

Ministry Boundaries: SOLT

2018

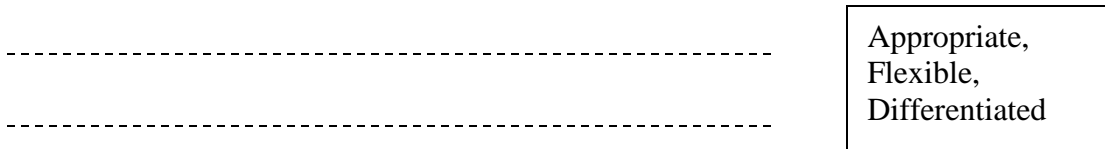
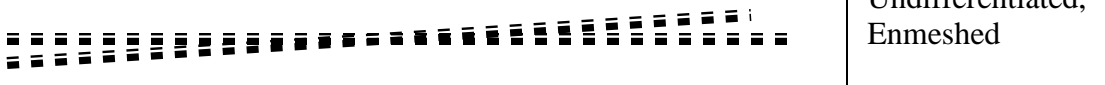
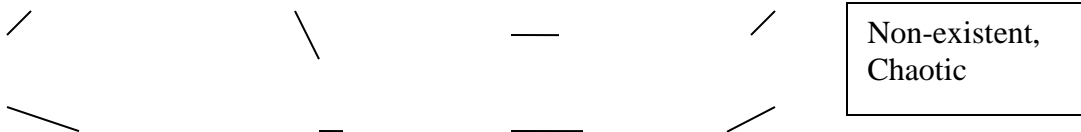
Mark Sundby, M.Div., Ph.D.
LeaderWise
www.leaderwise.org
mark@leaderwise.org
651.636.5120

Please do not duplicate. This set of handouts has been created by Mark as part of the materials for *Clergy Boundaries* and is not intended for general circulation or release. This material may not be photocopied or reproduced in anyway without written permission from Mark.

Boundaries

Boundary: “any line or thing marking a limit; bound; border” (New World Dictionary)

Boundaries are mutual and collaborative in a relationship. They can be rigid; non-existent; enmeshed; or clear and appropriately flexible.



