Dear Hope of Survivors Family,

Are you feeling the heat? I know many of you are suffering with temperatures over 100 degrees right now. Thankfully, in Omaha, it is "only" in the 90s--unlike last year when it was above 100 degrees for weeks on end.

If you're not feeling the heat temperature-wise, my guess is you are feeling it in some other way. Perhaps it's a conflict at work, financial stress, interpersonal relationship issues or--what many of you reading this have experienced--abuse by a spiritual leader.

Did you know our God has promised to be a shelter, a refuge, a place where you can hide under the shadow of His wings and find rest, peace and comfort? (Ps. 61:3; Ps. 9:9; Ps. 17:8; Matt. 11:28; Ps. 119:50) I encourage each of you to spend some time with Him today (and every day) to really experience the benefit of His peace. I believe, as you do so, the temperature outside and the "fires" in your life will become less burning and perplexing.

While my personal "heat" of late is an overflowing schedule and endless to-do list (which is why you haven't received many updates lately), I am so thankful God brought The Hope of Survivors into existence! Through this ministry, I have seen Him at work to bring back the "sheep" that have been driven from His fold by the wolves in sheep's clothing who professed to care for them. Ezekiel chapter 34 is a powerful testimony against those who harm God's flock. The Hope of Survivors is a tool in God's hands to facilitate healing in the lives of victims of clergy sexual abuse. It is truly a privilege and sacred responsibility to manage this organization and oversee the many volunteers who serve those in need.

My prayer is the articles in this issue will be a blessing to each of you in some way. God has blessed with many opportunities to raise awareness of clergy sexual abuse so far this year, and many more events and projects are in the works right now. Don't forget-this August we will...
celebrate the 3rd Annual Clergy Sexual Abuse Awareness & Prevention® campaign. It's not too late to do something in your area!

Please check the Calendar page to see all the upcoming seminars and events planned in Florida, California, Hawaii, Alabama, Romania and more! And, please continue to pray for and support The Hope of Survivors with your love offerings as we strive to educate in order to prevent abuse and, when prevention has failed, facilitate healing in the broken lives of victims around the globe.

God bless you,
Samantha Nelson
Vice President & CEO

P.S. In an unexpected turn of events, we have been informed there is a possibility of a property being donated to The Hope of Survivors to use as a safe haven for victims. The potential donors are awaiting an answer to their personal prayer and expect that answer to come in July. Please pray God will answer their prayer—and ours—according to His will!

Hope for the Hopeless
By Andora (a pseudonym)

My story began like many others. I was a part of a broken home. Fighting, yelling and a longing for affection from both parents was a part of my daily life. I grew up in the church, and from a very young age I had an intimate relationship with God. There was no doubt in my mind that I belonged to God and I loved every moment of it. My heart longed for ministry and pleasing God with every fiber of my being. Read more...

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In the Spotlight!
Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)

Does the organization have a clergy sexual abuse policy in place? If yes, where can this policy be found (provide URL, mailing address if a copy must be requested, etc.)? Answer to question... Read more...

Testimonials

"Very grateful for your counsel, your advice was SPOT ON! Thank you again. Even nightmares have stopped. Now I'm 70, unlikely to repeat. God Bless!"—Survivor

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always support The Hope of Survivors! I talked with Danielle recently about some things and got encouraged! You guys may never know how impacting your ministry has been to my life! God has used everyone in The Hope of Survivors to deliver, heal, and restore the hearts of His saints. I will be eternally thankful for your ministry."--AL

"A huge THANK YOU to both for the excellent presentation last night. ...it was an amazing presentation and I have heard a lot of positive comments on how well you both presented the information. I can't think of one thing that I would have wanted you to add or take away. I thank God for your willingness to be used for this purpose!!"--IA

Read more testimonials...

Prayer Requests

In addition to praying for each of the victims who contact the ministry and the healing that is so desperately needed in their lives, please also remember that The Hope of Survivors needs your prayers & support too. Thank you!

Creative Ways to Help!

Like to travel? Summer's here, and it's not too late to plan a great trip that also gives back to The Hope of Survivors when you select the organization as the beneficiary! Check out Goodtravel at http://www.goodsearch.com/travel-category/coupons.

Contribute with ease by setting up monthly recurring donations to The Hope of Survivors. It's easy! Just go to http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/donate.php and type in the amount you'd like to contribute.

Earn money for The Hope of Survivors each time you dine out or shop at merchants who participate in eScrip. Just register your credit or debit cards and choose The Hope of Survivors to be the recipient of the rewards. It's that easy!

Thank you for supporting The Hope of Survivors!

Immediate Needs

* Funds to purchase and/or modify a property to provide a safe place for victims to heal and overcome clergy sexual abuse in the US.

* Funds to purchase or build a healing center in Romania to provide a safe place for victims to heal and overcome clergy sexual abuse.

* Hope & Healing (victim's) conference expenses (meeting space rental, meals, travel, materials, etc.).

* Faith & Fidelity (pastor's) conference expenses (meeting space rental, meals, travel, materials, etc.).

* Monthly operating expenses (postage, office supplies, utilities, printing, etc.), staff, educational materials and victim assistance.

* Funds for conferences, exhibits and conventions--one of the best ways to spread the word about this ministry and bring hope and healing to victims!

Donations are the primary source of funds that make it possible for The Hope of Survivors to maintain its ministry. Since The Hope of Survivors receives no denominational subsidies, your gifts are vitally important.
Would you be willing to help? Thank you for considering a tax-deductible donation to further the work of this ministry and bring hope and healing to wounded hearts.
Hope for the Hopeless by Andora (a pseudonym)

My story began like many others. I was a part of a broken home. Fighting, yelling and a longing for affection from both parents was a part of my daily life. I grew up in the church, and from a very young age I had an intimate relationship with God. There was no doubt in my mind that I belonged to God and I loved every moment of it. My heart longed for ministry and pleasing God with every fiber of my being.

During my teenage years life began to change. My longing for acceptance by my parents, siblings and others would overtake me and, even though I had a relationship with God, there was something that continued to leave me hurting and searching. I was sexually abused and raped twice during my high school years (which I did not even realize was abuse until I was much older). The pain that I experienced through continually compromising to be accepted by men and the judgment that women placed on me was almost too much to bear. I went into a deep depression in the later years of high school until one day a friend was in need of help.

She wanted to go back to church but didn't want to go alone. I told her I would be glad to go with her and there began my journey into a world I never knew existed. This church was amazing, the Word was powerful, the people seemed loving and accepting and I knew that is where I was supposed to be. Finally there was something that seemed to be filling my void, a deeper and more applicable understanding of the Word was presented and it was exactly what I needed.

At this point I was very trusting and much happier but my unresolved issues followed me and things began to change. The first time I met this pastor officially was during a time when my family issues were overwhelming. I was 16 and felt like the whole world was crashing in. He saw me as he was passing by. I was crying in the hallway and he asked me to come into his office to talk. I said okay and he began to comfort me with his words. From then on our conversations would become more frequent but it always stayed very spiritual-related. A while went by and the emails and conversations began to become more personal. He started sharing issues he was having and how lonely he felt. I now know this is what is referred to as "grooming" their victims. It began to get deeper and, at first, I was honored that he chose me to share his deepest thoughts and struggles with but, very quickly, I realized it was becoming twisted but I didn't know how to get out. I trusted a man who said he lived his life for Christ, so I mistook my intuition as immaturity and misunderstanding the situation.

He began to tell me how, if anyone knew of his true thoughts, he would be devastated. I took this to mean that I should keep this to myself and so I took on that weight. Another year passed and the conversations started becoming more sexual than personal. He would ask me about the guys I was dating and how I felt about certain things. Finally, one day, it turned physical. At first I was stunned and he apologized. I believed that everyone was human and was eager to forgive because I couldn’t bear the thought of holding a small mistake over someone who truly loved God.

