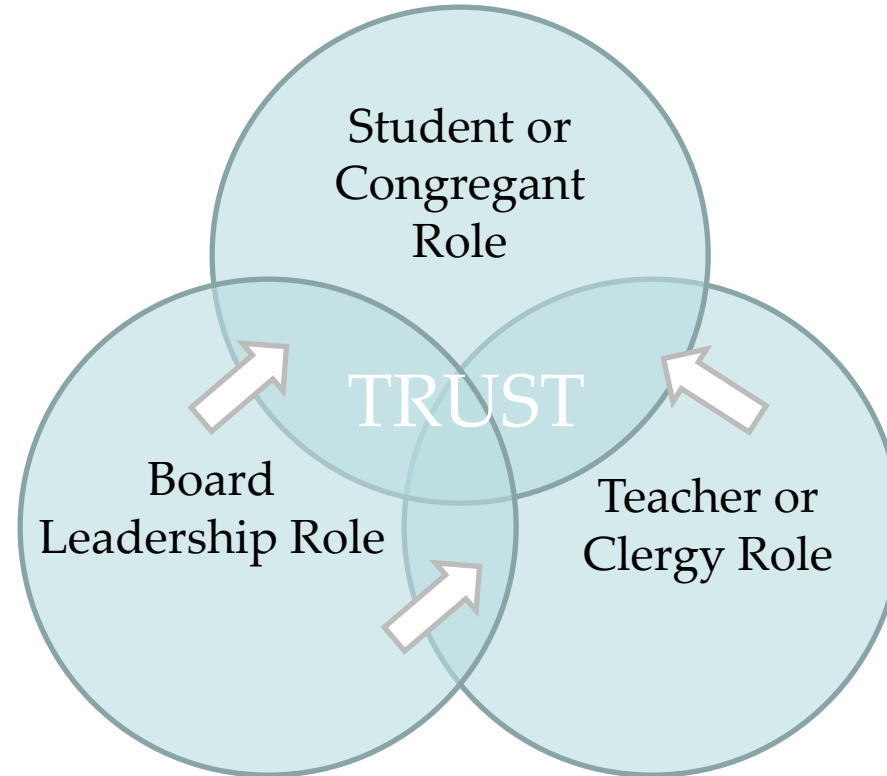
When a minister or other person with power engages in violating boundaries (sexual, financial, or otherwise) with a congregant, client, employee, student, or staff member:

1. It is a violation of role (and a breach of fiduciary responsibility).
2. It is a misuse of authority and power.
3. It is taking advantage of vulnerability.
4. It is an absence of meaningful consent.

1. Violation of Role

- What is a fiduciary duty?
- The duty is owed: to protect, do no harm, and act in the best interest of those served.
- Sexualizing or exploiting the relationship violates the role.

Fiduciary Responsibility



2. Misuse of Power & Authority

- Congregants, students, and staff revere and defer to power and authority.
- They want to please and not disappoint.
- Reverence and deference allows the more powerful person to maintain or violate the boundary.

3. Taking Advantage of Vulnerability

- Clergy and other leaders are invited to be alongside those experiencing challenging life circumstances.
- Difficult life circumstances can compromise clear judgement and decision-making.
- Clergy and other leaders have easy access to people in these vulnerable periods.

4. Absence of Meaningful Consent

There is no meaningful consent when:

- There is an imbalance of power and authority (either explicit or implicit coercion).
- The person is in a period of vulnerability and impaired (or immature) judgement.
- The person is responding to special attention given by a powerful person.

4. Absence of Meaningful Consent

Meaningful consent requires:

- Equality of resources
- Lack of coercion (explicit or implicit)
- Lack of constraints on choice
- Self confidence and maturity to refuse compliance in sexual situations
- Freedom from punishment, rejection or shaming if one says “no”

Test Questions

When I am considering crossing boundaries, what is the likely impact *on* or the potential harm *to*:

- The individual congregant?
- The congregation itself?
- Our shared mission?