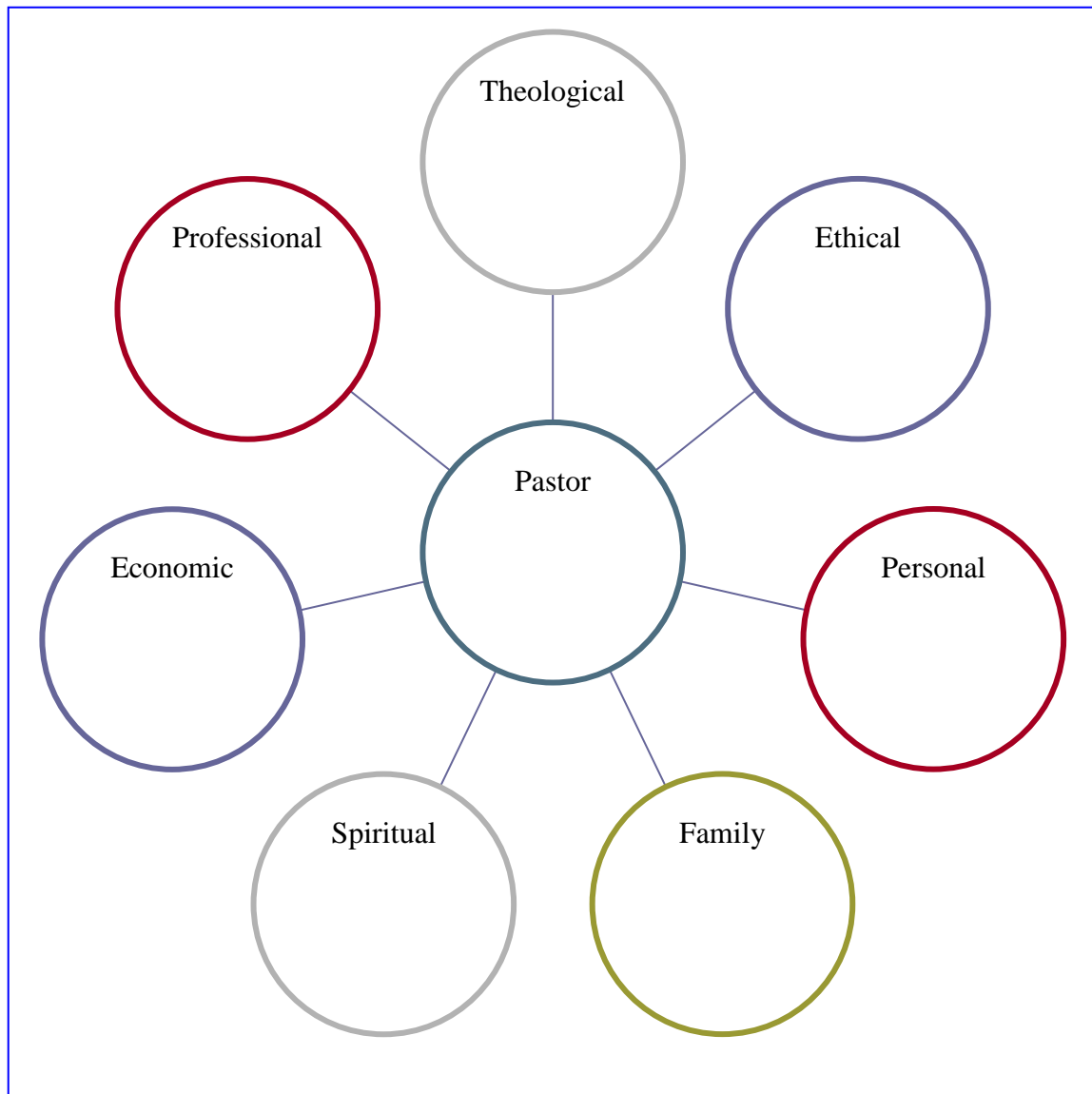
Boundaries Checklist

The purpose of the following boundaries checklist is to encourage discussion and to point out how difficult many of our boundary decisions can be, especially in a system that often reward codependent behaviors. The checklist is not meant to be a judgmental exercise to emphasize one's failures; rather it is intended to raise the consciousness of pastors, church professionals, and elders with regard to keeping healthy professional boundaries. (*Clergy Burnout* by Roy Oswald)

1. Should a church professional avoid saying 'no' when a church member asks a. For help? b. For a favor? c. To be rescued?	Yes Yes Yes	No No No
2. Is it appropriate for a church leader or professional to feel like a parent to the church member?	Yes	No
3. May one be both a church professional and friend to a church member?	Yes	No
4. Is it permissible to be both church professional and 'therapist' to a church member?	Yes	No
5. Is it appropriate to be in a business relationship with a church member?	Yes	No
6. If single, may a church professional date a single church member?	Yes	No
7. If single, may a church professional date a <i>former</i> single church member?	Yes	No
8. There is no apparent risk for church staff to counsel someone with no other personnel in the building.	Yes	No
9. How much time a church staff member spends alone with a parishioner is not important.	Yes	No
10. Long-term counseling relationships between church staff and church members are appropriate.	Yes	No
11. Church professionals and elders may visit opposite-gender church members at the member's home with no apparent risk.	Yes	No
12. One-on-one lunch or dinner meetings with an opposite-gender parishioner are not problematic.	Yes	No
13. There is not a problem with a church staff member making a personal loan to a parishioner.	Yes	No
14. Long conversations in a car between a church professional and a parishioner is without risk.	Yes	No
15. A review of the financial giving records of church members by a pastor is not problematic.	Yes	No
16. It is not problematic for a church professional to receive a. A gift b. An expensive gift. c. A personal/intimate gift.	Yes Yes Yes	No No No
17. Church leaders may be as stylish and/or casual in their dress as they like.	Yes	No
18. Suggestive clothing being worn by a church professional is his or her business.	Yes	No

