

COVENANT

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Transitions As Opportunities for Clarity and Peace: With Our Eyes Fixed On Jesus

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

(Philippians 4:6-7)



When the Board of Directors hired me in 2019 to lead The Southdown Institute as President and Chief Psychologist, I embarked on a journey which, upon reflection, has been filled with abundant blessings, unforeseen challenges, and with my deep sense of gratitude for working with a team of caring, dedicated, and deeply compassionate individuals.

Leading an organization which aims to foster Healthy Individuals, Healthy Communities, Healthy Church has blessed me with a renewed understanding of the value of empathic, non-judging, patient, and loving accompaniment of the men and women who reach out to us for assessment, residential treatment, outpatient counseling, spiritual direction, consultation, education, and renewal services. Providing a clinically outstanding, holistic environment, founded in the wisdom of the Catholic spiritual tradition, in a collaborative and team-oriented manner, has enriched me greatly. My appreciation for this ministry of healing has been strengthened by having often heard direct feedback from residents and clients about how much their time at Southdown has meant to them personally, in their vocation, and in their ability to serve others.

During the strenuous months of the COVID-19 Pandemic, which added an unprecedented level of distress to all our lives, Southdown embraced new and creative ways of outreach, ultimately increasing our capacity to bring preventative and restorative care services to a much larger community across Canada, the United States, and the English-speaking world. Southdown continues to be known as a trusted Catholic provider of spiritually integrated mental health and renewal services.

Our faith gives us courage as we navigate through life's challenges and various times of transition because of our trust in God, and by keeping our eyes lovingly fixed on Jesus. I have come to appreciate, with renewed clarity, that alone we can do very little, but with the Lord, "by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving," everything is possible, and that "the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus."

My five years in Canada have been a true blessing, and I am deeply grateful. As I prepare to depart Southdown in January 2024 to begin a new assignment back home in Munich, Germany, close to my family, I want to express my appreciation for the trust placed in me, for the collaborative work, and for the friendship. I wholeheartedly welcome Rev. Francois Diouf, OSB, Ph.D., as the new President and Chief Clinical Officer of this amazing community of healing, and I will continue to keep my eyes fixed on Jesus, who accompanies all of us on our journeys of life.

Sincerely,

Rev. Stephan Kappler, Psy.D., C.Psych., R.Psych.
President and Chief Psychologist

The Importance of Setting Healthy Boundaries

By Carol Cavaliere, MA, C.Psych. Assoc. (Supervised Practice)



Human beings, by nature, have a fundamental need to form and maintain interpersonal relationships. This is not a mere whim or desire, but a basic element of the human condition that exerts a profound influence on our behaviour and our well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Even in childhood, it is evident that we are consistently oriented towards seeking positive interactions with others, usually within the context of an ongoing relational bond; further, once we have established these bonds, we tend to act in ways that resist separation. There is a wealth of literature to suggest that such social connections are not only beneficial for our mental health, but also our physical health and longevity (e.g., Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2014). Certainly, this underscores the importance of fostering strong social connections in our lives, both personal and professional.

While the inherent human need for connection and belonging is central to our ongoing well-being, it is equally crucial to establish and respect boundaries within these relational bonds. Boundaries serve as the framework for healthy relationships, ensuring our autonomy is protected, and our mental and emotional health is preserved, while we seek and cultivate connections. According to Sperry (2003), "boundaries are norms, rules or codes [that] provide a nurturing and safe physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual environment for individuals" (p. 10). They enable us to establish mutual trust, respect and understanding, allowing relationships to flourish without compromising our and others' personal well-being. In essence, boundaries provide the necessary balance between our innate desire for connection and the need to maintain personal integrity, respect, and safety.

Tawwab (2021) identifies six key types of boundaries:

1. **Physical boundaries** relate to personal space and physical touch.
2. **Emotional boundaries** involve separating your feelings from those of others. They require us to understand and manage our emotions and avoid taking responsibility for others' feelings.
3. **Time boundaries** necessitate that we communicate our availability and ensure others respect it.
4. **Intellectual boundaries** require us to recognize and respect others' thoughts, ideas, and curiosity, rather than belittling or trivializing them.
5. **Material boundaries** relate to finances and possessions. They require an understanding and respect of what belongs to us and what belongs to others.
6. **Sexual boundaries** involve the appropriate expression of sexuality within a context of mutual understanding, respect, and consent.

Healthy boundaries in each of these areas are imperative for maintaining productive and fulfilling social connections and overall personal well-being. People with healthy boundaries understand their limitations, are aware of their actions, and can discern what they will permit or deny from others. However, healthy boundaries are not often the default setting for many of us navigating our connections and interactions with others; in fact, we may instead implement rigid or porous boundaries (Minuchin, 1974) in one or more of the abovementioned areas.

Within the context of pastoral ministry, it has become increasingly critical to navigate between these two extremes to cultivate healthy boundaries; that is, boundaries that are active, intentional, transparent, consistent, and well-defined are necessary to ensure the welfare and safety of all parties involved while maintaining the fiduciary integrity of the pastoral role. Moreover, in addition to Tawwab's six types, ministry leaders must also consider spiritual boundaries such as, for example, creating space for others' personal spiritual exploration and growth without exerting undue influence. Such considerations have become increasingly significant in the face of concerns related to spiritual abuse (i.e., the abuse of spiritual authority). Yet, as pastoral ministry continues to evolve, including diverse personalities and demands, our ability to effectively navigate boundaries can be challenged.

Our experience at Southdown, through the years of clinical experience in working with clergy and religious, has reinforced Prentis Hemphill's oft-cited claim that "boundaries are the distance at which I can love you and me simultaneously."¹ However, it is clear that ministry leaders also require ongoing support and education to maintain this delicate balance that lies at the heart of effective and sustainable pastoral ministry.