Risk

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMfpnC
GAwp8&list=PLTWkWVNslIGzTwE_bwaYm
kYmxbYKmUbmY&index=8&pp=iAQB](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMfpnC
GAwp8&list=PLTWkWVNslIGzTwE_bwaYm
kYmxbYKmUbmY&index=8&pp=iAQB)

Am I at Risk?

Questions to ask ourselves:

- ❖ *Do I ever worry that someone I serve in my role as pastor/CLP isn't able to do without me?*
- ❖ *Do I sometimes take over during a congregant's crisis?*
- ❖ *Do I experience inappropriate excitement from being a confidant?*
- ❖ *Have I ever confided in a congregant about my marriage or other personal information?*
- ❖ *Have I ever called a congregant because I needed to hear their voice?*
- ❖ *Do I ever create situations in which congregants take care of me?*

Activity (10 minutes)

In your small group, do the following:

1. Appoint a recorder
2. Give examples of appropriate boundary crossing behavior in congregational life.
3. Give examples of inappropriate boundary crossing behavior
4. Discuss how each impacts trust within a congregation.



Break
(10 Min)

Dual Relationships

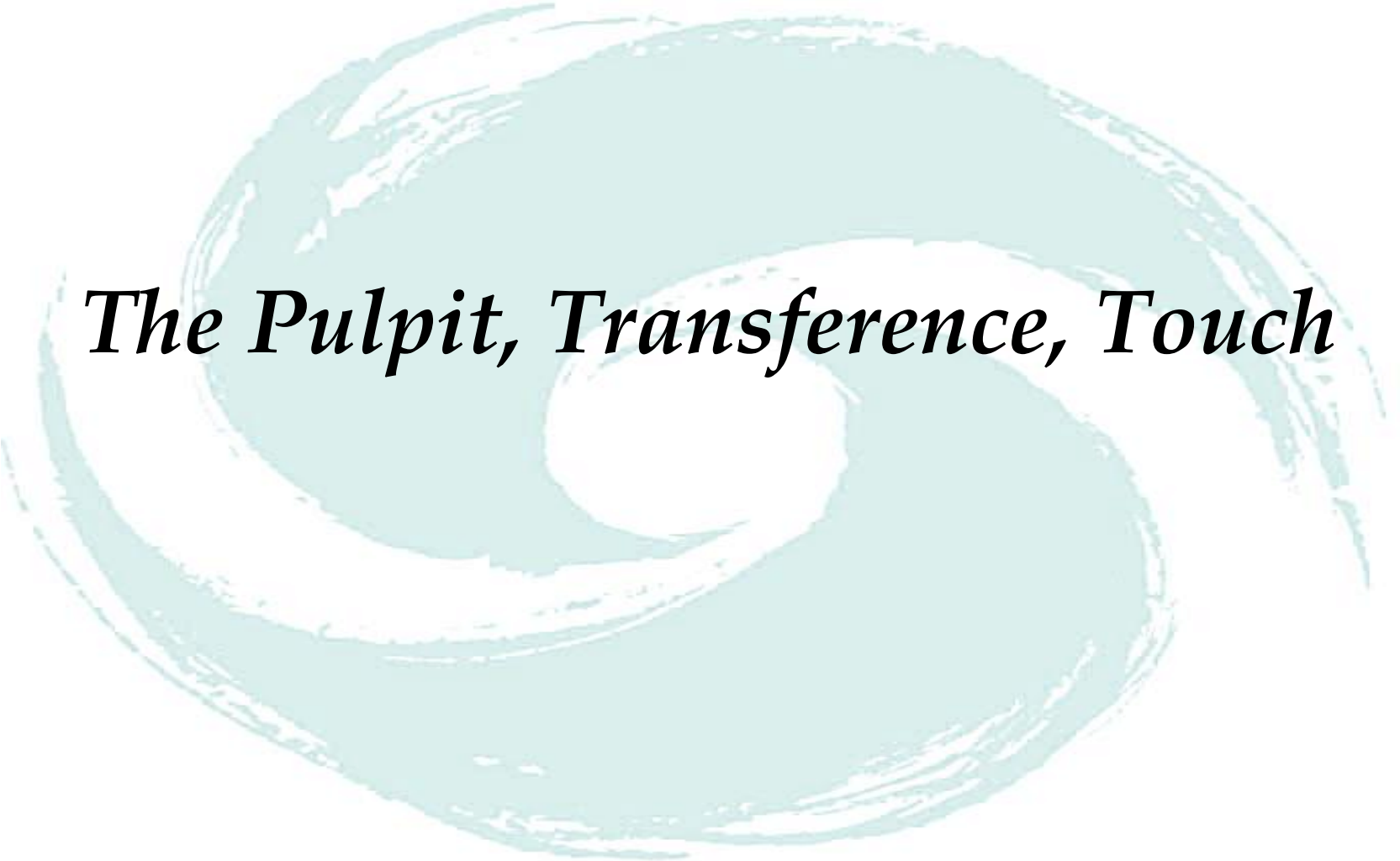
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46TVCbLLztM&list=PLTWkWVNslIGzTwE_bwaYmkYmxbYKmUbmY&index=12&pp=iAQB

