

Script 2026 Boundary Training Shenandoah Presbytery

Slide 1 Introduction

Slide 2 Open with Prayer , Scripture John 10: 7-10 Jesus as both Good Shepherd and gate

Slide 3 Topics Covered

Slide 4 Goals of Training

Slide 5 Goals of Training

Slide 6 Healthy Churches have Healthy Boundaries, and Healthy Boundaries make for Healthy Churches!

Slide 7 ALL are welcome to this discussion/training! Record attendees and date in Session minutes. Report pastoral leaders to assocgp@shenpres.org

Slide 8 Respect for others in this training/discussion, as these might be sensitive topics for attendees

Slide 9 So, when we use the word “boundaries,” what do we think of? What kind of boundaries did you grow up with in your family? Do you see in your church? Are you a “huggy” church? Do some people shy away when you go in for a hug? Do some hug you in a way that doesn’t feel ok?

Slide 10 video from Faith Trust Institute

Slide 11 Bumper Sticker found in Presbytery office

Slide 12 what does this bumper sticker need to add? What do we need to ask =
“Can I give you a hug?” - this might take some practice

Slide 13 Boundaries are both care for others and care for self-

Slide 14 Book of Order on our manner of life

Slide 15 Abuse always starts as “power over” someone. Recognizing the power differentials in relationships helps us understand boundaries, and potential for abuses.

Slide 16 What boundaries are

Slide 17 What boundaries are not

Slide 18 What DO healthy boundaries look like in our churches?

Slide 19 a solid wall? A Fence? A Gate, where we have the agency/power to let people in...or not?

Slide 20 In Ministry (and we all are in ministry) there may sometimes need to cross a Boundary, but never violate a Boundary

Slide 21 2 Scenarios: bringing communion to shut in, and hospital visits. You would ordinarily NEVER visit someone who is in bed, in nightclothes/johnny gown (in hospital) etc. - but you might, if you are making a hospital or shut-in/home visit. The difference here is that: there are 2 people making the visit (always bring another person with you) and this is for the purpose of ministry, not for an abuse/misconduct event.,

Slide 22 Bottom line: is this in the best interest of the congregant and the congregation

Slide 23 Definitions: Sexual Misconduct

Slide 24 Ethical/Moral Analysis

Slide 25 Definition: Meaningful Consent- meaningful consent is NOT ever applicable when there is a power difference: i.e., between pastor/congregant, boss/worker/supervisor/supervisor, coach/student, etc. By definition, the power imbalance negates any true ability to consent to the relationship

Slide 26 an example, from Facebook, of a small child who asked for, and respected, boundaries- this is consent. Also, good for the other child, to be able to say she did not want a hug!

Slide 27 Definition: Sexual Abuse

Slide 28 Definition: Sexual Harassment

Slide 29 Wanderers and lovers are seeking intimacy, in inappropriate ways. Predators are about power over, rather than intimacy

Slide 30 This is why we have policies and procedures. When people know that you have them in place, then predators will not stick around- they know you know.

Slide 31 Book of Order requires 4 policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child, youth and vulnerable adult protection policy, and an antiracism policy. If you do not have them, contact the Presbytery for help in creating/adopting them.

Slide 32 Dating/Friendships/Dual relationships/Gifts. Many of us serve in congregations in which we have friends/family members/maybe even grew up there. These relationships, while wonderful, also require us to examine our boundaries as we serve in ministry of any kind.

Slide 33 Dating- when a pastor dates a congregant....

Slide 34 Dating

Slide 35 Dating

Slide 36 If your pastor comes with a spouse/family...what are appropriate boundaries for their participation on Session/as volunteer/as employee? And what are the congregations' expectations for them? "Unexpressed expectations are preconceived grievances." -

Slide 37 Friends

Slide 38 Friends

Slide 39 Dual Relationships: where you as a ministry leader have both church and professional relationships: think dentist, hairdresser, car mechanic, who is also a church member. Do you talk about church/Session stuff while you are getting your car fixed? Is it appropriate for the barber to give you "the pastor's discount"?

Slide 40 Dual Relationships

Slide 41 BFP - The "Beloved Former Pastor" Upon retirement, your pastor is no longer your pastor. Please see Shenandoah Presbytery's Policy and Covenant on Departing Ministers and their Former Congregation this doesn't mean you don't care for/about them, or that you run the other way when/if you see them at Walmart- but they are no longer your pastor, and any concerns/issues/funeral arrangements/worship services should be with your next pastor

Slide 42 Gifts and Finances are Boundary Issues, too. Who counts? Who knows? Who has signatory?

Slide 43 Session has the authority to say "no, thank you" to gifts that are inappropriate (someone's old couch from their basement) or to gifts that do not match the goals of the church/Session's mission and ministry- i.e., if a memorial gift is designated by the family for "the hand bell choir," but you have no hand bell choir, and no intention in starting one, it would be appropriate to have a conversation with the family about what would be a better use for it, in keeping with the departed's love of the music program, etc.

