



ATFE

Association for
Theological Field Education

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**MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY
OF THE MINISTERIAL
RELATIONSHIP: THE
IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATING
STUDENTS ABOUT BOUNDARY
ISSUES**

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Maintaining the Integrity of the Ministerial Relationship: The Importance of Educating Students about Boundary Issues

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Goal: Presentation of basic concepts underlying the issue of boundaries in ministry, and ways for theological field educators to present this material to students preparing for ministry. How the materials from the *Faith Trust Institute** are being utilized at Wesley Theological Seminary.

Introduction: It is assumed that as field educators we are quite conscious of the ministerial climate within the churches and society relative to issues of boundary violations. Every religious faith community has been affected by such violations. The need to help ministerial students be attentive to the dynamics of boundaries within ministerial relationships is critical. My intent in this workshop is to present some basic concepts about boundaries, and share with the participants how we are utilizing some basic materials in multiple class settings. The work and resources of the *Faith Trust Institute* (formerly the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence) will be highlighted.

The basics about boundaries:

- Our goal a ministerial persons
- definition of boundaries
- dynamics of power and vulnerability
- dual relationships
- respect and sacredness of the other

Why do we need to teach out students and ourselves about boundaries?

- Overview of basic assumptions and common experiences as ministerial persons
- Statistics on abuse and harassment
- They are assuming new roles and positions with power
- Vulnerability of students relative to supervisors/mentors
- Self-care
- Provide them knowledge of “red flags” in ministry

What we have recently been doing at Wesley

- Training of faculty members (6 thus far) through the workshop on boundaries offered by Faith Trust Institute
- Student Pastors - in 3rd year one semester devoted to boundary issues: view, discuss, respond
- Student Pastors – in 1st year one session in first semester
- Pastoral Care courses utilize Faith Trust Institute videos in courses
- In leadership courses (Lovett Weems, Lew Parks) addressing issues of infidelity, and use of authority and power.

Other ways of utilizing the available resources

- Periodic workshops in supervised ministry courses focusing on management of ministerial relationships – topic focused
- Utilization of case study material pertaining to specific boundary issues in pastoral care and supervision groups
- A faculty forum utilizing a case brief and reflection

Bibliography and Resources

Books

Is Nothing Sacred. The Story of a Pastor, the Women he Sexually Abused, and the Congregation he Nearly Destroyed. Rev. Marie Fortune, Cleveland: The United Church Press, 1999.

Sex in the Forbidden Zone. P. Rutter. Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher: New York: Distributed by St. Martin's Press, 1989.

Lead Us Not Into Temptation: Catholic Priests and the Sexual Abuse of Children. Jason Berry. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Betrayal of Trust: Sex and Power in Professional Relationships. Joel Friedman & Mobilia Boumil. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995.

Boundaries and Relationships. Charles Whitfield. Health Communications, Inc., Deerfield Beach, FL, 1993.

Boundary Wars: Intimacy and Distance in Healing Relationships. Katherine Hancock Ragsdale. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1996

Resources

Faith Trust Institute, 2400 N 45th Street, #10, Seattle, WA. (206)634-1903; Fax: (206) 634-0115; Email: info@faithtrustinstitute.org

Clergy Ethics Training Curriculum. Faith Trust Institute publication. Includes two videos, trainers notebook, workshop manual & brochures

A SACRED TRUST: Boundary Issues for Clergy and Spiritual Teachers. Faith Trust Institute publication, Seattle, WA. Four videos, manual, workbook.

Not In My Church. Video produced by Faith Trust Institute, Seattle, WA

Once You Cross the Line. Video produced by Faith Trust Institute, Seattle, WA

What You in the Congregation Need to Know About Clergy Abuse. Excellent pamphlet. Publication in English and Spanish produced by Faith Trust Institute.