19. Church professionals and elders are allowed to use any kind of language they want.	Yes	No
20. Church professionals and elders are allowed to tell off-color jokes and stories to parishioners.	Yes	No
21. Church professionals and elders are allowed to drink alcoholic beverages with church members.	Yes	No
22. When alcoholic beverages are served at a wedding or similar event, the amount that a church staff member consumes is not problematic.	Yes	No
23. Sharing personal information about oneself and/or one's family as a church staff member to a parishioner is not problematic.	Yes	No
24. To be called by only her/his first name by church members is not problematic for church staff.	Yes	No
25. When sincerely attempting to help a church member or counselee, is a church professional or elder free to break confidentiality a. With a close friend? b. With a family member? c. With another professional?	Yes Yes Yes	No No No
26. Is it necessary to get written permission from the counselee to get a consultation regarding counseling from another professional?	Yes	No
27. During counseling, church staff or elders a. May hold hands with a member/counselee b. May hug a member/counselee c. May kiss a member/counselee d. May sit next to a member/counselee on a couch e. May meet in a dimly lit room with a member/counselee	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes	No No No No No
28. If a church member/counselee initiates a hug, kiss, hand holding, etc., from a church professional or elder, then there is no problem.	Yes	No
29. How the words, actions, etc., of a church staff member are interpreted by a parishioner is not the responsibility of the church professional.	Yes	No
30. It is the church professional or elder who determines if a word, action, etc., is a boundary violation.	Yes	No
31. Ministry and intimacy go together. It is unavoidable.	Yes	No
32. Much of this boundary stuff is just an overreaction to isolated incidents and don't apply to me.	Yes	No

Ministry Boundaries



Theological: The minister has theological integrity rather than acquiescing to please others.

Ethical: The minister is clear about moral beliefs and values. The minister lives out beliefs.

Personal: The minister has personal time for recreation. Home is distinct from church.

Family: The minister's family is independent of the church. Privacy is respected.

Spiritual: The minister has time each day for spiritual renewal.

Economic: The minister does not regularly sacrifice and pay for incidentals in ministry.

Professional: The minister adheres to a code of professional ethics for denomination.

Church Professional's Responsibilities

Practices Self-Differentiation. The minister is clear about beliefs and committed to practicing them. The minister explicitly identifies boundaries for congregation, both verbally and behaviorally.

Acts as a 'Cultural Anthropologist'. One image is that the church professional is a 'cultural anthropologist', who learns about and respects the congregation while remaining distinct from it. In anthropology language, the minister is a "participant observer" in the system.

Minimizes Multiple Roles. The church professional recognizes the nature of multiple roles and minimizes whenever possible. If the minister crosses this boundary, it is a conscious decision with a clear rationale.

Tolerates Conflict. The church professional deals directly and forthrightly with conflict. If the minister avoids a conflict, it is a conscious decision with a clear rationale.

Stress and Boundaries

A majority of boundary violations occur during times of transition and stress for a church professional. A minister is particularly vulnerable as he or she experiences personal and/or professional stress. Stress can be managed by:

- Informal Social Support – Encouragement, Phone, Emails, Texts, Visits
- Formal Social Support – Coaching, Counseling, Mentoring
- Preparatory Skills Training – Seminary, Workshops, Books
- Remedial Skills Training – Targeted Skills Training
- Insight and Developmental Plan – Psychological Assessment, Coaching

Stress Test: By the Numbers

The number of people who...

Report experiencing stress in a typical workday

- a) 10% b) 30% c) 50% d) 70%

Believe that stress is affecting their health

- a) 10% b) 30% c) 50% d) 70%

Say that stress is negatively impacting their friendships

- a) 8% b) 21% c) 63% d) 92%

Say that stress is negatively impacting their marriages

- a) 5% b) 19% c) 43% d) 62%

Believe that they have more stress in their lives than their parents did

- b) 8% b) 29% c) 54% d) 82%

Report that stress made them do something they later regret

- a) 6% b) 34% c) 56% d) 88%

Prevent them from enjoying their lives more

- a) 5% b) 25% c) 50% d) 75%

Job stress accounts for \$ _____ billion in lost productivity each year.

In the United States, _____ million take medication for stress related symptoms.

About ____% of all visits to primary care physicians are for stress-related complaints and conditions.

Elkin, A. (2013).