After that it continued to progress until one day the virginity that I had guarded for so long was gone. After that the situation became very abusive. There were threats that if I told anyone, the whole church would come crashing down and that I would destroy everything he had worked for. This abuse continued for many years. He used what he called "spiritual insight" to manipulate situations and even began to attack the couple that had taken me under their wings to disciple me. They knew something was wrong but couldn’t identify it and I wouldn’t share it. He told me if I shared anything about what was going on that it would also destroy the couple's place in the church (they were elders).

The emotional, spiritual and sexual abuse continued. It was a nightmare that I did not know how to wake up from. There were times when I thought it was okay and that he really loved me, but deep down inside I knew that God was not pleased. After a while I found out that I was not the first person and there were many others, even at the same time. It was devastating, especially since for so long purity had been important to me and now it hadn’t even been given to someone who cared anything for me.
He began to get paranoid and started threatening me. He said that if I ever told anyone, he would have to kill me. To save the church, to save his family and to save all that he had worked for. In spite of the threats, I began to share little bits and pieces to see if anyone would hear my cry for help. All that did was turn the people that knew against me. I was even confronted by a member who stated if I told anyone they would personally beat me up for it. I was even more devastated and confused. How could one man be so hurtful and how could God's people not see that I needed help? How could the Body of Christ protect one man, and leave all the other victims helpless? I cried out to God to help me but felt so overwhelmed in guilt and condemnation that I didn’t even expect Him to hear me.

Finally, I decided to tell the elders that were discipling me. The husband had truly been a father to me. He was so angry with me for not telling him sooner. He immediately confronted the pastor and told him he needed to leave me alone or he did not want to know what would happen next. After that it was internal chaos. The pastor began to defame the elder’s character over the pulpit and purposely began sowing seeds to destroy any ties or relationship that anyone had with me or the elder and his wife. He even started telling people that the elder and I were in a relationship to distract others from looking at him. He even began to share with people how I was after his money all this time and that I was not as innocent as many believed, that my intention since the beginning was to destroy relationships.

The church completely turned against me. For a whole year I stayed receiving counseling through the elders who were helping me. I went through a process of breaking the soul tie while sitting every Sunday watching him preach in the pulpit. This was so hard but I never heard God tell me to leave. One day I confronted the pastor and told him that I understood his purpose was to teach me what love was not. He was angry but I stood my ground. He kicked the elders and me out of the church by announcing that they had decided to start a church of their own and their service would be next Sunday.

We continued to seek healing from it all. That was almost 10 years ago. He continued to pursue me and even sent people to find out what I was doing and where I was. The other women involved with him became angry with me because I was the only one that chose to be healed and change my situation. I was no longer his victim or under his control. I was proof that, even when a person gets into that situation, they can be healed and change and turn their life back around toward living a life pleasing to God.

During the situation, I couldn’t see a way out, I didn’t believe that I would ever survive it, but I continued to seek God and apply His Word and trust that He would see me through. It taught me so much about life and lessons and how much grace and love God has for us. I know many people who have faced this situation and turned completely away from God and the church and that is what the enemy wants. My relationship with God is not tied to a man so, even though man let me down, God never did. There is always a process to healing. Ten years later, I can say that I am healed, even though there are many layers yet to be identified and dealt with, I do claim and know that I am healed.

Experiencing this is devastating but everything has a purpose. I didn’t see it but now I understand it. For many men and women who have faced this, the purpose has yet to be revealed but God is good and His way is perfect we just have to trust that He will bring us through. I know He can, because he brought me through. There will be many tears, anger, sadness, disappointment and confusion but, after, if you are willing to be healed, there will be understanding, compassion for others and a heart to see others healed. I am no longer a victim! I am more than a conqueror through Christ Jesus and a true walking testimony that there is in fact hope for the hopeless!

[END OF STORY]

If you are a survivor of clergy abuse, we would love to hear your story and possibly make it available on this web site for others to read and renew their hope. You can use a pseudonym if you choose and rest assured that all personal information will be kept private and strictly confidential. Please contact us.

Please note: We do not necessarily agree with or endorse all the information contained in the survivor’s stories. We do, however, feel they have some valuable information that could be useful to you in your recovery. It helps to know you’re not alone, that others have shared your pain and have healed, by the grace of God, in their own time and way.

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart... — Psalms 34:18
Tips for Helping a Partner who was Sexually Abused as a Child—Grant Cameron

(From the July 2013 edition of HopeSpeak)

It was several years ago, but I clearly remember the day my wife, Liz, told me that she had been sexually abused as a child.

We were watching TV and I could tell she wasn’t really interested in the show.

“What’s wrong?” I asked her, unaware that her answer would turn my world upside down.

“My stepfather sexually abused me when I was a child,” Liz said. “Now I’m getting harassing phone calls from him.”

It all came flooding out.

Liz told me about the abuse. She told me about the episodes in the bathtub, the attic, times she’d wake at night to find her stepfather watching her with a strange, mad look on his face.

After that, Liz spent roughly a year going through the process of healing from childhood sexual abuse. It was a roller coaster ride at times. And, as a partner I often had nowhere to turn for help.

Having gone through the healing process with a survivor, though, I can now provide some insight into the problems that partners face. Following are five tips to help partners cope:

1. **Find a Good Counselor**

   This should be a priority. They are worth their weight in gold.

   Word of mouth is perhaps the best way to find someone who can do the job, someone whom you can trust to help the survivor heal.

   If you know someone who has been through the process, don’t be afraid to ask him or her for the name of a counselor. They’ll likely be more than helpful in pointing you in the right direction.

   Failing that, try the yellow pages. Look under marriage and family therapists. That’s where most of them are listed. Call the local family counseling centre or sexual assault centre. They’ll also have names of counselors available.

2. **Prepare for the Crisis Stage**

   This is the time in the healing process when everything in the survivor’s life seems to come apart at the seams. The crisis stage can come on suddenly and without warning. It happens because the memories of the survivor’s past can be overwhelming.

   The best way a partner can help a survivor get through this stage is by taking an interest in what the survivor has to say. Rather than just wait for her to talk herself out, get involved in conversations about her past and ask questions so you can better understand it all. By sharing her experiences, the survivor will not feel alone during this stage.

3. **Release Your Anger**

   Anger is something you’ll have to deal with if you’re going to get safely and sanely through the healing process with a survivor.

   It’s caused by the fact you have limited control over the situation and because things seem hopeless at times. Learning how to control anger is the key to survival.

   Your anger needs to be vented in a constructive way or it will boil over inappropriately.

   Exercise is a great way to release your anger. There are myriad ways to vent. Go out and hit the heavy bag in the garage. Go fishing. Sometimes taking a walk in the park can also help.
4. Take Breaks

The pressure and problems associated with helping a survivor heal can tax your reserves to the limit. If you don't schedule breaks, you're going to buckle under all the pressure—especially down the road as the healing process drags on.

You need to be physically as well as mentally fit for what's ahead, for whatever comes up on the survivor's road to recovery. To do this you've got to eat properly, exercise and, above all, take regular breaks from the healing process.

5. Realize it Will End

Just knowing this can help you get through the healing process with a survivor.

It takes time, but the survivor will heal. And as the survivor heals, she will leave behind the pain of the past. She will no longer mourn for her lost childhood, although she will always remember what happened to her. The key is that she will no longer suffer as a result.

Grant Cameron is an award-winning journalist and author living in Ontario, Canada. He has written a downloadable PDF book called What About Me? for men who are helping female partners recover from the effects of childhood sexual abuse. To order a PDF, go to www.helpforpartners.wordpress.com. The book is $15.95. Grant can be reached at grant.cameron@cogeco.ca.

