

Pastoral Guardrails — A Personal Covenant

LONG FORM

Core Posture

- 1. I will be a servant, not a celebrity.** My authority exists to wash feet, not to be elevated.
John 13:14–15 – “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”
Matthew 20:25–28 – “Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’”
- 2. I will pursue humility through rigorous honesty.** I will practice daily confession, make amends when needed, and invite accountability.
Philippians 2:3–4 – “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”
James 5:16 – “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”
- 3. I will guard the flock, not build my brand.** My decisions will be for the good of the people, not for my own image.
1 Peter 5:2–3 – “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

Guardrails on Power & Authority

- 4. I will submit my leadership to plurality.** Major decisions will be made with counsel and documented consensus from trusted elders or peers.
- 5. I will welcome questioning.** Honest questions will be treated as signs of health, not rebellion.
Acts 17:11 – “Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in

Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

- 6. I will set clear boundaries against coercion.** I will not use fear, guilt, or manipulation to secure compliance.

Matthew 11:28–30 – “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Guardrails on Money & Transparency

- 7. I will keep finances transparent.** I will ensure independent oversight, open books, and clear conflict-of-interest policies.

2 Corinthians 8:20–21 – “We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.”

- 8. I will avoid entangling gifts.** I will not accept gifts or favors that could compromise integrity or influence decisions.

Proverbs 15:27 – “The greedy bring ruin to their households, but the one who hates bribes will live.”

Guardrails on Relationships & Vulnerability

- 9. I will maintain strict relational boundaries.** I will create visible safeguards in counseling settings, avoiding secrecy and emotional dependence with those I serve.

1 Timothy 3:2 – “Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.”

- 10. I will not counsel someone I am romantically interested in, or anyone who has shown interested in me.** I will refer them to another trusted resource.

- 11. I will never exploit confession.** Anything shared in confidence will never be used for control, advantage, or intimacy.

Ezekiel 34:4 – “You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.”

Guardrails on Teaching & Doctrine

- 12. I will teach for freedom, not control.** Scripture will lead people toward liberty of conscience, not dependency on me.
Galatians 5:1 – “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”
Mark 2:27 – “Then he said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.’”
- 13. I will disclose my limits.** When a topic exceeds my knowledge or capacity, I will say so and refer to someone more equipped.
Romans 12:3 – “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.”

Guardrails on Community Culture

- 14. I will de-center myself publicly, as much as possible.** I will share credit, rotate voices, encourage testimonies, and resist pedestal-building.
John 3:30 – “He must become greater; I must become less.”
- 15. I will protect spiritual refugees.** I will not pressure spiritual performance, will reframe triggering terms with grace, and will respect each person’s pace of healing.
Matthew 12:20 – “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory.”
- 16. I will keep The Sanctuary non-exclusive.** There will be no “us vs. them” elitism and no hidden requirements beyond Christ’s open invitation.
Romans 15:7 – “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

Guardrails on Process & Accountability

- 17. I will keep a living Rule of Life.** Daily prayer and Scripture, weekly Sabbath, monthly spiritual reflection, and regular retreat time.
Luke 5:16 – “But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”

18. I will practice regular self-examination. I will review my stewardship of power, money, relationships, recognition, and resentment — and act quickly to correct any drift.

19. I will seek counsel on difficult decisions. Where unity is lacking, I will wait, pray, and seek peace rather than forcing a decision.

Acts 15:28 – “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements...”

20. I will document safeguards. The Sanctuary will maintain clear policies for grievances, counseling boundaries, financial oversight, and whistleblower protection.

Monthly Red-Flag Checklist

- Am I impatient with questions or critique?
- Do I feel indispensable or irreplaceable?
- Have I hidden a decision, gift, or relationship to avoid scrutiny?
- Do people seem anxious around me?
- Am I using “God told me” to end discussion rather than invite discernment?
- Have I blurred a boundary under the guise of “pastoral care”?

Quarterly Renewal Prayer

“I renounce control, secrecy, and self-importance. I bind myself again to service, as Jesus instructed us. I choose confession over image, plurality over isolation, and people over platform. Lord, restore to me the joy of serving unseen. Make me a shepherd after Your heart.”