Response to Reports of Suspected Abuse at Duke Memorial

Purpose
To ensure a clear, consistent, and legally compliant response to allegations or suspicions of abuse within the church setting. The priority is always the safety and well-being of children, youth, and vulnerable persons.

Composition of the Safe Sanctuaries Response Team (SSRT)

1. Lead Pastor
2. Chair of Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC)
3. District Superintendent (DS)
4. A least one Qualified at-large member
    a. Someone who is a therapist, counselor, or other person with background or training in abuse prevention and/or follow up.
    b. Appointed by the Lead Pastor, Chair of SPRC, and DS as needed.

*If any of the above persons are implicated in the alleged abuse, they shall not serve on the SSRT for the duration of the case.

Reporting Process
Reporter must contact appropriate government authorities:

1. Department of Social Services in the county where the minor or vulnerable adult resides

2. Law Enforcement: If abuse involves criminal activity (sexual abuse, physical assault, exploitation)

Reporter submits an Incident Report to the SSRT.

SSRT sends an acknowledgement of receipt of the incident report and begins response actions.

Response Actions
Step 1: Protect the Vulnerable
Ensure immediate safety of the alleged victim(s).

Remove them from contact with the accused staff member or volunteer.

Provide pastoral care and emotional support.

Step 2: Status of the Accused Staff/Volunteer
Immediate administrative leave for staff.

Suspension of volunteer duties pending investigation.

Restricted from contact with children, youth, and vulnerable persons.

The accused is informed of the allegation and process, but not allowed to confront the alleged victim.

Step 3: Notification of Authorities
Ensure the reporter has notified social services and/or law enforcement.

Contact the District Superintendent for denominational oversight.

Contact Insurance carrier/legal counsel: to ensure compliance with all policies.

Step 4: Communication and Documentation

Communications: Manage internal and external messaging, including media inquiries.

Documentation: Maintain secure records of all reports, actions, and outcomes.