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart... — Psalms 34:18
Leadership Abuses: Private and Public Sins—Jim Wright

(From the July 2013 edition of HopeSpeak)

"Peace if possible, truth at all costs."—Martin Luther

"Church" can often be messy, especially when ongoing sins and improprieties begin to come to light—maybe even among our leaders. Yet God, I believe, is calling us all to a new level of collective integrity.

So how do we handle leadership failings, especially when they go beyond merely personal sin and involve an abuse of position or trust within a church, movement or mission, and hurts others?

**Private Personal Offenses**

In Matt. 18, Jesus tells us how to address private, personal offenses between believers.

In that passage, we are told to first approach the offending brother in private. If he doesn’t listen, we then take one or two others in private. If he still doesn’t repent, we go public by taking it before the whole congregation and, if there’s still no repentance, remove him from the church if necessary.

**Public Leadership Sins**

In contrast, I Tim. 5:19-21 tells us how to deal with leadership sins that amount to more than just an offense between two believers.

Often, such problems are so bad that outside intervention is needed—maybe because the local church failed to take corrective action out of loyalty or the offending leader has manipulated the process to prevent accountability.

When that happens, there is no effective repentance and the misconduct threatens others. For such offenses, Paul commands Timothy to publicly reprimand the church leader based on the confirming evidence of multiple witnesses.

**Peace and Truth**

When a church leader is accused of having abused his or her position of trust, tensions will often emerge.

Those who temperamentally value peace and relationships above all else will want things swept under the rug—even if it means avoiding truth.

Others, who temperamentally tend towards truth and justice, will want to rush in and set things straight without following proper Biblical procedures.

I’ve found over the years, however, that relationships and peace purchased at the expense of truth are never substantial or lasting.

Likewise, truth that wants to quickly confront misconduct in our leaders without following proper Biblical procedure can be like acid that burns and disfigures a community, while also running the risk of destroying reputations by improperly rushing to judgment.

Nonetheless, where a church leader has abused his or her position, and it is confirmed by multiple witnesses following a careful investigation, then truth must go public.

**Silence Not Allowed**
When it comes to church leaders who engage in disabling leadership sins, silence is not optional. In the New Testament, I Tim. 5 teaches this.

In the Old Testament, we also have the example of Nathan the prophet publicly confronting and exposing King David for his abuse of power and position—even though David clearly was God’s anointed leader! (See 2 Sam. 12:1-24 and Psalm 51.)

Any community of believers that values peace at the expense of truth—properly posited—will not survive. Eventually, cracks that have been hidden will open wide and the foundation will crumble. It is no mercy to let those cracks slowly bring down a church, movement or mission due to silence over disabling leadership sins.

Likewise, truth divorced from a motivation for real peace in the long run (as opposed to a false peace built on lies) will also destroy authentic community as leaders hold onto disabling sins or improprieties.

Sometimes, however, getting to Biblical peace requires that we first go through the messy process or open investigation, rebuke and warning—like we see throughout scripture and Paul commands of Timothy.

I am aware of NO instance where the Bible condones covering up the improprieties of those who claim to be leaders. In fact, the Biblical approach—Old and New Testament—is quite the opposite.

Furthermore, a truly repentant leader will not try to hide his leadership sins, but openly confess and publicly repent. Absent that, they remain a danger to all.

Investigate, Confirm, Rebuke

It’s naive to think some church leaders—including those we may personally find charming and inspiring—don’t secretly abuse their positions or those entrusted to their care.

Left unchecked, at best they become frauds whose public persona and teachings are contradicted by their private lives.

At worse, they become predators who thrive on secrecy, manipulation, lies and misplaced loyalty.

That’s why God gives us proper procedures in 1 Tim. 5 for confronting abusive church leaders—starting with investigation, confirming evidence and eventually escalating to the point of a public reprimand and warning to others.

 Nonetheless, God cautions us on our attitudes when confronting the sins of others. But he never tells us to turn away from truth—even though there may be pain and conflict involved—nor does he ever give us the option of sweeping the disabling sins of church leaders under the rug.

Never.

The Golden Rule

The Golden Rule ("do unto others as you would have them do unto you") also applies.

If there’s been an abusive situation with a church leader, ask this question: Was it of such a nature that you would have wanted to be warned and thus protected by others who were aware of the problem, before becoming involved with them or their teachings?

Or, instead, would you want others to place you and your family at risk by remaining silent over leadership abuses, whether the malfeasance involved an abuse of funds, relationships, power, position or whatever?

Conflict sometimes is unavoidable when a church, movement or mission wants to protect or hide leadership improprieties in the manipulative name of “peace”. It can get messy.

But shouldn’t we raise a warning that we ourselves wish others had raised (following proper Biblical procedures, of course)?

Walk in Integrity

This is especially true when a leader has violated his position of trust or authority, or otherwise poses a risk to others. In such cases, efforts to maintain peace at any price threaten the health of the community more than any season of conflict that may arise from properly investigating, rebuking and warning others about that leader’s past abuse.

Certainly Paul, in the New Testament, tried to achieve peace when possible. But he never sacrificed the need to directly speak to problems to achieve real peace rooted in truth. Paul, unlike many today, was willing to accept conflict if that was necessary to properly to get to truth and also protect God’s people.

Likewise, Jesus was uncharacteristically harsh in truthfully condemning the religious leaders of his day who put their own interests above those of the people.

Speaking Truth to Power

Let’s pursue peace, but not at the expense of properly pursing truth and public accountability. Otherwise, we have only an illusion of peace, relationships and community—especially where it involves a leader has abused his or her position by engaged
in disabling leadership sins or improprieties.

Eventually, the need to speak truth to power—properly yet firmly—can’t be ignored if we want to achieve authentic peace and unity (even if it means passing through a season of conflict to get there), to emerge healthy, to bring healing to victims, and to protect others.

Some may decide they don’t want that, preferring instead an illusion of peace and unity rooted in false, lie-based relationships. So be it.

But I side with Jesus, Paul and Nathan, and chose the better way . . .

Jim is a church sower, public but unassuming, thinker, mentor, teacher, older brother in the faith, motivated by redemption, foe of tyrants, friend of the dispossessed, retired attorney, entrepreneur, private pilot, and so-so bass fisherman. This article was initially published on http://crossroadjunction.com. Republished here by permission.

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart... — Psalms 34:18
In The Spotlight!

(From the July 2013 edition of HopeSpeak)

Denomination: Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)

Does the organization have a clergy sexual abuse policy in place? If yes, where can this policy be found (provide URL, mailing address if a copy must be requested, etc.)?

Yes, we have recommended and approved guidelines which can be found on the CRCNA Safe Church website, www.crcna.org/safechurch, along with other resources related to abuse awareness, prevention and response. The Specific Guidelines for Handling Allegations of Abuse Against a Church Leader can be found here: http://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/HandlingAbuseAllegationsAgainstChurch%20Leader.pdf

How/where can victims or members of the congregation find out about the policy and proper procedures for reporting abuse? Is there a specific person or office to contact?

Safe Church Ministry is the place to go to find out more information and to request guidance in any abuse related situation. Bonnie Nicholas, Director, can be reached at bnicholas@crcna.org or by calling 616-224-0735. Safe Church Ministry is responsible for education, awareness, and prevention as well as response to abuse. One office cannot possibly be responsible for all the education and awareness, all the support for those who have been hurt, or handle all the situations related to abuse that arise in our entire denomination. Ideally, each geographical area (classis) in the denomination has a Safe Church Team made up of individuals representing the churches in that classis. Safe Church Teams are trained by the denomination to be a resource to the churches regarding abuse issues. We have not reached this ideal of every area having a trained Safe Church Team; but we continue to work toward that goal. We believe that the concept of more localized Safe Church Teams is critical to this work.