In response to this ongoing challenge, the first of Southdown's Continuing Human Formation Seminars is "Navigating Essential Boundaries." This seminar, designed specifically for priests involved in parish ministry, involves a combination of presentations by the Southdown clinical team, and a group process element, including opportunities for small group discussion and case examples. The seminar topics identify key issues such as the concept of boundaries, cultural understanding of boundaries, and self-care boundaries, which reinforce the vital importance of healthy boundaries in ministerial relationships.

Holistic human development is a lifelong process for all of us. Identifying and maintaining appropriate boundaries is essential to building healthy relationships in our personal and professional lives. ■

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The Importance of Renewal in Our Lives

By Msgr. Jack Stoeger



For the past 20 years, I have been privileged and blessed to journey with my brother priests through spiritual accompaniment and retreat experiences at the Cardinal Timothy Manning House of Prayer for Priests in Los Angeles, California.

During these years, with the decline in priestly vocations, the demands of parish ministry (many priests alone in a parish or responsible for several parishes), the recent perils of the COVID-19 Pandemic, not to mention the stressful situations in which parishes are often divided over politics and social unrest, etc., priests are overworked and fatigued. This often leads to lethargy, unhealthy ways of coping, addictions, and a vague and ambiguous sense of purpose. What we do not deal with will deal with us sooner or later, and probably not in the best of ways. This is precisely why it is vital for us who minister to set aside time to step away, embrace our humanity, and be renewed in body, mind, and spirit.

Quality time away from the familiar for a brief or extended sabbatical, a much-needed restorative vacation, or an extended yearly retreat, is essential for our health and wholeness... and for the quality of our ministries! In my view, it is a duty for priests, religious, and lay ministers to take time to recentre on Christ, to allow grace and professional care to heal weary bodies, hearts, and minds and renew our dedication to serving others as Christ models for us. This should be done daily, during times of personal prayer and healthy self-care, but also during regular, more extended times of renewal.

So many aspects of current-day living and ministering militate against any sense of interiority. Recently, I asked a young priest, who is the pastor (and only priest) of a busy parish, if he is taking his day off. He hesitated for a moment, looked at me with exhaustion written all over his face, and responded, "Sometimes." Sabbath is a commandment!

We need to take time to rest, to be refreshed, and to be renewed. As Rev. Ronald Rolheiser, OMI, writes, "When you read the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, particularly the early sections in Genesis which chronicle the creation of the world and how God "rested" on the Sabbath, you see that there's a divinely-ordered rhythm to how work and rest are supposed to unfold in our lives." He continues, "In essence, our lives of work, our everyday agenda, and our normal anxieties, are to be regularly punctuated by a time in which we lay down the hammer, lay down our agenda, lay down our work-a-day worries and simply sit, rest, vegetate, enjoy, soak in, luxuriate, contemplate, pray and let things take care of themselves for a while." Jesus himself delegated to others and went away regularly to a deserted place to rest and be renewed.

In my own struggle to be renewed, and in witnessing this same struggle in those I accompany, I am convinced that growing more human, more holy, and more whole, is not a matter of doing more but of letting go more often. The importance of regular renewal in our lives cannot be overstated! From my experience these many years, it is non-negotiable! ■

So many aspects of current-day living and ministering militate against any sense of interiority.

Msgr. Jack Stoeger was ordained a priest of Los Angeles, California, in 1972. He has served in various parish assignments, and as Spiritual Director of St. John's Seminary/Theologate in Camarillo, California. In 2005, he was named Director of The Cardinal Timothy Manning House of Prayer for Priests in Los Angeles, where he continues in the ministry of spiritual and retreat accompaniment of priests. His passion is to assist others in deepening their relationship with God and enabling them to encounter God in creation and in others, especially the poor, the marginalized, and the voiceless.

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Thank you and may God's blessings be yours in abundance.

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Welcome to Our New President and Chief Clinical Officer



On September 21, 2023, the Board of Directors of The Southdown Institute was pleased to announce the appointment of **Rev. Francois Diouf, OSB, Ph.D.**, as the new President and Chief Clinical Officer, effective January 16, 2024. Fr. Diouf brings a deep commitment to the Mission of Southdown and to the achievement of our Vision for Healthy Individuals, Healthy Communities, Healthy Church. In his role as President and Chief Clinical Officer, Fr. Diouf will provide inspiring leadership, clinical reflective practice expertise, and commitment to collaborative professionalism in his work with the staff, stakeholders, and Board of Directors of Southdown.

Fr. Diouf expressed his deep commitment to Southdown's dedicated service "in meeting the Church where it is today while working relentlessly to empower the best possible leaders of the Church of tomorrow." We welcome Fr. Diouf to his new role at Southdown and look forward to his leadership.

In Memory



The Southdown community was deeply saddened by the news of the passing of **Sr. Miriam Ukeritis, CSJ, Ph.D.**, on December 2, 2023. During her tenure as President and CEO of The Southdown Institute from 2008 to 2014, Sister Miriam successfully led the organization through a period of unprecedented change, including a comprehensive program review, which resulted in a shift from a six month length of stay to a period of 14-weeks residence, and the major transition in the move from Aurora to our new home in Holland Landing. She will be remembered for her generous spirit, her faith-filled example of visionary leadership, and tireless dedication to the Vision and Mission of Southdown.



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Covenant is produced and published by The Southdown Institute. Its purpose is to inform and educate the readership about clinical issues that surface in our work and to invite integration of the emotional and spiritual aspects of our lives.

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