Case Studies

- Group 1: You are the sole pastor in a rural area. A member of your congregation has been especially nice to you, dropping by your house about 3 times per week to visit. They regularly bring gifts: flowers, cookies, books, etc. This seemed friendly at first but is beginning to seem like an intrusion. How do you handle it?
- Group 2: You are the pastor of a small congregation. You have 4 children and your salary barely covers your expenses. Your 10 year-old car is in the shop – again. A member of your congregation owns a car dealership and has offered to give you a great price on a 2-year old van. How do you handle this?
- Group 3: You are a 28 year old single pastor. A couple in your congregation with a single son/daughter your age has been very friendly, frequently inviting you over when their son/daughter (also a congregation member) is there. You are attracted to them and would like to ask them out. What should you do?

Helpful Hints

- ❖ Dating – inform and refer
- ❖ Friends – spread your attention
- ❖ Dual Relationships – the M&M Rule
(minimize & manage)
- ❖ Gifts – keep it simple



The Pulpit, Transference, Touch

*The Pulpit, Transference, Touch and
Intimacy*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhYNWnuC1DA&list=PLTWkWVNslIGzTwE_bwaYmkYmxbYKmUbmY&index=3&pp=iAQB

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 is conflict within the congregation, or encouraging a particular political perspective
- ❖ 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. We need to be aware that:

- ❖ A congregant'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;
- ❖ The dynamics of transference make congregants more vulnerable.

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

Hugging & Touch Boundaries

Touch is an important part of the human experience and can be an important part of pastoral care. However, we always 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?

When in doubt (which is likely most of the time 😊) ask!

Understanding Intimacy

Spirituality can be described as the “intimate connection between ourselves and God,” and *sexual activity* as the “intimate connection between ourselves and another person.” Sometimes, these intimacies become confused for both the congregant and the pastor/spiritual leader.

Sexual contact with a congregant is always inappropriate boundary crossing, never ok, and has the potential of doing great harm.

Continuum of Sexual Abuse Perpetrators

Wanderers



Predators



Prevention

- Prevention and healthy boundaries can stop many wanderers, but not predators.
- When prevention fails, intervention is necessary. This is why we have policies and procedures.



Break (10 Minutes)



Social Media & Finances



Benefits & Potential Risks of Our Digital World

Benefits

- Ease of communication; spreading your message
- Access to information/research/news
- Connection with others with common concerns/interests
- Shopping/banking
- Entertainment/recreation
- Social networking

Potential Risks

- Create confusion among members through miscommunication
- Create unrealistic expectations of access to you as a spiritual teacher
- Complicate dual relationships
- Replace/complicate face-to-face interaction
- Become addictive or unhealthy
- Exclusive to those with access to technology
- Issues around privacy; hacking; security
- Hard to know what information is reliable

As teachers and clergy. . .