Specially trained Safe Church Team members also provide the Advisory Panel Process—used in situations of church leader abuse or misconduct. Someone who has been victimized by a CRCNA pastor or church leader can request an Advisory Panel by contacting a church council member, a Safe Church team member, or the Safe Church Ministry office directly. This process provides a more neutral “listening panel” of people who are not involved directly in the situation. The panel hears both sides, and then submits a report of its findings about the veracity and gravity of the allegation to the council of the accused. It is then up to the church council to take appropriate action. The guidelines also provide a course of appeal.

Does your organization’s policy include the abuse of vulnerable adults, as well as children?

In our denominational structure, the role of Safe Church Ministry is advisory in nature. It is up to each church council to enact policies that fit each church situation. We provide resources, information, and advice to help churches enact effective abuse prevention policies. One of the sidebars on our website homepage is “Creating a Safe Church Policy”. Clicking on that link will provide lots of resources to help churches in the process of developing effective policies. Churches can also access their Safe Church Team or the office of Safe Church Ministry for help.

In addition, we are promoting a safe environment program called “Circle of Grace”. We are subsidizing the costs of that program to make it easier for churches in our denomination use it. We believe it is one of the best faith-based tools available for building communities of respect and preventing abuse. More information about “Circle of Grace” can be found on our website by clicking on the sidebar “Education is the Best Prevention.

Of course, in the case of any suspected abuse or neglect involving a minor or vulnerable adult, our recommendation would be to report to the proper authorities immediately.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank “The Hope of Survivors”. We have a link to your website on our website. I have also referred many people to your site—it is an excellent resource. Thank you again for all you do. May the Lord add his blessing to your good work.

Submitted By and Position:
Bonnie Nicholas, Director
Safe Church Ministry
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560
The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart... — Psalms 34:18
Testimonials

By God’s grace and healing power, this site has been used to restore hope and courage to those who have been abused. Below are just a few of the comments we’ve received about how this site and ministry have been helpful to those hurting individuals (in most cases, names have been omitted for privacy reasons.).

“Very grateful for your counsel, your advice was SPOT ON! Thank you again. Even nightmares have stopped. Now I'm 70, unlikely to repeat. God Bless!”—Survivor

“Thank you so much for your prayers and concern for us. We want to always support The Hope of Survivors! I talked with Danielle recently about some things and got encouraged! You guys may never know how impacting your ministry has been to my life! God has used everyone in The Hope of Survivors to deliver, heal, and restore the hearts of His saints. I will be eternally thankful for your ministry.”—AL

“A huge THANK YOU to both for the excellent presentation last night. ...it was an amazing presentation and I have heard a lot of positive comments on how well you both presented the information. I can’t think of one thing that I would have wanted you to add or take away. I thank God for your willingness to be used for this purpose!!”—IA

“I found the Hope of Survivors on the internet. I am a victim of pastoral abuse and in the process of trying to educate my former church/elders of the truth. Your ministry has been the greatest blessing to me and my husband throughout this whole ordeal. Thank you.”—VA

“I benefitted from Samantha’s counselling several years ago, and am pleased to report I am doing very well now. I have donated to THOS a few times... I read that the Canadian branch is raising funds to apply for incorporation, and I was wondering if I can direct a donation to that.”—Canada

“I want to thank you again for your help and support. I honestly don’t know where our lives would be without THOS. Surely God’s hand is in your ministry. I know we need more time to rebuild our lives. I feel I am ready to help THOS at anytime you may need me.”—VA

“I thank you for having this ministry for so many of us. It has opened my eyes and heart. I have discovered strength I never knew I had. I look forward to the positive change that is ahead of me. Thank you.”—KS

“God directed me to you and your amazing and wonderful help ...You have been so valuable to my recovery as you know what it is like to cope with this. Even the councillor said that I appeared far better than he had thought I would be and I told him that it was because of my dearest friend [Wendy at THOS] the other side of the world who has been helping me. ...you were there when I was at my lowest ...”—South Wales

“Thank you both so much for all of your support for us. Always know that God used your ministry, The Hope of Survivors, to deliver me out of such bondage and abuse from my pastor! I hope and pray that God will abundantly bless THOS and Steve and you so others will be set free too. The Truth is setting me free and I am healing by His Word and Grace. After my time of healing, I would love to work with your ministry however God would like to use me.”—AL

“...Had it not been for Samantha and Hope of Survivors, as well as my sponsor, who lives not far from me and counsels the Spanish community, I would not have received the healing I needed from God. Most people would not even want to hear something as sinister as a pastor doing something you would never expect him to treat a woman who wants more than anything is trust. I had written a book about my emotional healing from God and named it “From caterpillar to butterfly” before the pastor's abuse, and wish I had never written it. I took it out of anymore print. Now the book's title needs to be "From trust to lust." I thank you all at HOPE [The Hope of Survivors], and I pray God's blessings on all of you. I know every city should be blessed with a HOPE counseling center. This is a type of abuse that is silent and leaves the victim without hope and healing. Samantha saved my life and helped me so much with her encouraging emails and wisdom and knowledge she has gained in helping many women heal when she feels so alone and has lost not only her pastor, but also the women in her church who did not believe her, and eventually had to leave the church she had worshipped and prayed in so often. May God bless HOPE in all ways and bring healing to all women who need so badly for someone to believe her and trust when no one else will hear her cries for help. The Hope of Survivors website is so helpful in knowing others have experienced the pain, hurt,
shame, guilt, but through HOPE was able to survive and become a victor. God will someday bring vengeance upon
the sin and it is not our place to try to get revenge. Thank you Lord God for providing HOPE to so many hurting
women. I am a VICTOR not a VICTIM!”—TX

“The conference was really helpful. I’m so thankful for THOS; can’t imagine how lost we would be without this
God-given resource. We hope to be able to bless and give more to the ministry in the future. God bless your
ministry!”—IA

“I did find the conference valuable. ...Though I know that it was not my fault, I still have shame around it. But
coming to the conference in a safe place is a big step in my acceptance and another step forward in my healing.
You and your organization are so needed. Thank you for having the courage to bring this out in the open and help
us victims become survivors.”—KS

“I got the most benefit from hearing the testimonies... Every new story helps me understand my experience better
and affirms my experience. My appreciation to Dr. Weber for acknowledging clearly how devastating this experience
is; to all for making this such a safe environment—a truly safe environment, and for the courageous dedication you
show every day in this work.”—CA

“I really appreciate the conference and the website. Hearing the experiences helped me identify my personal
feelings and helped in my support.”—AL

“Hearing the testimonies was extremely helpful because we were able to hear about the specific tactics used by a
predator, as well as the impact the abuse had on you and Steve.”—NE

“IT [the conference] helped me not feel alone.”—MO

“Excellent workshop!”—KS

“Great conference, great information!”—IA

“It was amazing to hear the similarities and be reminded this was not my fault. We are so thankful for the thorough
info/website and the active communication with the staff.”—IA

“I thank God for your ministry to bring healing through our Lord and bring comfort to the pain of abuse.”—AL

“Thank you for all you do. We wouldn’t be together if you weren’t there.”—Anonymous

“Your organization is truly a gift from God to us. It has answered so many questions and truly given us hope.”—IA

“I found the booklet very informative. In it I found answers to a number of questions I had hovering in the back of
my mind. I will be mailing out the other copies so that spiritual leaders, and associated professionals, may be
educated and, hopefully, better able to assist survivors in a sensitive and supportive way. Thank you so much
Wendy, for continuing to be available to listen when I need to share. I have faith that out of all this, God has great
things in store for the New Year ahead. I am going to be looking back at the website to see what ways I can
contribute to THOS.”—MA

