

For religious communities to have integrity and credibility they must flourish as places of love and respect. Every aspect of church life is defined and protected by essential boundaries: boundaries around space, time, thought, speech, will, emotion, and behavior--both for clergy and church members. Lack of awareness and attention to boundary keeping diminishes the integrity of the church and harms its mission, whereas insight and vigilance about best practices lend freedom and energy to the calling of the church to care for others and to reach out to the world. In a flourishing Christian community, a wide array of boundaries must be recognized, celebrated, and navigated--from the boundaries that define and protect us as individual persons to role boundaries and the boundaries that define essential communal functions, such as worship. This book is no conventional account of boundaries. It takes a comprehensive approach to the challenge of understanding and creating healthy boundaries. It applies the lessons from the emerging field of behavioral ethics to the rich and rewarding complexity of boundaries in church life, helping us to be more loving and responsible in how we think, speak, and act, so that the church can be true to its identity and mission. A meticulously crafted volume that addresses the complexities and subtleties of boundaries for the people of God engaged in ministry. The theological perspective of the authors informs their analysis and proposed solutions to ensure that the integrity of the body of Christ remains intact as experienced in the daily interactions of the people of God. --Robert H. Albers, Distinguished Visiting Professor of Pastoral Theology (retired), United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

Nessan and Mahlberg go after an unglamorous topic--boundary keeping--and refashion it to attract the attention of any serious Christian. Dispelling the notion that boundaries are mostly about constraint, these two scholars take down the yellow police tape that often encircles our imagination. They open up whole new worlds for our understanding of what it means to live moral lives grounded in integrity. --Peter W. Marty, Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Davenport, IA

Readers expecting to find an extended treatise on sexual boundary keeping will be disappointed with this book. But those interested in a larger study that addresses integrity and moral character formation are in for a treat. Nessan and Mahlberg help us look in the mirror and out at the church with fresh eyes. From boundary topics as wide-ranging as managing electronic information to respecting the identity of other peoples names, they provide all the elements we need to give shape to a culture of high ethical standards. --Peter W. Marty, Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Davenport, IA

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