- We bring resources to teaching and ministry (role, knowledge, training, experience, etc.)
- We are public figures
- Our professional and personal lives overlap

When we're online, how do we:

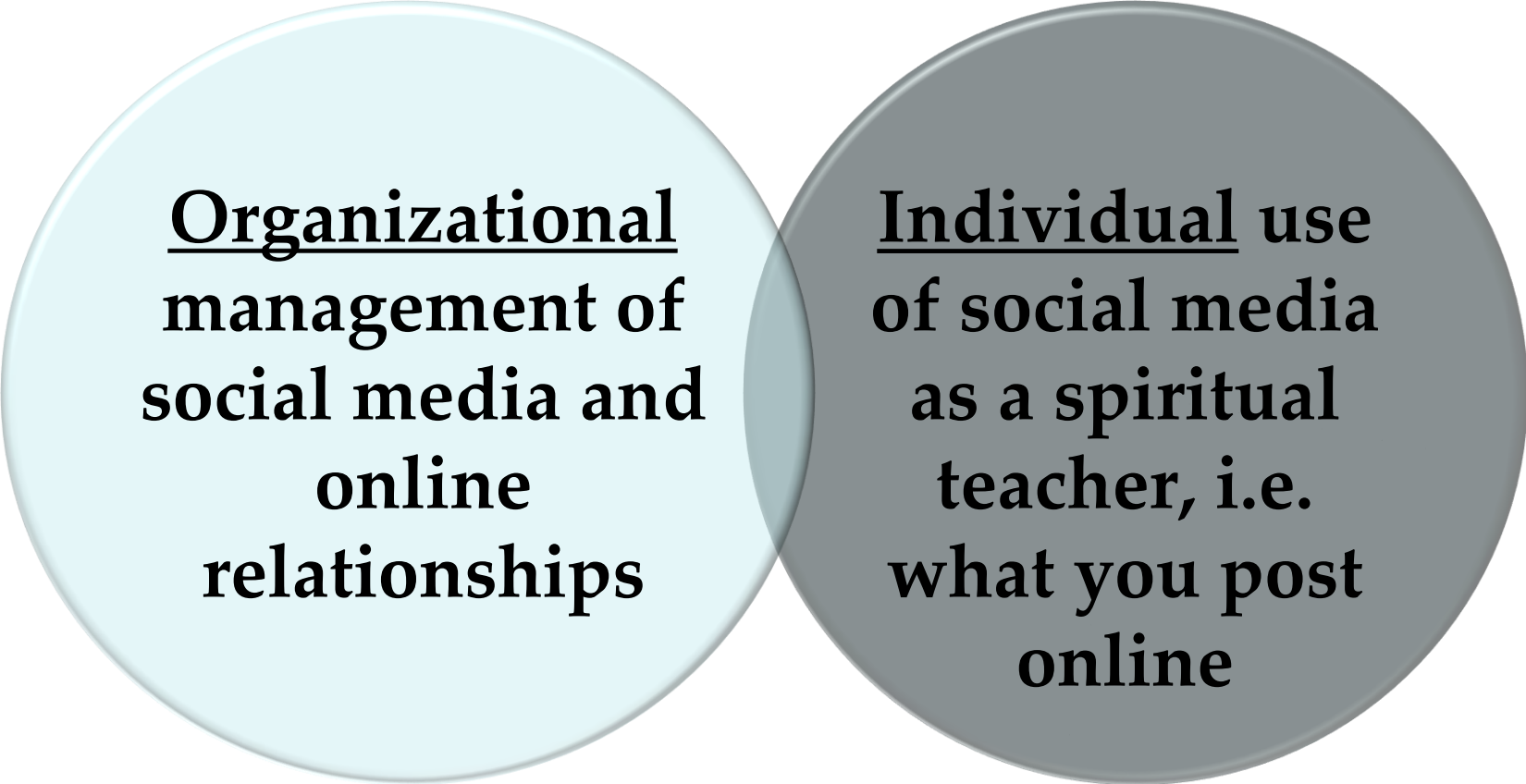
- Maintain the integrity of the teacher/student, clergy/congregant relationship?
- Always recognize the reality of power and vulnerability present?
- Make choices that sustain healthy boundaries?

Built-in Boundaries

- How can built-in boundaries online help us maintain healthy boundaries in teaching?
 - Personal account and professional account?
 - Choosing whether or not to friend or follow students?
 - Privacy settings?
 - Page admins?

