

Boundaries in Ministry

(Rev Marie Fortune, Centre for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, Seattle).

In a ministerial relationship there is unequal power and authority. Ministers have power and authority by virtue of their role. What are the sources of **ministerial power**? Credibility, expert knowledge, expectations and projections from the parishioner, the minister's sense of personal power.

Boundaries "are defined as limits that protect the space between the professional's power and the client's vulnerability". (Marylin Peterson: At Personal Risk: Boundary Violations in Professional-client Relationships).

Characteristics of Ministry that create the potential for boundary violations: they are both a gift and a danger that are part of ministry...to bring harm or help those who are vulnerable and in need.

- We are often dealing with people in emotional crisis
- We are trusted with intimate details of a person's life
- We have easy access to and privilege of initiating contact with persons in the congregation
- Private office
- Flexible schedule
- Power, prestige, influence of ministry
- Personal qualities of sensitivity, warmth, attentiveness are valued in ministers, attractive qualities especially to people in crisis