

A Sacred Trust

**Maintaining Appropriate
Boundaries in Christian Leadership**

While there is nothing new....

- A small amount of inappropriate sexual behaviour by Christian leaders has always been with us
- In the past this behaviour has often been hidden and has rarely made public

.... times have changed

- There is increased sensitivity the misuse of power in leadership. This has particularly impacted the church, which has always proclaimed high moral standards
- At the same time social standards around sexual behaviour are changing significantly and these also impact the church.

Faithfulness in Service

- Christian leaders need to be deeply aware of the dynamics of power and trust.
- They need to have a healthy understanding of sexuality.
- Leaders today need to take intentional steps towards maintaining personal godliness and appropriate boundaries in their ministries.

Power and Trust

- All leaders exercise a level of power that resides in their position and which must never be abused by taking advantage of any person under their care – this is the fundamental “duty of care”.
- Christian leaders ministering in the context of the church community have 3 specific areas of power which are unique and place them in a unique position of authority.

1 The power of Spiritual Guidance

- There is an important difference between a pastor / leader and any other professional person in the type of knowledge they possess.
- This is knowledge of theology, God, Bible, spirituality, morality and ethics
- Members of the congregation often come seeking not just advice but God's will

2 The power of Pastoral Access

- Professionals usually deal with quite personal areas of people's lives: health, finances, problems.
- Pastors and Christian leaders have a level of access into the lives of the members of a congregation that far exceeds any other profession.
- This is often unrestricted and occurs at times of great vulnerability

3 The power of Facilitating Community

- Professionals deal with individuals. Pastors and leaders can shape the way a person relates to a whole group and finds community.
- Leaders facilitate acceptance, involvement, and create community for people.

Power and service

- These three together create a significant source of power that leaders exercise in the lives of church members
- This has great God-given capacity for good, for growth and maturity. It is what God uses to create an alive growing church
- But the same power can be easily abused through a failure to understand it, a failure to use it in a spiritual way and a failure to care for oneself as a leader.

Social change in sexual standards

- Sexual freedom is seen as the norm outside of a marriage relationship – abstinence is seen to be unrealistic and unreasonable
- There is a huge rise in all forms of internet sexuality
- 'Touch' has lost its warmth and innocence - it is now largely sexualised.
- Child sexual abuse has arisen as a major public concern.

All this means boundaries

- *“Good fences create good neighbours”*
- We each have a sense of our own personal space: physically, psychologically and also spiritually.
- We equally need a sense of other's space and personhood and a commitment to respect this.
- We all try to manage our boundaries carefully raising and lowering them on trust.

All this means boundaries

- Boundaries are firstly the simple rules which enable people to serve, work, learn, pray, worship.. together with a sense of safety and wellbeing.
- They apply particularly to situations where 'one to one' interpersonal relationships are part of the community.
- They are particularly important where there is a difference in power between people

All this means boundaries

- Boundaries are also the simple rules which enable people to serve, work, learn, pray, worship.. together with a sense of safety and wellbeing.
- They apply particularly to situations where 'one to one' interpersonal relationships are part of the community.
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Managing boundaries

- In our actions
 - Being sensitive and carefully appropriate with all forms of contact, touch and time with others
 - Being aware of actions which place others in a position of debt to us
- In our words
 - Never using sexual innuendo, jokes or
 - Never sharing intimate or personal stories with those to whom we minister