



# A LETTER FROM THE ABUSE RESPONSE TEAM

*at St. Thomas More*

Dear Parishioners of St. Thomas More,

Cindy Neely and I write to you today to update you on the response our parish has made to the abuse crisis in the Church. In the fall of 2018, we held listening sessions in response to the crisis. However, it was important that this was not just a “one and done” kind of thing for us. There was a need to have an ongoing response in order to respond in every way possible to this crisis. As such, I convened a group and asked Cindy to be the facilitator. Cindy is a spiritual director and coordinates our spiritual direction ministry.

The Abuse Response Team was charged with the task of making recommendations to me as to how to proceed in our parish to help ensure that abuse does not happen in our Church or in families.

The crisis has been a time of great pain for us who form the Body of Christ. This crisis has involved a betrayal of trust by those who were placed in positions of authority in the Church. The cover up has caused trauma, pain, sadness, and anger among abuse victims, their families and the Catholic community. As your pastor, I support openness and transparency to learn from the abuse crisis and work for true change in our Church.

As the baptized, each of us is called to universal holiness. We are intentional disciples who seek to know and follow Christ. We must open our hearts to all those who have suffered as a result of abuse of power in all of its forms. As we strive for a Church that is holier and healthier, we are asking that you listen, learn and engage on this issue of abuse.

So how might you do that? Here are some activities planned in the months to come. Details will be available as the plans roll out. Please engage in them as your heart directs:

- Respond to our short survey on the sex abuse scandal to help us know and meet our specific parish needs that is available on the September More News and Links
- Read the book that will be distributed on September 29, *Letter to a Suffering Church* by Bishop Robert Barron
- Participate in the parish novena for abuse victims in October
- Attend one of the talks and discussion sessions offered by Fr. Gerard McGlone, SJ, an abuse survivor, the weekend of October 26-27
- Participate in the Advent Group Spiritual Direction session

- Participate in the Adult Faith Formation series in the first quarter of 2020 as a front line responder, parent or grandparent
- Participate in training sessions to learn to protect our youth
- Support a faith-based Victim's Recovery Group
- Give your time as a mental health professional or spiritual director to advocate and accompany abuse victims
- Help develop and distribute mental health resources to victims and their families in the Chapel Hill area
- Help St. Thomas More develop policies and processes to advocate and facilitate the referral process
- Learn about mental health resources, parish governance, and policies for reporting abuse to the police and diocese
- Take part in lay leadership ministry and other opportunities to help our pilgrim Church live gospel values
- Make your views known to me (smccue@stmchapelhill.org; 919-942-6234) or Cindy Neely (neelycynthia@gmail.com; 919-942-6224).

We will continue to inform you of what the Abuse Response Team recommends and accomplishes. We will have more to say on this topic in future communications.

Please know the power of God is present in our brokenness. The Risen Christ has given us his Spirit to strengthen our holiness and help all heal from the pain of abuse.

We invite you to join us as we go forward together with compassion and humility to live lives of love and mercy.

Yours in Christ,



Fr. Scott McCue  
Pastor



Cindy Neely  
Abuse Response Team Coordinator