“THOS has always helped me give the proper language to what I experienced.”—TX

“You and Steve have shown God to me in a way that no one else ever has—as though before, all these people were
telling me about this “awesome person who loved me” but you guys actually took the time to introduce Him to me
personally. There aren’t words to thank you for that...”—NY

“Certainly use any part of my e-mail. I can’t say enough of how very thankful I am to you Samantha. You were the
one who finally made sense of what was going on in my life. Your willingness to respond to my e-mails even daily
was so important to me. I did not have another person in my life who was so attentively caring for my wounded
soul.”—WI

“Thank you so much for all the work you do. It’s been a lifeline to me.”—UK

“I will stand with you in prayer and against the enemy. He will NOT win! We have the victory and we will maintain
that victory!”—IN

“I know you are doing a wonderful and much-needed work! I am not surprised to hear of Satan’s attacks. I will
certainly pray for you, and please keep up the work of helping victims of clergy sexual abuse!”—CO

“I haven’t spoken to you in quite awhile. I am in tears as I read your email. My heart is soooo heavy for you and
The Hope of Survivors. You were there to help me when I REALLY needed to hear the voice of truth and you were
there beyond that and I know that you are still there if I need you. And I am only one. I can't imagine what it
requires to do what you do for each and every little voice that musters up the courage to call never knowing as
their story unfolds, what the battle ahead will require of THOS.”—Survivor

“You can count on me to pray diligently for you and the others at THOS as you are under attack. I am also available
to talk to anyone that may need it (including you!). You know that I am a licensed counselor for nearly 20 years. I
can also make a small, wish it was big, monetary donation to THOS if you let me know how to do that. If you can think of any other way that I can help you please let me know.”—FL

"Thank you for sharing this email of general but plain expression of your need for support and prayer. I have had you all on my heart a lot—and I will continue to pray. I strongly believe that the battle you all face is because you dare to help those who have been shackled by Satan and his agents to escape the chains of abuse and death. This is no easy work. I have often thought, as I share with you my burden and prayer requests, that I know you need prayer as much, or more, than I do. Know my heart will continue to pray for God to uphold and bless you with his abundant mercy. May He allow the bread you have cast on the waters to come back on every wave and feed your souls. May He allow you to reap a harvest of good in time for the beautiful seeds of hope, peace, freedom and comfort that you have planted. And while you wait for these times of refreshing, may His Spirit give you light in the darkness, and songs in your night.”—MI

"We lift you, all those who serve and victims up in prayer. Your ministry was one of the two earthly supports that God gave us to survive & heal and we will never forget that. I pray for your healing, for peace and for God to fortify you and others who are serving in such an important ministry. Thank you for what you are doing and may God lift you up.”—FL

"Your ministry is much needed. It has given me much courage to deal with my ordeal. The devil has been extremely busy lately—he knows he is running out of time. I guess you can use him as an indicator of your value to God by the torment he inflicts on you. :) You have my love and appreciation for your dedication to our Lord, and doubtless the same from any other of the Survivors who have been helped by your ministry.”—Australia

"I can tell you now that, had it not been for your personal talk with me, I would never have gotten over the misconduct my pastor displayed toward me and that made me feel, along with his wife, that I was the one who caused it all. It is so sad that the victim is blamed for the misconduct of their pastor.”—TX

"I know God has called you for His purpose. Recently on THOS website I read “How to “Tell it to the Church” —Christ’s Neglected Commandment” by Martin Weber. What a powerful message! And such a contrast to what I see and hear most often around me. I decided to start donating $20 dollar per month to help your ministry. I want you to know I support what you are doing and I know God has called you to do it.”—OR

"I just read your Newsletter. I just want to encourage you and Steve to push on. God is with you, and you and your volunteers are doing a wonderful and very important work with THOS. Even though, at the moment, I cannot support you financially, I will keep you in my prayers. I will never forget those years, when I was struggling, not only with my past, but also with the lack of friendliness in the church I was at. When I e-mailed you from that Christian bookstore in Germany, you always answered my e-mails straight away—even when I didn't expect an answer. You were there for me in a time when things were very confusing for me. I want to thank you for that, and again, I want to encourage you and Steve to keep on doing the work with THOS that you do so well. God bless you...”—Germany

"My prayers are with you. I know you asked for our prayers for THOS ministry—and you have them! But I am also praying particularly for you, for quick healing from shingles and for God’s encouragement and strength. I am so grateful for everything you do. Your ministry has made a huge, healing difference in my life. God bless you and Steve!”—CA

"Samantha, I know you face a great amount of stress and so many people need you—thank you from the very bottom of my heart. I would have never been strong enough to face that testimony without the guidance, love, support, and prayers you have given me over the past 3 years.”—IL

"We are lifting you up in prayer—extra. We just finished praying for you in our family worship. We know you are on the front lines in your specific ministry. Satan would like to stop what you do because hearts are being healed and sin is being revealed. May God continue to sustain and bless you both as well as your efforts. The work He began, He will finish in truth and righteousness.”—AL

"I will forever be thankful for the support I received from Samantha personally several years ago when I contacted Hope of Survivors. The ongoing counseling from Samantha was the starting point of my recovery. I had been abused by a Dr. that I worked with who was also a very respected spiritual leader in our church and community. The confusion that I had experienced for more than four years had me so entangled. Samantha helped me to see the situation for what it was. Oftentimes what she said was hard for me to accept. I was very alone and ashamed of what was going on in my life. I was very manipulated by this individual and had an allegiance to him that was so hard to describe when I look back at that time. I knew that if I contacted Samantha she would always respond with Godly advice. I do not know if I would be at this same point if she had not so faithfully supported me through all of her e-mail.

God has done a good work in my life. I have not spoke with Samantha since she resigned the job of counseling but I would like her to know how well I am doing. ...What Satan thought would destroy me and my family made us all stronger. I would like to support this great ministry. I have shared with so many about all that they have done for me. May God continue to give each of the support staff the strength needed for this ministry.”—WI

"I will keep all of those on staff and volunteers in my prayers. What you did for me I will never forget. I know I..."
"I do know God is in control . . . of my life, of your life, of The Hope of Survivors, etc. I also know that Satan is working harder than ever to steal, kill and destroy and, unfortunately, he has found a way into our churches through weak-minded men who yield much power over those under their leadership. As you said, he'll do everything he can to keep you from destroying his work by exposing the evil he is orchestrating. I will pray for you and your ministry. I'm all for hope and healing, but there's got to be honesty, too, and that's a challenge when you're dealing with something that so many try to hide. I wish you the best as you continue to fight the good fight."—AR

"Keep fighting, Samantha! You can't see us but you are not alone. You have sisters standing with you and some brothers too! Keep up the good work!"—TX

"...The Hope of Survivors is carrying on a much-needed work among a group that currently has no official recognition in the church organization, at least not that I am aware of. My belief is that this is the work that the Lord has asked you and Steve to carry on for Him. Although, you will pass through trials and temptations, He will guide you and bless you. As you know, I have prayed for you and your ministry on numerous occasions and I will talk to the Lord again about your present situation. Blessings to you and Steve and The Hope of Survivors."—MO

"I've seen a number of websites for survivors, but yours is exceptional!"—MN

"I feel that I have come to a place of healing and peace. I have laid down my fear and pain and have taken up the hope and joy in my relationship with the Lord. Any lingering thoughts or possible future problems don't have as much power to hurt or consume my thoughts anymore. I continue to give thanks to you [Heather] and Hope of Survivors for all the help you have given helping me understand what happened and for your continuing prayers and thoughtful guidance. As you have blessed me, I will continue to bless Hope of Survivors with a monthly contribution so that you may help others out there who have suffered from clergy sexual misconduct. I will continue to keep you in my prayers and Hope of Survivors and if it is God's will try to use my experience to help others however He leads. May God's blessing be with you all."—MD