Two Areas of Focus

Social Media



Organizational
management of
social media and
online
relationships

Individual use
of social media
as a spiritual
teacher, i.e.
what you post
online

Using Social Media

When using social media in your practice or ministry, consider these guidelines:

- Have a policy on social media and internet usage.
- Include transparency in your policy.
- Have someone in your organization supervising/monitoring the content of all company social media sites.
- Direct teachers or clergy not friend or follow members but only respond to requests.
- Separate personal and professional communications.
- Do not post photos of someone without their permission.
- Do not post photos of children due to risk of photos being misused by predators.
- Be cognizant of what you are liking or retweeting, as they may be interpreted as endorsements.

Social Media Policy Examples

- **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Social Media and Congregations,**
[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Social Media and Congregations.pdf](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Social%20Media%20and%20Congregations.pdf)
- **Presbyterian Church, USA, Being in Covenant Community in the Virtual Community of Social Media,**
<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/ga221-social-media-guide/>
- **Chris Boudreaux, Social Media Policy Database,**
<https://web.archive.org/web/20181204125447/http://socialmediagovernance.com/policies/>
- **United Methodist Communications, Five Social Media Guidelines for Churches,** <http://www.umcom.org/learn/5-social-media-guidelines-for-churches>
- **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Social Media Guidelines,**
<http://www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm>



Boundaries and Finances

Problems created by:

- Carelessness
- Misuse of funds
- Embezzlement



Consequences

- Betrayal of trust
- Liability
- Criminal proceedings
- People stop giving

Be Aware

Sexual boundary violations often correlate with financial boundary violations.

Rationalizations that may reflect financial impropriety:

- “I am just borrowing it and will pay it back.”
- “They will never know the difference.”
- “It has been years since I had a raise.”
- “I need it more than some of these people need it.”

Principles

To help ensure clear boundaries in management of finances:

- Transparency
- Accountability
- Separation of personal and faith community finances

Guidelines

- Discretionary funds should not be used
 - for personal needs
 - as a slush fund for personal banking
 - for routine budget items that the council has decided not to fund
- Bank statement should be sent to someone other than the faith leader or whoever writes checks
- Faith leader should tell board/council if he/she receives **gifts*** of significant value

Guidelines

- Business expenses and reimbursable items should be reported in a timely way and include receipts
- An annual outside audit or review should be standard procedure
- At least two unrelated persons should count the monies from the collection

Guidelines

- Cash and checks should be safeguarded
- Keys to the buildings, business office, clergy offices should be accounted for
- **Beware of making exceptions to these guidelines!**

Personal Needs and Self-Care

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59xVMRzsHMc&list=PLTWkWVNslIGzTwE_bwaYmkYmxbYKmUbmY&index=15&pp=iAQB

Reflections on Self-Care

- What are the challenges to self-care?
- Why is it important?
- The Scriptural mandates/examples of the goodness of self-care:
 - *“The people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, making the Sabbath an enduring covenant for generations to come.” Exodus 31:16*
 - *“The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile.’ For many were coming and going and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.”*

Mark 6: 30-32

Barriers to Self-Care

Delusion and Denial

1. Invincibility: Superman, Superwoman, Superperson!
2. Indispensability: inflated importance
3. Lack of Margin: between load & limit

Adopted from *Rest in the Storm* by Rev. Dr. Kirk Byron Jones.

Hints for a Healthy Ministry

- 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.

Hints for a Healthy Ministry

- “Let go but stand by.” —Frances Willard
- Don’t take yourself so seriously.
- Take yourself very seriously.
- “Pray always and do not lose heart.”
—Luke 18:1

Additional Resources for Self-Care

The two workbooks for this training are available for download at this link:

[Healthy Boundaries for Clergy, Spiritual Teachers, and Lay Leaders | VAWnet](#)

The workbooks contain some Self-Assessment Checklists that you can use to help your own reflections about the state of your self-care. (And lots of other good stuff!)

- Questions?
- Comments?
- Thoughts/Reflections?

Colossians 3: 12-17

Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.