Clergy Statistics

Ministry Satisfaction

90% of clergy report being satisfied with their calling to ministry (DeVogel, 1986; Leadership Journal, 2003; General Social Survey, 2006)

Clergy score highest for being happiest with their jobs (General Social Survey, 2006; U.S. News & World Report, 2009; Forbes, 2011)

98% of clergy describe their work as “meaningful,” which is the highest among all jobs and professions (PayScale, 2014)

Clergy Stress

Almost 50% experience stress “fairly often” or “very often” in their congregations (UMC, 2014)

40% report moderate to severe financial stress (UMC, 2017)

30% acknowledge they feel “isolated and lonely” (UMC, 2017)

20 – 40% report moderate to severe burnout (Klass & Klass, 1999)

75% of stress related to unclear boundaries (Clergy Wellness, 2003)

Clergy Health

80% of clergy are overweight or obese compared to 61% of population (UMC, 2017)

2/3 of clergy advised by a health care provider to engage in more physical activity, improve diet, or reduce weight (Presbyterian Panel, 2010)

Twice the rate of depression among clergy versus a comparative sample in the general population (NY Times, 2010)

7% of clergy are clinically depressed and 13% receiving treatment (UMC, 2017)

28% of clergy experience functional impairment due to depressive symptoms (UMC, 2017)

Highest death rate from heart disease of all professional groups (Carroll, 2002)

73% of clergy spouses have fair to poor health (Carroll, 2002)

Key Demographic Differences for Health and Well-Being (UMC, 2017)

Male clergy have higher rates of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, and are more likely to experience a lack of spiritual well-being

Female clergy have higher rates of asthma and arthritis, and are more likely to experience occupational stress

Female clergy report exercising less often than their male counterparts

Older clergy suffer from more physical ailments, but younger clergy have higher rates of asthma and depression, and also show higher levels of risk on all spiritual and occupational stress dimensions

White/non-Hispanic clergy score lower on spiritual health measures

African-American clergy have higher rates of hypertension and cholesterol but report lower levels of stress

Asian clergy have lower rates for several health conditions, including weight, hypertension, arthritis, asthma and diabetes

Hispanic clergy have higher rates of depression

Key Vocational Differences for Health and Well-Being (UMC, 2017)

Part-time lay pastors report lower levels of stress and hostility in their ministry and occupational settings, and higher levels of spiritual health

Clergy in full-time settings experience more depression, lower spiritual vitality, and more stress and hostility in their occupational settings

Clergy at smaller churches have higher physical health risks; those at larger churches have higher spiritual health and occupational stress risks

Clergy who change churches more frequently show higher levels of risk across several physical, emotional, spiritual and stress dimensions

Those in cross-racial or cross-cultural ministry settings report higher spiritual vitality and well-being, and more positive ministry work environments

How Vulnerable Are You to Stress?

The following test was developed by psychologists Lyle Miller and Alma Dell Smith at Boston University Medical Center. Score each item from 1 (almost always) to 5 (never), according to how much of the time each statement applies to you.

_____ 1. I eat at least one hot, balanced meal a day.	_____ 11. I have one or more friends to confide in about personal matters.
_____ 2. I get seven to eight hours of sleep at least four nights a week.	_____ 12. I am in good health (including eyesight, hearing, teeth).
_____ 3. I give and receive affection regularly.	_____ 13. I am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.
_____ 4. I have at least one relative within fifty miles on whom I can rely.	_____ 14. I have regular conversations with the people I live with about domestic problems (e.g., chores, money, daily living issues).
_____ 5. I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week.	_____ 15. I do something for fun at least once a week.
_____ 6. I smoke less than half a pack of cigarettes a day.	_____ 16. I am able to organize my time effectively.
_____ 7. I take fewer than five alcoholic drinks a week.	_____ 17. I drink fewer than three cups of coffee (or tea or cola drinks) a day.
_____ 8. I am the appropriate weight for my height.	_____ 18. I have an income adequate to meet my expenses.
_____ 9. I get strength from my religious beliefs.	_____ 19. I regularly attend club or social activities.
_____ 10. I have a network of friends and acquaintances.	_____ 20. I take quiet time for myself during the day.

_____ **TOTAL**

To get your score, add up the figures and subtract 20. Any score under 30 indicates a resiliency to stress. You have less resilience if your score is between 50 and 75, and would benefit from taking steps to manage stress if over 75.

