

Love Sets Boundaries

Scripture Reading — Romans 12:17-21

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with -every-one. — Romans 12:18

I've consulted with a number of churches that have members who challenged the limits of their love: an older man with dementia who propositioned young women in church; a man with intellectual disability who literally pushed people when he got excited; a woman who phoned different members of the church several times a day.

How does a church love people who test the limits of love? Love includes setting boundaries for persons whose behavior is inappropriate.

Occasionally churches must ask the person to leave and not come back, but such a rejection must be the last resort. Instead, churches need to get creative with love. They may need to help the person learn appropriate behaviors. They may need to ask for volunteers to accompany a person when he is at church gatherings so that he can be reminded to avoid offensive behaviors. Always church members must remember that they do not deserve God's love themselves but that God has loved them through Jesus Christ. They are called to do the same with others, even those who are difficult to love.

Sometimes God brings difficult people into the church fellowship so that the congregation can learn new ways to love. When our understanding of love is stretched in unwanted directions, we begin to taste the love of God for humans in new ways, and we get better at loving everyone.

Prayer

God, we love because you first loved us, even though we can be unlovable. Show us how to love creatively. In Jesus, Amen

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