"I was so excited to have found The Hope of Survivors' website and a way to "speak" to someone that I failed to look over the entire website. There's plenty there for me to read and so far it has all been very helpful. ...and most of what I was trying to ask or express is found on the website. Thanks so much for your time and caring."—VA

"From a recent blog on THOS, I have written a rough version of my story at the hands of my Pastor, please find it attached. I thought mine was such a rare occurrence in the S.D.A. Church and it was only when I found THOS that I realized mine is not so unique as I had feared, unfortunately. ...I want people to be aware. Knowledge can be strength!"—Australia

"May God bless your ministry. I think this is going on in the church all the time, and someone needs to speak out. You have a ministry second to none."—Pastor, South Africa

"Thank you for your kind assistance and prayers. I often visit the website for information and encouragement. It is a true blessing. I pray that you continue this work."—MD

"I hope you still remember me [from] way back [in] 2007! Praise God! Now, I can say that now I'm one of the survivors! Thank you for your ministry. Praise God for your ministry. God has used you to make my broken life whole again! Pray for us as we continue to love God with all our hearts and follow Him always! Hope to be able to support your ministry soon! From the bottom of my heart, thank you so much!"—Survivor, Philippines

"My wife is one of the victims associated with this mess in Pella, Iowa. We truly need help over here. If someone does not commit suicide over this whole ordeal I will be very surprised. On a side note...your website has been very helpful. We read it daily. The articles associated with this website have been very helpful and we have forwarded them on to many people within our community. Can someone please respond to this...I don't know how much longer I can hold it together. Thank you."—Survivor, IA

"I am one of the four victims that was manipulated by this sexual predator. This website has been a true answer to my prayer and blessing for myself, husband, family and friends. Thank you for your blog entry...God have mercy on us all! I need to process the info you shared—you shall hear from me again. God bless your work!"—Survivor, IA

"Please be encouraged to know, without your help, I fear I would not have made it. Your telephone calls opened my eyes to what had happened with Pastor M. ...Truly, God worked through your ministry to me and I know to so many others. I am so sorry for any hate mail you have received. Look to the Lord for strength and perseverance!"—Survivor, IA

"It has been a long time since we've spoken but you and THOS often run through my mind and are often in my prayers. I'll never stop saying Thank You for doing what you do. Having your hand there always open and extended to me to grab onto whenever I needed to as I pulled myself out of the sludge of the pit I had fallen into with a troubled man in a dangerous position was sometimes the strongest tie I had to truth and healing, though we've never set eyes on each other."—Survivor, FL
“I am an attorney representing a girl who suffered abuse by her Youth Pastor at the age of 16. We found your site and it has been of great help and comfort to my client. I would like any information you have or could share so that my client(s) can interact with other survivors and get help moving on. The church never apologized to the family, said it had no way of knowing such a thing would occur again, and the congregation and clergy have turned against them. The church did not offer any counseling, support, or legal help with the prosecution. The entire family is broken and suffering. I appreciate all the help you can offer via survivor support. Thank you very much for having this site on the Internet. It has already helped the family greatly, as the church’s reaction has stunned them, and they feel lost, at fault, and guilty.”—Attorney, FL

“I just now watched Issues and Answers #148 on THOS website. You are lovely, and I was so deeply touched by everything both you and Steve had to say. Everything from your personal experience, to the empathy you share for others. I’m further touched by how universal the guilt and shame is for those who suffer through these abuse issues; thankful that there is this ministry to reach out and offer this lovely, Christ-centered hope and compassion. I’ve known about your compassion for some time now, but sometimes is just strikes me in a fresh and powerful way.”—OR

“I love reading the monthly newsletter and keeping abreast of all the growth and lives that are being changed due to The Hope of Survivors.”—MO

“You [Arlagene] have been an amazing help and support to us... Thank you for the great work you're doing. You have been a great blessing to us.”—Australia

"This information will be very useful to me as a pastor and family life educator.”—Pastor, TX

"Thank you so much for this wonderful experience. It is nice to know that there are people who don't just get angry about this particular problem (sexual abuse by pastors), but actually do something about it. I wish the best to The Hope of Survivors.”—Olga, Russian Translator, NJ

"I've been abused; and have been helped by Shyleene Rosado for about a year. I'm still trying to heal, God has been faithful, and I'm not working this year, due to a depression. I would love to help translating for this ministry that has been used by God to reach me and take me out of the darkest hole ever. I think I would be of help in translating from English to Spanish. It would be my pleasure and my honor.”—Maria [Latino Division Testimonial]

"I don't know what I would have done without your ministry. Through the Internet, you have provided help and healing to me and my family. Thank you!!!♥”—Victim via THOS on Facebook

"I am so grateful to you [Heather] for "entering into my world" and responding to my email. Thank you. It wasn't until my husband stumbled upon The Hope of Survivors and we both read everything on the site that I came to see that what happened in this scenario was truly abusive. ...Please know how grateful I am to have someone to dialog with on this. I don't think any of my friends would understand; in fact, one I confided in called it an 'emotional affair,' but it was The Hope of Survivors that confirmed to me it was anything but—it was abuse.”—NC

"Words are not enough to express what your ministry has done for me when I was at the lowest point in my life, but I am still going to say thank you. I am also looking forward to being a volunteer with The Hope of Survivors, it is the right thing for me to do.”—NJ

**Testimonials about THOS operations:**

"I took some time to look at the documents you sent me earlier today. I must say that I’m impressed that THOS has such internal organization at its core to have thought through so many a delicate issue with such caution and diligence. I have great respect for the intent of each document, without reservation, and would have no problem signing and submitting to any of them.”—Prospective Volunteer, OR

"Remarkable appeal letter [Good morning The Hope of Survivors Family, 8/25/10]! One of the best I have ever read! Cheers!”—Herb Douglass, Th.D., CA

**Comments about voting for THOS through Chase Charity Giveaway:**

"The Hope of Survivors has and will continue to do for clergy abuse survivors what MADD did for decreasing deaths due to drunk driving. Vote today and keep our house of worship safe havens for all.”—Suzanne Collins-Cyr, ME

"This organization helps many women all over the globe, please vote for them. I can't thank you enough for what you and THOS do.”—Sherry Stockford, MI
Other Comments:

“So great to see you guys are going to be in GEORGIA!!! :) I hope all is well w/you and w/the ministry. I still think of you from time to time and am still deeply grateful for your help in time of great need. I’ll never forget staring at my computer screen in almost disbelief of what I was reading as I searched your website...that was when I was still grappling to believe that what I had experienced was truly abuse and NOT my fault. Praise God for His chasing after me and healing my wounded heart (from many things). Thanks again for all you do for the Kingdom in this much avoided issue. Keep pressing on!!” —GA

“Thanks for the support...it makes a difference talking to other victims compared to a mate, family, or friends. I don’t think anyone can understand what we’re experiencing until they’ve walked in our shoes!” —MN [comment made to Heather Brown, Victim Support Services volunteer for The Hope of Survivors]

“I am taking a moment ... to tell you how much I have appreciated your website and the quality of material you have made available. I myself have pastored for over 20 years and see the real need for this information as I have, indeed, everyone has, sadly, seen men fall. There is a great need today for an aggressive training of men to be true men of God by leadership—starting in their theological training. I looked at the compilation you put together from the book Christian Service, chpt. 24 on your website and feel that that is a very good place to start. May God continue to bless and honor your ministry as you honor Him with it.” —Dave M.