Church Professionals: Questions for Self-Reflection

1. How often do you work on your days off?
2. What do you do when a church meeting or appointment conflicts with an event important to your spouse or children?
3. How often do you and your spouse (or other loved one) go out on a date?
4. How long has it been since you enjoyed or practice a hobby?
5. How long has it been since you read a non-work-related book?
6. How would you rate your physical health? (Circle)

Poor

Fair

Good

Excellent

7. How would you rate your spiritual fitness? (Circle)

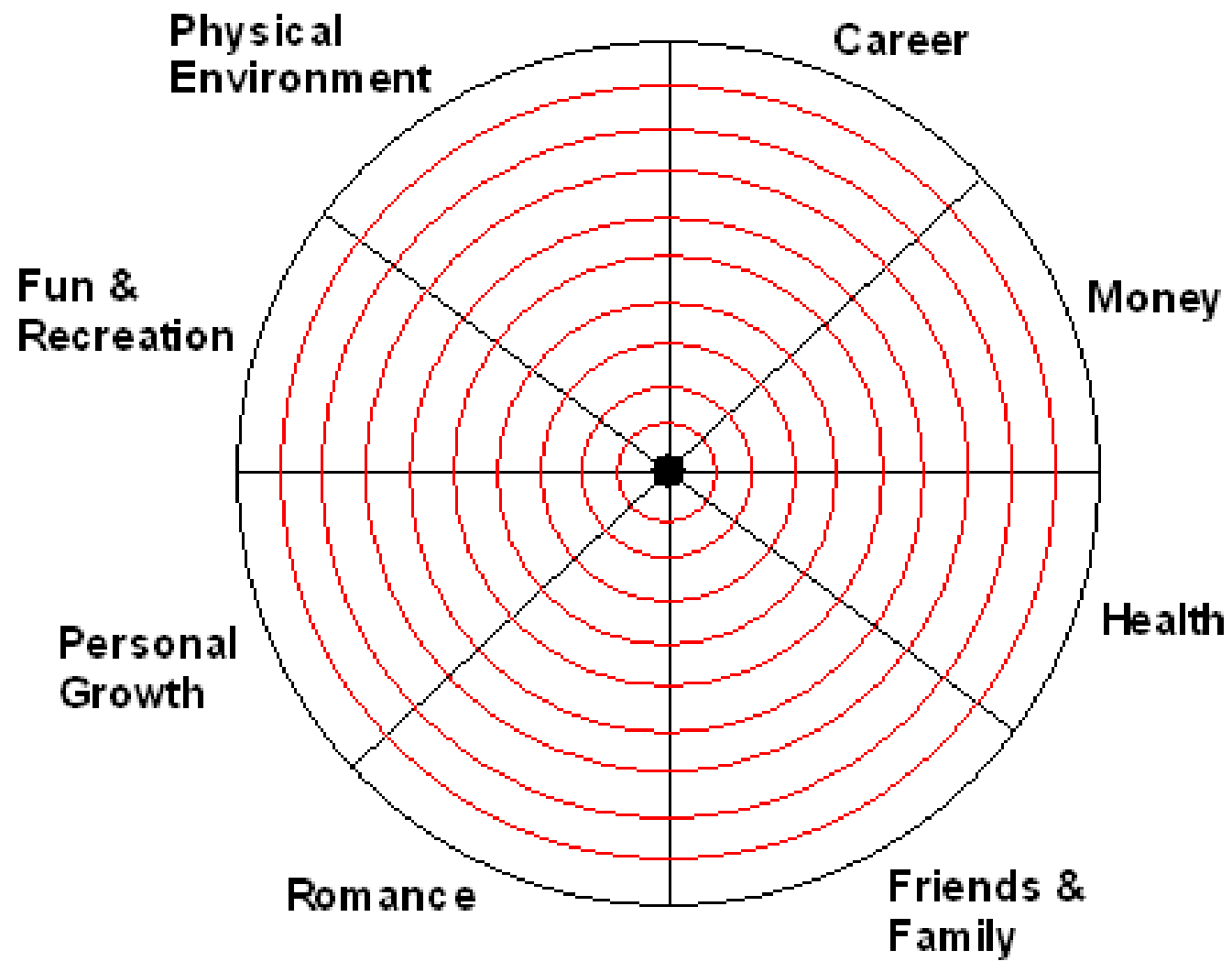
Poor

Fair

Good

Excellent

8. Did you take all your vacation days last year?
9. If you could change two or three things in your ministry that would significantly improve your well-being, what would those be? What steps can you take today to implement those changes?



