Dear Friends,

This may be a little long, but bear with me. It will be a quick read!

Recently The Hope of Survivors competed in the GuideStar-KIMBIA® $5,000 grant giveaway, and lost. The rules were simple: the organization with the most reviews wins the grant. The winning nonprofit received over 2,000 reviews. The Hope of Survivors? Only 57. This, in spite of the fact notices were sent out to over 1,200 newsletter subscribers and posted on Facebook® repeatedly. No matter that The Hope of Survivors website receives 10,000-12,000 visitors (not hits) each month. The simple fact is not enough people were willing or able to take the time to write a brief review to improve our chances of winning the much-needed funds.

The reviews we did receive were great--very affirming and encouraging. Here are some of the posts:

"As a pastor for over 37 years, I have seen more times than I want to recall the tragedy of clergy abuse. I have also known Steve and Samantha for several years and am well aware of the countless lives they have touched with this ministry. As they serve from experience they also serve with tremendous skill, sensitivity, and professionalism. Too many churches and organizations are reluctant to address this problem and as a result many lives have been severely damaged. The Hope of Survivors can not only help victims, but can also effectively help pastors and church administrators avoid the problem before it starts. THOS is a powerful tool across denominational lines."--Pastor Marvin

"I first became aware of THOS through their website and, soon after, they happened to run some workshops and training for Church pastors and leaders near where I live in Australia. As a social worker, investigator and educator who has worked in this field I must say I was impressed with the depth, balance, and practical approach of the training. It was clearly evident that the pastors and leaders from many denominational groups found the training by THOS most helpful indeed. I totally recommend their training programs and the approach taken by THOS. I have no hesitation in recommending THOS and their website to clients I work with and the feedback from clients has been very positive about what THOS has opened up for them."--Doc AU

"I will never forget the help Samantha and Steve gave me during my times of
trouble with our church. They are a Godsend and I pray they will always be able to continue with their ministry. It is very important and I can’t stress enough how much they were of service to me. I don’t think I would have made it without their many calls.”--DebK

"I was worried at first about trusting the people at The Hope of Survivors with my story of clergy sexual misconduct. What if they didn’t believe me? What if they didn’t keep my information confidential? Worst of all, what if they didn’t understand? Well, I was amazed at how they did understand. They understood more than anyone else, and they helped guide me through the difficult process of bringing a complaint and eventually telling my husband what happened. What’s more, they shared the truth of God’s love for me when I most needed to be reminded of it. I have never been helped by any organization as much as I was by this one. If not for them, I would not have come through this as well as I did.”--Baptist

"When my husband came across THOS on the Internet, it was the starting point for my healing from clergy sexual misconduct. The counseling I received from THOS helped quiet the shaming voices that were telling me that it was all my fault. ...With the Lord’s help, THOS saved my sanity-and my marriage."--SurvivorGirl007

"The ongoing ministry of THOS encourages me. I believe the Holy Spirit is using the ministry of THOS to not only help victims, but also to bring change in the church by their presence at General Conference meetings, television appearances, and their dedication to help and educate about this problem. A problem that has been in the church far too long.”--DebD

"I admire the work that The Hope of Survivors is doing... This organization addresses an issue that is rarely looked at by the majority of churchgoers. It provides a healing environment for women to recover what has been lost (or taken) from their lives. All in all, I’d say that this organization is one of the most caring organizations I’ve come across. I want to volunteer with them.”--TirzaR

Additionally, in answer to the question, "If I had to make changes to this organization, I would...", the responses below show a recurring theme:

...Allow more financial support so they could continue to reach out to those who need them the most whether this be through more organizations in different countries or more conferences.

...I would like to see this organisation grow in reaching more survivors and having a stronger voice 'politically' to organized 'religion' in calling for reform and the mandating of clergy training and complaint response procedures.

...I wouldn’t change a thing, except shower them with the funds that they need to expand their ministry.

...only make it more widely known and available to more people.

...want them to be available in every large city and maybe a hotline for help.

...find more volunteers to help lighten the workload.

...However possible, expand their resources (time, finances, personnel) to spread THOS message of hope and healing through Jesus Christ.
...try to increase funding to promote to a wider audience.

...have people donate more so they could get paid.

...THOS needs more publicity so victims of pastoral misconduct can know there is help available to them!

...THOS should reach out to our nation's military bases.

...provide funds to expand the ministry.

...I would like to see them receive more funding from churches and NGO's.

...Get the word out! This organization needs more literature-maybe even t-shirts or stickers so we can show support.

...Have more field workers...there is so much work to do in this field!

The consensus seemed too obvious to ignore. The two things people would change about The Hope of Survivors are: (1) provide more funding and staff; and, (2) expand its awareness and advertising so more people would know about it. Interestingly enough, both of those things take funds...the very thing organizations like The Hope of Survivors struggle to obtain.

It set me to thinking about things though. This ministry is a labor of love, a burden that has been on my heart (and Steve's) since December 2002. So, ponder with me for a moment, if you will. What if...

...we all prayed for God's will, direction, blessing and provision for The Hope of Survivors?

...those who have received support from The Hope of Survivors contributed in some way financially?

...people who have made promises or pledges to give actually followed through?

...victims everywhere were willing to spread the word about The Hope of Survivors through various means?

...churches of every denomination were more open to hosting conferences conducted by The Hope of Survivors, or collecting offerings for its mission?

...there were enough funds to pay staff salaries and hire more workers?

...we could have representatives in every country and language, working with victims and church leaders alike?

...we were able to conduct Hope & Healing conferences for victims in every major city around the world?

...we were able to conduct Faith & Fidelity conferences for pastors and church leaders in every denomination around the world?

...we had all the resources needed to create and distribute additional materials, such as DVDs, literature, etc.?
...we could establish a fully-staffed healing center, as many have requested?

...we advertised in magazines (rates are $3,000-$6,000 per ad, per time) to raise awareness?

These are just a few of the questions I ask myself--and the Lord--as I ponder what could be for The Hope of Survivors, for victims, for congregations worldwide. The possibilities are endless. They are only limited by means.

Many wrote that the changes they would make to The Hope of Survivors would be for more funds and greater exposure. I confess I do not know how to make that happen. I do what I can to share the needs of the ministry, to apply for grants, to spread the word...but that’s all I can do. Prayer is the answer, I believe. Will you join me in prayer for The Hope of Survivors--the organization that has touched your life, or someone’s you know, in such a powerful way?

At times I am discouraged by the never-ending, daunting tasks before me, and the seemingly insurmountable challenge of funding a vitally necessary organization in a world where most people simply do not care. I am comforted by the words in Matthew 19:26, "But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Thank you, Jesus!

I choose to praise God in advance for what He will do through our collective prayers.

What if you joined me?

God bless you,
Samantha Nelson
Vice President