“I pray for God’s continued blessings for you [Martin] and THOS. You have been God’s blessing to us—the face and heart of our Adventist church. God knew we could not bear this without your ministry.” —FL

“I am, and will always be, grateful to you. If I had not found your website, and if you had not been there for me personally, I would not have known how to put into words what had happened in a way that would have been taken seriously...” —Victim

“Martin, I really thank the Lord for your ministry it is absolutely awesome and God is using it to save our ministry. I actually read out to the whole meeting yesterday the first letter that you replied to me and it spoke volumes to everyone and gave the leadership some clear direction. This is all very new to them and they honestly did not have a clue how to go forward, but your letter explained the process beautifully, whilst at the same time helped them not to fall into sympathizing with the perpetrator.” —UK

“You can’t realize (or maybe you can) how much your writing means to me. To think that somebody took this much time to respond to me, blows me away! I know I need God to be my healer, but I so need someone right now to tell me I’m okay. Your emails do that for me.” —IN

“Samantha, you have given me great wisdom and support throughout this whole ordeal.” —OH

“I do know that you are one busy couple!! But always remember if you are ever so stressed that you are pulling your hair out—if it wasn’t for your support, guidance, encouragement, love, and friendship through my ordeal—I would not be where I am today mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The appreciation you deserve for the ministry you provide could never be expressed in words.” —IL

“Words cannot express how much it meant to me to see you and be able to feel safe during worship again. I have so often thanked God for His presence through your selfless dedication towards my healing...and so many, many more like me. Thank you so much for your belief; invaluable encouragement and support of this journey which will soon be unfolding through its challenging trial of upholding the TRUTH...” —Western Australia

“Thank you, Steve & Samantha, for all that you do in giving a voice to what is so often a silent crime gone unpunished.” —IL

“Thank you for being a light in darkness for those who have come through this abuse, knowing there is a ministry like this to turn to has truly been a blessing in time of great storm, with time God can turn it all around and heal and raise up the broken.” —SC

“May God bless you and Steve and your ministry. I have never met two people in my whole life that can change my life for the better in one week, thank you so much.” —Australia

“You guys gave us the courage and strength to carry on in the dark and dismal days following disclosure. Today, we thrive in good part to your being the Christ for us, the light when there seemingly was none.” —ME

“This new life is pretty wonderful. Even with all the...medical things going on I am still having the most wonderful life ever. I thank God every day for coming into my life and bringing you and Steve into my life. I believe with my whole heart that He sent you guys to help me not die and learn more about God.” —IL

“Thank you so much for all your help the past few months. When I first emailed you, I had no idea how beneficial it would be. The advice you have given me has always been sound, and your patience, respect and encouragement have been incredibly helpful. At a time when I felt very much alone, it was so important to know you were there. ...I wanted to send you this [donation] as an expression of thanks.” —Canada

“I cannot being to explain the relief I already feel over sharing this with you, someone who understands. I’ve read
some of the things on your site, and after reading your own testimony, I knew I had found someone who knew exactly what I was talking about."—IL

"[The conference contained] a good balance of information, testimony and pointed back to Christ."—IN

"Thank you for your love and compassion! Please always include the “ministry hour” where couples/individuals ministered to each other—powerful! Thanks for providing the morning and midday ministries that set tone, and gave direction to the afternoon hours. Excellent!"—Gail Coridan, Women’s Ministries, IA-MO Conference

"It was great, thank you so much! I am very grateful for your ministry."—MO

"After the Q&A session, I feel much better, hopeful and positive among friends."—OH

"[The conference] encouraged me to hang in there and to keep focused on those who have been abused as I have."—MO

"Thank you for being vulnerable in sharing such a painful experience in order to help other hurting people. You are to be commended. My prayers will be with your ministry."—Robert Peck, VP for Admin., IA-MO Conference

"I have followed your website for several years, since 2002 when it had a different look. It helped me through a time that I thought had signaled the end for me."—Survivor

"I am so thankful to God that your ministry was there for us when we needed it, had it not been for God using you and Steve I don’t think the outcome would have been quite too good. Sometimes all it takes is knowing you are not alone. May God continue to bless your ministry and give you strength in all you do for Him."—SC

"I will always be thankful for the day God brought you into my life. You give that special care that I have such a hard time finding. I appreciate your efforts."—WI

"[My friend] just sent me The Hope of Survivors website and it is amazing already and I’ve only read a couple of pages! I had no idea anything like that existed."—IN

"Sometimes the ugliness of that time hits me and I am momentarily sad, but I know so many have been through so much worse and I know your ministry is a rock to steady them as it was for me after such a confusing experience."—MO

"I really appreciate you and your husband taking time out of your busy lives to be such a wonderful support to us. You have helped me more than you will ever know with your emails and story from the media clips."—IL

"...we are very grateful for THOS, because your ministry serves a very large purpose and one that many victims will benefit from."—MO

"I have said it before and I will say it again. One thing I admire most about people is an ability to speak the truth in love, even when it hurts...You hit a homerun with the message I needed to hear. ...I want God to clean house and He has used you, to open up those areas in my life. I can’t thank you enough for all that you have exposed to me. Not just in what is happening in my wife’s life, but mine as well. You really have been one of the main tools that God has used in my life for change."—OH

"Getting help has been the best thing I have ever done. It was a risk for me to talk to you, ...but I suppose I took it in faith, and so far it’s been amazing how beneficial it’s been. I find it very helpful to hear your perspectives, especially the reassurance that God can help me heal from this."—US

"I think what you, Steve and God are doing is wonderful and so helpful to people like me. I want to support your ministry however I can!!"—IL

"I would also ask that anyone who is able visit http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/ for information on clergy sex abuse and hopefully to make a contribution to this ministry. That is the organization that was instrumental in helping my daughter begin this journey of healing."—Victim’s Father, on a blog posting

"I will be praying that the funds come in. THOS has been for me, and is for so many, a lifeline of support during a very dark time. You offer hope...at a time when all feels hopeless. God knows how you reach the hurting, and we’ll just pray that He continues to provide for this ministry..."—WA

"I have learned so much from you. Thank you for all of the knowledge that you have so willingly shared with me. You are a true Godsend."—WI

"I wanted to thank you for being there for my family when it was really hard and also for believing in me, it meant a lot, it’s only people like you and my mother that kept me going without doing something really stupid that might have taken my life."—Child Victim

"Hello. I was browsing Facebook to see if there was a Hope of Survivors group on here, or anything like that. The Ministry that you are a part of has helped me so much. I believe my mother spoke with you (via e mail) and you sent us some information a few months ago. I just wanted to thank you. I will be emailing you shortly. Thank you
again. God Bless you!”—PA

“Thank you so much for your replies, and for sharing your story with me, and for reassuring me that I’m not crazy and that things like this do happen, and that my perceptions could very well have been accurate. I have read the brochures, and they’ve been extremely helpful. In fact I don’t know what I would have done if you weren’t here for me and if those materials weren’t available. I would have been completely alone, and as I’m prone to depression, I just don’t know what would have happened. Honestly I think some women in this position might grow so despondent they would think of hurting themselves. Thank you so much for the work you do in helping people like me, in helping to educate others about clergy abuse. God always finds a way to take something bad and make something good come from it, and this is what He has done through you. Thank you again for everything, I don’t know what I would have done without you.”—OH

“First of all, I wish to thank you for the supportive Bible verses—especially for Ps. 37, which I have already read several times. What a blessing you are to those who have been terribly afflicted as I have. Your advice is uplifting and strengthening, and I can’t thank you enough. I have faith, that I am being sheltered by Him.”—NY

“...just reading your website and typing up my story has already resulted in a miracle in my heart. I am grateful to have found your website.”—WA

“I enjoyed reading your story as I related to almost every feeling. I am thankful that God put someone like you in my path. I do not think that it was just coincidence. I just want help getting the garbage out from inside my soul. I want to be able to one day have a normal relationship and family. I’ve done a lot of cleaning up—but there is so much more to go.”—CA