What's Your Rating?

Boundary Issue	Always OK	Usually OK	Sometimes OK	Never OK
1. You are invited to dinner by a parishioner at a restaurant and he insists on picking up the check.				
2. You want to buy a house and a parishioner offers you an interest free loan to help with the down payment.				
3. You have friends in the congregation.				
4. You and your spouse get very close to another couple in the church and the four of you skinny dip in a hot tub.				
5. You are invited to the lake cabin by a couple in the congregation for the week.				
6. You are single and date a member of the congregation.				
7. Your best friend is a member of the congregation.				
8. You come into the office and the secretary has a crick in the neck and you give her a back rub.				
9. You are counseling a member who was sexually abused, and it seems appropriate to tell him that you were too.				
10. You have a standing invitation to dinner every Wednesday evening with a family that struggles with many stressors and problems.				
11. You have been close to a couple during your ministry and the husband dies. The widow wants you to do the funeral service though you are no longer pastor of the congregation.				

Boundary Issue	Always OK	Usually OK	Sometimes OK	Never OK
12. In gratitude for your ministry, a parishioner buys you a car.				
13. In gratitude for your ministry, a member gives you a gift card for a weekend at the spa.				
14. You fall in love and have sex with a parishioner.				
15. You get very close to a staff member as you work together and share stories about your marital hurts and joys.				
16. You confide in the Sunday School superintendent that you no longer believe in the Virgin Birth.				
17. You are in psychotherapy and find it very helpful. You recommend your therapist to a church member.				
18. You are attracted to a parishioner and find yourself experiencing erotic feelings.				
19. You visit a member in the hospital who just had an ovary removed, and you tell them you've had the same surgery. You show her your scar.				
20. Halloween falls on a Sunday. To mark the occasion, you wear devil horns to worship.				
21. You tell "dumb blonde" jokes to your female church council president.				
22. A member of a neighboring church comes to see you to complain about their pastor, who is your friend, and you agree to talk with her pastor about changing his behavior.				

The Virtual World

General Assumptions

- Clergy have a unique power dynamic with people with whom they have a pastoral relationship, and therefore have a special responsibility to guard how they interact with those people.
- All communications sent digitally (email, social networking sites, notes or posts, etc.) are not confidential and may be shared or reposted to others.
- Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent, as a window in the door provides transparency in the physical world.
- In the virtual world healthy boundaries and practices must be adhered to just as they should be in the physical world.
- In the virtual world, “friend” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In the physical world, friend can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality and expectations for relationship. The difference should be recognized and respected.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.

General Guidelines

- Clergy are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile to shield both adult and youth members from viewing content that may be inappropriate.
- Digital communications are appropriate for communicating basic factual information such as the time of an event, agenda for a meeting, text of a document, etc. but it is not appropriate for matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged or require extensive conversation and explanation.
- Individual personal profiles of clergy are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Clergy should not submit “friend” requests to parishioners and others to whom they minister. The disparity of power may not give the other person the ability to decline such request.
- Clergy are strongly advised not to accept “friend” requests from people with whom they have no prior relationship. “Friends” on social networking sites should be limited to people you have met before in person.
- Clergy who want to connect via a social networking website with parishioners are strongly encouraged to set up a group account that all parishioners may join. The purpose of having a personal profile and parish group is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with parishioners and real family, friends and colleagues.
- Clergy should consider the impact of declining a “friend” request from parishioners. These encounters may create a tension in “real world” relationships. Clergy can direct “friend” requests from parishioners to the parish’s group page.
- Clergy who work directly with youth are encouraged to establish church sponsored digital communications groups to maintain contact with youth members.
- When a clergy assignment at a parish or other ministry setting ends, the cleric should remove parishioners as “friends” or contacts in all forms of digital communications.
- Clergy should manage their own profiles, and in the case that they do delegate that work, closely monitor their profiles for potential problematic behavior.
- Clergy should refrain from making political statements, joining political groups, or “becoming fans” of particular political candidates or political causes on social network sites.
- Clergy, especially new ones, should examine the pictures/videos that are posted of themselves to make sure they are appropriate to share with the general public
- All transcripts of on-line text chats, video chats, blogs or video blogs should be saved when possible.

