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Former area pastor accused of child molestation

By Joe Beck

James Daley ([Buy photo](#))

A Page County grand jury Monday handed up indictments of 12 counts of aggravated sexual battery of a child less than 13 years old against the former pastor of a church in Shenandoah County.

Page County Sheriff John B. Thomas said the defendant, James Richard Daley, 70, now pastor of the Beth Eden Lutheran Church in Luray, was arrested after someone reported him to the Luray Police Department. Daley remained held without bond in the Page County Jail on Tuesday afternoon.

Daley was pastor at the Lebanon Lutheran Church in Lebanon Church for several years in the 1980s.

News of Daley's indictments stunned John D. Cutlip, the current pastor of Lebanon Lutheran. Cutlip said he has been in sporadic contact with Daley through the years, most recently two or more years ago when they co-officiated at a wedding.

"It's safe to say I'm shocked, and everybody here is shocked," Cutlip said. "It's something we wouldn't have suspected."

Daley's wife, Margaret, also was charged with failure to report child abuse and keeping a child in a dangerous environment.

Thomas said the indictments against James Daley span a period from Jan. 1, 2011 to Sept. 30, 2012.

Thomas said the investigation was triggered by a report received at the Luray Police Department on July 14. The Luray police sought out his department for assistance in the investigation a day later, Thomas said.

Thomas said law enforcement officers initially arrested Daley on two counts last week. Those charges were dropped before Monday's indictment, he said. The two initial counts are part of a strategy sometimes employed by law enforcement to hold defendants for a short period before their case goes to the grand jury, Thomas said.

A search warrant affidavit filed with the Page

Margaret Daley ([Buy photo](#))

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County Clerk of Circuit Court states that Daley was accused of "inappropriately touching a female child." The affidavit, by Investigator Mike Wagoner of the Sheriff's Office, states that he and another investigator, Clay Nevitt, interviewed Daley on July 16, and Daley "admitted to allegations that were alleged by the victim."

The affidavit states, "numerous allegations of sexual abuse were reported" during the investigation.

The affidavit identifies a two-story house at 8 Blue Ridge Ave. in Luray as the location authorities targeted for the search warrant. The address is the same as the one given for the Daleys in the White Pages telephone directory.

The items listed as possible evidence to be seized included a long list of computer-related communications devices such as modems, sim cards, software and passwords. Authorities were also looking for diaries, notes, books, pictures, magazines and videotapes depicting sexual activity between adults and children, according to the court document.

Thomas said Margaret Daley ran a day care center, but refused to say whether the charges against her or her husband were linked to the operation of the facility.

"I think you can read between the lines if she was charged with failing to report," Thomas said, referring to the charge of failing to report child abuse.

Thomas said the town has revoked Margaret Daley's business license under which she operated the day care center. He said she was found to have 18 children enrolled at the facility, far above the five she was licensed to serve.

Thomas said the investigation is continuing and future charges against one or both Daleys remain possible. Thomas said he knows of no one else who could be charged in the investigation.

Cutlip called the allegations against James Daley "a horrible situation" but the defendant remains innocent until proved guilty.

"It's a shock and our prayers are with him and his family and those involved," Cutlip said.

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