



SALEM CHURCH

July 9, 2019

Subject: Important Alert from Salem Church & Utopia Outreach

Dear Salem Church & Utopia Outreach Family,

On Tuesday evening, June 25th, we received a sexual abuse complaint from a local family against Angelo Paulino, a Salem Church and Utopia Outreach volunteer. In compliance with our security protocols, we immediately removed Angelo from all access to Salem Church until the matter can be fully investigated. On Thursday, June 27th, Salem Church Associate Pastor Ed Fieramosca, a former NYPD sergeant and licensed counselor, sat down with the family who made the complaint. Immediately following this meeting, Pastor Ed Fieramosca reported the alleged incident to Child Protective Services who then referred the case to the NYPD. At this time, there is a criminal investigation underway, and Salem Church is in full cooperation with the authorities.

Hearing this complaint has outraged, shocked and deeply saddened me. And while awaiting the outcome of the NYPD's investigation, I am committed to leading the entire Salem Church leadership team through a prayerful follow-up process that is both totally transparent and focused on discovering the truth. In the weeks ahead, we will be contracting an outside firm to carry out a full, independent investigation and assessment of Salem Church policies and practices related to child safeguarding. Once completed, their report and subsequent recommendations will be made public to the Salem Church membership along with proposed action steps moving forward.

In the meantime, our priorities will be **primarily** caring for the brave family who came forward with this complaint. **Secondly**, we are taking immediate steps to ensure even greater safety for the families under our care at Salem Church and Utopia Outreach. **Thirdly**, since a church is not qualified or authorized to investigate a potential crime, we are working closely with the NYPD to discover the facts of the reported abuse in question. **Fourthly**, we encourage each family of Salem Church and Utopia Outreach to have a delicate conversation with their children and teenagers, encouraging them to be honest about any inappropriate interactions with anyone in their lives. Over the past few days, I have had one-on-one conversations with my own young children on this difficult topic, and I encourage each family associated with Salem Church and Utopia Outreach to do the same.

Finally, and most importantly, if anyone has knowledge of any incident of abuse or behavioral misconduct on the part of anyone associated with Salem Church or Utopia Outreach, we strongly encourage you to come forward immediately. Either Associate Pastor Ed Fieramosca (ed.fieramosca@salemchurchnyc.org) or Executive Operations Director Anne Lau (anne@salemchurchnyc.org) are prepared to meet with you, hear you, and provide whatever assistance is needed going forward. I can personally assure you that you will be respected, affirmed and loved as you take that difficult step forward.

The scripture commands, *"Give justice to the weak & the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy, deliver them from the hand of the wicked."* (Psalm 82:3-4) As a father of three, and a pastor to hundreds of children, it has always been my deepest desire to provide a safe space for them to grow to love and serve Jesus. Please pray with me that God would be glorified in the way we handle this difficult season, resulting in even greater days of ministry ahead for both Salem Church and Utopia Outreach.

All to Jesus,

Pastor John Welborn
Matthew 6:33