Slide 44 Break into smaller groups, read cases studies, come back and discuss

Slide 45 Question # 1 Time for a break!

Slide 46 Abuse and Misconduct PREVENTION- policies and procedures

Slide 47 Data regarding Abuse

Slide 48 Abuse and Misconduct at Church. Note especially survivor's reports about how the way the church handled/did not handle the abuse/misconduct affected their faith- it was a double trauma-

Slide 49 PC(USA) has resources to help, as does the Presbytery

Slide 50 We always want to try and PREVENT, rather than respond after the fact. Think about Fire Drills- we do them, so we know what to do in an emergency, even as we pray, we never have to use that knowledge.

Slide 51 AND you (and the congregation) need to know what to do BEFORE an event/allegation occurs- again, think about fire drills

Slide 52 MANDATORY REPORTING- As Pastors, Ruling Elders, Deacons and Certified Christian Educators, we are REQUIRED to report to both church and legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity (see slide for complete wording)

And yes, we are REQUIRED to make these reports

Slide 53 Every state has reporting phone #s to call. They will ask you for information, some of which you might not have. They will not call you back and tell you the outcome of their investigation. But you will have done the right thing, even if it feels scary or uncomfortable.

Slide 54 Every state also has a Good Samaritan Rule about reporting: if you make a report in good faith, and it is not substantiated/found to be true, you cannot be charged in civil or legal court

Slide 55 Story of Rev. Kris Schondelmeyer, his experience of being abused by a lay pastor, and the culpability of the church. He shared his story at the 2016 PCUSA General Assembly

Slide 56 unlike other kinds of disciplinary issues, there is no statute of limitations regarding failure to report- disciplinary action may be taken against those who reasonably could have known, and did not report/take action to protect

Slide 57 Another break?

Slide 58 Goals of your policies and procedures

Slide 59 First and always, we look to Scripture

Slide 60 All policies should have these 3 components

Slide 61 Training- who, how often? How do you let the congregation know about the training (maybe they want to come) or maybe they want to make sure they know the SS teachers/youth leaders are trained in healthy boundaries, so they can have trust in your church

Slide 62 Your policies are about prevention of abuse- this extends to in person gatherings, physical plant (doors open, windows in classrooms/offices, etc.) and social media use by and for the church

Slide 63 Best Practices

Slide 64 Social Media should be included in your policies

Slide 65 AI AND BOUNDARY TRAINING

Slide 66 If your church does not have these policies, or you want some help refreshing/revising them, contact the Presbytery. Please do NOT just copy and paste somebody else's policy whole, as it might require you to do things (like a 7 person response team) that you are unable to do.

Slide 67 Question #2

Slide 68 IF THERE IS AN ALLEGATION OF ABUSE/MISCONDUCT/HARM (we pray there never is, but remember the fire drill analogy? You need to know what to do)

Slide 69 Have a clear process, that everybody knows, and follow it

Slide 70 steps to take immediately (what does your church's policy say?)

Slide 71 Care for everyone on all sides of this issue

Slide 72 Clarity in process- who receives report? What happens next?

Slide 73 Verbal report of an allegation. In our system of church discipline, there must be a written complaint/report of the allegation. Often, people are unwilling to make a written report. NOTE- whether or not there is a written report, we still have DUTY TO REPORT abuse of a minor to both church and legal authorities

Slide 74 verbal report- what to do?

Slide 75 If the allegation is against the pastoral leader- call the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery

Slide 76 Administrative leave

Slide 77 If the allegation is against a church member/elder/employee/volunteer, notify the Clerk of Session

Slide 78 Informing the congregation that an allegation has been received- this is a time to have copies of your policy available to all (which should be true all the time) We may NOT name the allegation, nor the people involved. It is still an allegation at this point.

Slide 79 This might feel risky, making a report, telling the congregation. But we do this for the health of the church, and all involved.

Slide 80 After the announcement, people will feel all of the feelings- disbelief, betrayal, grief, anger, etc. It will be important to support people in whatever they are feeling, but also to only transmit the information you can transmit, and to cut down on speculation/gossip/uninformed accounts, etc.

Slide 81 REVIEW of your Policies: Questions to ask

Slide 82 Real objective of your policy? Bring health to the congregation, and those on all the sides of allegations? Or to protect assets/staff/reputation of church?

Slide 83 Clear language in policies

Slide 84 How often to review? How often to train?

Slide 85 Question #3

Slide 86 Our Book of Order reminds us that discipline is not about revenge or punishment, but about restoration to wholeness

Slide 87 Communication of all this with the rest of the congregation/staff/volunteers

Slide 88 Boundaries are NOT a burden!

Slide 89 Required to do this training at least every 36 months – pastoral leaders and Elders- and also anyone else your policies require to do so (SS teachers/youth leaders/nursery care workers. Etc.

Give yourself a pat on the pack- you did it! Each participant should receive a certificate of completion and put the date the training was completed- and then plan on coming back for more training in 36 months- or fewer! Thank you!

Rev. Dr. Nancy Meehan Yao, for the Committee on Ministry, Shenandoah Presbytery