

Establishing Healthy and Appropriate Boundaries

Establishing healthy and appropriate boundaries is essential for maintaining mutual respect, emotional-wellbeing, and a happy, healthy community.

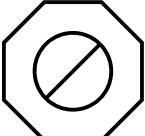
Church communities often encourage openness, close relationships, and shared vulnerability, but without having and upholding clear boundaries people can negatively impact on all the good that church communities can do.

The ethos and culture of the church is seen and felt as soon as someone comes through the door, whether for the first time or if they've been there a long time. When individuals in church, whether congregant, leader, or occasional visitor set and respect boundaries, a culture of safety, and trust can be created. However, if boundaries are not respected, it can damage not only that church relationship, but the relationship with the individual's own faith as well.

It is particularly important when, for example, saying hello to someone or when sharing the peace, that you do not assume that someone is okay with the same level of intimacy and contact that you are. Further, if someone who previously was happy with contact but is no longer comfortable, this should be respected and not questioned. When someone sets and enforces boundaries, it is not about them being unkind, or distant, and is not something to be challenged. It is about them protecting their own personal space and wellbeing. A culture where people feel free to choose and express their boundaries should be encouraged and developed. Most importantly – if someone expresses discomfort at the overstepping of a boundary, respect that and ensure that the behaviour does not continue and is not repeated.

It is good practice for the presiding member of Clergy to remind people of the usual procedure for sharing the peace in that church and that people should remain aware of other peoples' boundaries (i.e. do not automatically hug people or shake their hands – there are many reasons why people may not want to do this).

Thinking about boundaries:

Make self-care a priority	Setting your boundaries	Things to consider Combine this with left	Seek support
You may be questioning whether you can/should/may set boundaries in the first place. The answer is yes; you can. Your well-being matters. 	Identify what you are comfortable with and what makes you uncomfortable. The things that make you uncomfortable will inform your boundaries. 	Identify who you feel respects your boundaries, and who does not. Think about how you might be able to communicate your boundaries. 	There is no need to do this alone. If you are struggling, reach out for support to those around you who you trust. If you feel that you need more support speak to your Clergy, Archdeacons, or the Safeguarding Team. 