Guidelines Specific to Interacting with Youth

- Adults who minister to children and youth are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile.
- Adults should not submit “friend” requests to minors or youth. Youth may be unable to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults. Youth may ask to be “friends”, and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
- Adults who want to connect via a social networking website with youth to whom they minister are strongly encouraged to set up a closed group account that youth may join. Youth requesting to “friend” an adult can then be invited to join this group rather than be accepted as a friend on an adult’s personal profile account. The purpose of the adult’s personal profile is to connect only with his or her real friends/relatives/peers. The purpose of these two separate accounts/profiles is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with youth and real family, friends and colleagues.
- Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the local Department of Children and Families. If the material is on a church-affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with DCF and/or police.
- Closed, but not “hidden” groups should be used for youth groups (Teen group, OCF, Jr. FOCA, Project Mexico Trip) These groups should have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth administrators.
- Invitations to youth to join the group should be made by youth administrators, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite him/her to join the group.
- Behavior expectations should be formulated and clearly posted on the group page.
- Inappropriate material that does not raise suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should immediately be removed from the site.
- A least one youth and one adult administrator of any group should be charged with regularly policing the group page for inappropriate posts or comments.
- Social networking groups for youth should be open to parents of current members.
- Parents should be informed that the content of youth pages or groups that are not sponsored by the church are NOT within the purview of adult youth leaders.
- Adult leaders of youth groups and youth who are no longer associated with the group, due to departure, removal from position, or no longer eligible because they “aged-out” of a program should be immediately removed from digital communication with youth groups via social networking sites, list serves, etc.

Guidelines for Posting Pictures and Videos

- Parish representative must inform parishioners when they are being videotaped because church buildings are not considered public space.
- Any parish or community that distributes video of its worship services or activities on the web or via other broadcast media should post signs that indicate the service will be broadcast.
- All parish communities should secure signed Media Release forms from adults and guardians of minor children who will or may participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.
- Photos that are published on church-sponsored sites should not include name or contact information for minor children or youth.

Guidelines from the Orthodox Church in America, 2011.

Ten Commandments to Prevent Church Professional Sexual Misconduct

1. **Set Boundaries with Parishioners**
When meeting with parishioners, set length of meeting, time of day, frequency of sessions, and little or no physical contact.

- II **Be Clear About Your Limits in Counseling Parishioners**
Only counsel to the extent of your training. Refer parishioners whose problems go beyond the scope of your training.

- III. **Understand and Be Aware of Your Attractions and Erotic Feelings**
Erotic feelings are normal, but you do not have to act on them. Understand your emotional needs and the factors in your life which evoke feelings. In fact, those feelings may give you a clue to the unresolved wounds in the parishioner's life.

- IV. **Avoid Multiple Relationships with Parishioners**
You cannot be a church professional who hears vulnerable parishioners and then socializes with them as friends.

- V. **Understand the Power and Authority Church Staff are Given by the Church and Culture**
Use the power and authority in the parishioner's best interest.

- VI. **Avoid Sexual Behavior**
Vulnerable parishioners will seek a church professional when experiencing a crisis in their life. They believe a minister will have compassion and comfort to take away their pain. This can be confused with erotic feelings. Misuse of authority by suggestive words and actions is inappropriate.

- VII. **Attend to Person and Family Behavior**
Ministry is stressful for the church professional and his/her family. Symptoms of stress may be investing more time in work, arguments, preoccupation with desires and low self-esteem.

- VIII. **Get Supervision**
If you counsel four hours or more a week, meet with a qualified supervisor to understand the dynamics between the parishioner and you.

- IX **Avoid Isolation**
Guard against loneliness. Develop a close friendship with someone other than a parishioner to share your interests and to be with you.

