

## **Canadian Anglican Cursillo**

# **RESPECTING PERSONAL BOUNDARIES**



*“Show proper respect to everyone, love the fellowship of believers...” (1 Peter 2:17)*

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Cursillo is intended to help Christians learn and live what is fundamental as a Christian, and to help these same Christians to discover and live out a personal vocation. Just as Jesus came to earth to dwell among humans: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), the Cursillo movement enables us to serve God by befriending others to bring them to Christ.

Personal contact or the individual friendships we have with others as Christians is crucial to the working of the Holy Spirit through the Cursillo movement. We remember the motto from the Weekend: “Make a friend, be a friend, bring that friend to Christ”. Exemplary interpersonal communication skills are crucial to these relationships.

There are a number of Personal Boundaries we must be aware of:

**Boundary:** *A border line between persons, places or things.*

**Personal Boundaries:** *the degree of distance or space considered safe or appropriate to maintain personal integrity (is established and maintained between persons during interactions and is dependent on degree of trust established and nature and setting of interaction).*

**Boundary Crossing:** *Actions or behaviors that deviate from established or expected boundaries in an interaction or relationship.*

**Boundary Violation:** *Boundary crossing actions or behaviors which extend beyond an accidental boundary crossing and use a trust relationship with another to meet personal needs and may result in harm to the other.*

**Boundary Signs:** *Actions, behaviors or thoughts which present warning signals that personal boundaries, in a particular interaction or relationship, are in jeopardy of being or may have been crossed.*

Cursillistas can sometimes be enthusiastic about their faith and about their experience within Cursillo, which may have contributed to a re-awakening of a personal commitment to both Christ and the church. It is possible for this enthusiasm to bubble over and lead to actions, comments or attitudes that may result in a person feeling threatened.

How do we, as loving and caring members of the Cursillo community, share the joy of Christ with others and show proper respect to others, especially in the area of personal contact?

## **Respecting Personal Boundaries**

The following are some areas to consider:

1. Before touching another, always seek permission from the other. If they say "No", then DO NOT IGNORE THE STATED WISH! Accept their refusal with grace. Do not make them feel that somehow their refusal is inappropriate. When a handshake is appropriate be careful in how firm you grasp their hand as they may have sensitivities. When passing the peace consider what it means in the context of the liturgy. It is a time where we mend relationships before going to receive communion. The handshake provides the opportunity to look them in the eye and offer the peace. A hug negates that opportunity.
2. **Physical boundaries and personal space** – This includes touching or hugging others or even being too close i.e. in their personal space. Situations may include: praying for another, comforting another who may be crying or reacting emotionally, responding to music by raising your arms or dancing. For some this degree of intimacy or exuberance may be unacceptable and may create an environment that feels unsafe or uncomfortable for them.

Please consider being present to another by simply being there, especially if they are crying or looking distressed: do not touch, hug, or try to comfort them for the crying to stop. Crying is necessary to healing, to life itself. If you wish to be a friend, sit beside them without touching them, in this manner you are letting them know you are present with no expectations of them. In the case of raising your arms or dancing ensure you are not invading personal space. Move to a place where you have room to do so and the other does not feel as if they should be doing likewise. Let them express their faith in whatever form is comfortable to them.

3. Sensitivity to religious or cultural beliefs, values and/or expressions – People are amazingly diverse and so are their ways to worship God. Respect the individual's personal religious devotion and liturgical practice. A respectful environment allows each person to engage with God in their own personal way. Consider trying to understand their religious or cultural beliefs, values and/or expressions` and share your own so that your understanding of God is enlarged! Never attempt to convince them they are wrong. There is no right way or wrong way to be in relationship with God!
4. **Relationship Building** – Relationship building takes time. There are several appropriate stages: *contact, involvement and intimacy*. We have expanded upon the following stages which are taken from The Episcopal Cursillo Ministry booklet: *Personal Contact Technique*:
  - *Contact* – begun by perceiving that there is someone with whom you would like to establish a relationship, and then interacting to explore if common interests can be developed.
  - *Involvement* – Discovering through natural conversation is mutually beneficial. This involves learning more about each other and simply being a friend without expectations. In this phase you are both discovering a new friendship that is not based on getting someone to come to a Cursillo weekend. IT may take quite a while before they share intimately enough for you to even know the fullness of where they are in life or in their

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relationship with God. IF THE INVOLEMENT STAGE MOVES TOO QUICKLY, THERE IS RISK OF BOUNDARY CROSSING AND VIOLATION.

- *Intimacy* - This stage involves some degree of commitment to the relationship; more depth takes place in sharing details of our lives, faith, fears, pain.

When we open ourselves up to others and share our own vulnerabilities, our own pain, fears, hopes, joys and thanksgivings, the other will be more likely to respond to you by sharing their experiences. Deep self-disclosure is best saved for those with whom you have a deep and trusted relationship. Consider your motivation to self-disclose. Consider whether or not the self-disclosure is appropriate to the conversation. Consider the depth of disclosure of the other person. This will advise you of his/her comfort level with the degree of sharing. ALL OF THIS SHARING BELONGS IN THE INTIMACY PHASE AND NOT THE INVOLVEMENT PHASE.

How we respect the boundaries of others may affect how that person views the Church and, therefore, how we act and speak has great implications. We must build genuine friendships and demonstrate sincere caring and respect for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Listen actively, objectively and respectfully. Pray that your relationships with others will be respectful.

### **References:**

- All employees/volunteers should be aware of the protocols and policies of your Diocese (a copy of the current documents should be on your Diocese's website)
- Rector / Lay Director / Spiritual Director / Leader of the Weekend should be aware of the reporting of Safe Church Policies and Procedures at your Diocesan level.
- Cursillo and Potential Liabilities Issues Guideline