- X. **Avoid Workaholism and Burnout**
Investing an overabundant amount of time in ministry is an indication of something deeper going on in your life. Discover the currents in your life which drive you to neglect yourself.

Case Study #1

Pastor Susan is in her fourth year at First Church in a mid-sized town. She followed Pastor Lloyd, a popular pastor of twenty-one years, who is retired, lives in the community, and attends the congregation. The last year has been difficult for Pastor Susan. The Personnel Committee shared with him that they have heard a number of rumblings. Pastor Susan asks for names so that she might visit the disgruntled members, but the Personnel Committee declines. The chair of the committee emphasizes, “Just know that we’ve heard these complaints more than once from a large number of people.” For Pastor Susan, the most troubling one is, “She doesn’t seem committed to this church.” After several months of asking for specifics, Pastor Susan finally gets a response at a Personnel Committee meeting. The chair of the committee explodes at a meeting, “You see this as a nine-to-five job. Pastor Lloyd attended all our meetings – he really cared. But you think it’s enough to just check in occasionally. And, to make things worse, you’re husband and children don’t even attend! What kind of example is that?” Pastor Susan explains that her husband is Lutheran, and that her children, who are teenagers, are given the choice of where to attend. The chair replies, “If you can’t be the spiritual head of your own family, how can you be ours?”

As Pastor Susan, what are you experiencing? Emotionally? Physically? Cognitively?

Imagine that several congregational members express dissatisfaction with your ministry. They secretly pass around a petition on Sunday morning to have you removed. They refuse to share names but comment, “Just know that it was signed by over forty members.” How do you respond?

On a personal level, what do you think of the decision by your family not to attend?

What do you see as the boundary issues in this scenario?

Case Study #2

Jon is serving his first church as a youth minister at a large suburban congregation. He has completed his third year, and, after participating in a time study, finds that he is working between fifty and sixty hours per week. He is both relieved and disturbed. He is relieved that he now understands why he is so tired and why there seems to be so little time for his wife and three young children; he is disturbed that he can discern few places in his ministry to cut back. He recognizes the need to do something. At the next meeting, he shares his dilemma with the Personnel Committee. He is stunned by their comments:

Middle-Aged Woman: “Well, Jon, what did you expect when you chose ministry?”

Young Man: “I have a brother who is a minister, and he works more hours than that!”

Older Man: “I’ve farmed for thirty-two years. I often work twelve-hour days, seven days a week, and never take vacation.”

Middle-Aged Man: “If you want to spend more time with your children, maybe you should consider another job until they’re grown up.”

As Jon, what are you experiencing? Emotionally? Physically? Cognitively?

If you are Jon, how do you respond in the moment? What options do you have after the meeting?

If Jon came to you for advice as a trusted colleague, what would you advise him?

What do you see as the boundary issues in this scenario?

Case Study #3

Pastor Jordan is a dedicated clergyperson. The congregation is highly pleased with her worship leadership, pastoral care abilities, and strong work ethic. She has no idea how many hours she works, because her attitude is, "I do what I have to do." Pastor Jordan's family has made sacrifices to support her ministry, but her husband and children willingly comply because they see how devoted and talented she is. Her husband often remarks, "She truly is called by God."

Pastor Jordan and her family have the car packed, ready to leave for a two-week vacation to Florida. She has lined up worship leadership for the two Sundays and informed the congregation of another pastor who will handle for pastor care emergencies. As they are about to lock up the house, the telephone rings. A longtime and well-loved congregational member has just died. The son is choking up, "I know you're about to leave for vacation, but would you please stop by on the way out of town? My father is beside himself."

As Pastor Jordan, what are you experiencing? Emotionally? Physically? Cognitively?

If you are Pastor Jordan, how do you respond in the moment? What options do you have after the meeting?

Imagine that you decide to visit with the family. After praying with them, the woman's husband comments, "Martha respects – respected – you so much. It's a lot to ask, I know, but if we could schedule the funeral for tomorrow morning, would you be able to do it? It would mean so much to Martha and me." How do you respond?

If you are a member of Pastor Jordan's family, how do you feel?

What are the boundary issues in this scenario?