“I’m sorry to hear that your ministry is so busy, because I know that means there are many people in pain, but I am so grateful for the work you do. I don’t know what I would have done without you, and I’m just glad you are willing to continue the ministry. It’s so needed, as most churches seem to be incapable of providing victims with any form of appropriate support.”—AZ

“I just finished reading Steve’s words in HopeSpeak, [January 2008] and I wanted to share with you my overwhelming feelings when I read the last line, ”God has used our experience to save more than just ‘one’.” I felt an upheaval in my heart and was so touched by the words that I felt like I was about to break down and cry uncontrollably. Tears came to my eyes and I was overpowered by the feeling to hold onto you both and have a good cry over what happened to you two. What a way to turn a bad situation into what your ministry is today!! ... Steve’s words touched me in a way I’ve never been touched before. You two have such a special ministry and I’m thrilled to read how far it has come since C. discovered your web site. That your ministry has expanded worldwide is amazing, and you both were such an integral part of his healing. My wishes for you this new year are that God sees fit to offer your ministry more open doors and for good health. I’m so happy to have met you both... You both hold a special place in my heart.”—MA

“Today, when I came back from school, I found your newsletter and believe me that I didn’t eat and I didn’t even change my clothes before I finished reading it. I didn’t know what The Hope of Survivors means, now I understand. I appreciated you and Steve, your whole work, when we met in Norway and now I have a lot of reasons to appreciate you more. You have a lot of power, and a great heart to help the others. I was really impressed by what I read. I want you to know that I pray for you and the other people who work for THOS. God bless you all.”—Romania

“I have great admiration and appreciation for the ministry the two of you have undertaken, especially knowing a bit about the background that led to the very positive work you are doing to help so many hurt people around the world. You will be in our prayers. Pray for us, as we resume pastoral ministry in the Peoria-Sun City Adventist Church in northwest Phoenix. Though no longer serving on your board, you retain our love, respect, and high esteem as friends. Call on us if we can assist in any practical way.”—Ralph Robertson, (former) Ministerial Director, Northern California Conference

“First off, I would love to thank you for taking the time out of your busy day for me... you don’t even know me, yet you take the time out to read my story and reply even. You assume I am telling the truth and don’t assume I am making this up. I have wanted to tell someone for the longest, but feared no one would believe me. ...You have helped me more than you will ever know...”—NY

“The time spent with you and your husband was very beneficial for the both of us. We had a wonderful time visiting. Being able to tell our story to a couple who was understanding and supportive was an amazing outlet for me. You both were so kind and compassionate to the both of us and it was so uplifting to be able to know that I (we) am not alone in this and that others have dealt with situations like mine successfully. I’ve read through the pamphlets and they are all SO good. I am getting ready to place an order so I can share them. ...Thank you so much for listening to God’s direction in your life and helping people like me. I’ll say it again—you saved my life.”—IL

“Wonderful job! The newsletter [October 2007] was the best ever! You are great. Hope it gets out the need for The Hope of Survivors to continue and how much it is needed. Great paper.”—WA

“The ministry of THOS is so very important to helping those little sheep that Satan has scattered and it breaks my heart to know that many, many churches do not understand what pastoral abuse is and what it isn’t. I see very
"The Hope of Survivors web site was literally a 'God-send' to me and to my husband. Both of us were betrayed by our 'pastor-friend' and found ourselves truly in the wilderness. You are to be commended for the depth and breadth of the ministry you offer. For victim/survivors, there really is no such thing as a local support group you can turn to in order to help minimize the shock and dismay of this particular trauma/abuse. Your web site became my/our support group, especially for my husband in hearing Steve's story and realizing how all-too-common spouses are part of such a web. Often in the evenings, I would find great solace in reading the sad-but-very-similar stories of abuse and feel like I was not alone. Over time, your resources have helped our church understand the complexity of this issue. Your calm demeanor and sense of being 'ever-present' were affirming and healing to us. And, naming that this is 'never an affair' is extremely helpful, especially early on! Our lives have been 'saved' by God's grace working through you to reach out to others! Thank you for being an authentic and reliable witness to the Gospel."—B., Maine

"I am writing to you to let you know how you have helped my wife and myself get through the trauma of CSA. Early on, your web site and your emails kept us going when all was in turmoil. You helped us to understand what it was that we were going through when we did not understand ourselves. For me, as the husband, just having another husband who had gone through this was a blessing. Steve understood what I was going through and guided me through the turmoil of CSA. Your web site and educational materials were answers to our prayers in helping not only myself and my wife understand CSA, but also letting us help others in our church family to understand what was happening. Without you there would be no hope for survivors. Thanks for being there.—P., Maine

"I love your words. They are like a soothing oil comforting my soul in this spiritually parched desert in which I find myself."—A Survivor

"Thank you for sharing with me and being honest. Yes, the more time goes on and the more I learn and the more I speak with you...well, the more I see the truth of all of this. Truly, I don't think you realize how needed you are and your ministry and how much you are a blessing to me...I can't even imagine how many people you must have helped."—A Survivor

"I want you guys to know that the work you do is invaluable. Although I am still immersed in the pain and regret of my actions, I can see how many others have experienced what I am going through and that makes me glad to know that I will be healed and whole one day."—A Survivor

"Thanks for checking up on me. I don't know what I’d do without your support. It’s amazing to me what you’re doing. The Church is rich in tradition and devotional aesthetics, and there's nothing wrong with that. But, what you’re doing is more Christian than anything I’ve seen the Church do for a long time."—A Survivor

"I am so sorry it's taken me so long to thank you for your heartfelt and beautiful email. It was just so refreshing to hear from someone who sees the truth, and has had experience in this area...Everyone seems so blind—I want to scream. That is why I can't tell you how wonderful it was to hear your words of encouragement and wise advice....I have copied your email to the members in my family who are standing on the side of God's Word in this situation. Your words have been a blessing to us all. Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to reply to me. I have no way to fully express how much it meant to hear a voice of reason, filled with Godly wisdom. You are a good person. Finally, I want to thank you so very much for taking such a painful experience in your own life, and using it to create a ministry to help others see a bit of light in a very dark place. God bless you and your ministry."—A Survivor

"Words cannot express how thankful, to God, I am to have you to turn to with all of this."—A Survivor

"Thank you for your messages of today and yesterday...they have been inspiring and a blessing. I need all the help I can get right now..."—A Survivor

"I really want to thank you for your web site...I wish I had looked for it a long time ago. Your site really hit the nail on the head concerning the fact that an affair happens between equals, NOT between a clergyman and a parishioner, no matter what.... Until I found your site, I felt so very alone in this.... What you’re doing with your web site is truly God's work. I know that that is what Jesus had in mind for His Church."—A Survivor

"I look at your web site daily for a bit of encouragement and a reminder that what happened was wrong, regardless of the response of the church authorities. Without your web site and kind words, I'd be lost."—A Survivor

"I’d love to be a part of your ministry in any way, shape or form. You’ve done so much to save my life, my marriage, my relationship with God... Prior to finding you I had AdvocateWeb, and they do still help with their online messages of hope, but your ministry is *personal* and one-on-one, something a new victim of CSA can’t get enough of as they’re struggling with the shock and wondering if they can even live another day in their newly shattered world."—A Survivor

"I will never forget my first conversation with you Samantha...you brought me hope."—A Survivor

"First, I want to thank you for all the information on the site! Thank you for this ministry! You were a blessing to me! I hope more people find you!!!!"—A Survivor
"I wish to thank you very much for your web site on abuse. I am not a Christian; until recently, I had lost all faith in God, but your site really gives me hope. Once again, thank you for the information on your site, as I said, it truly does give me hope."—A Survivor

"Thank you for providing this help to the victims. I am the full-time pastor of the Cohutta Georgia Seventh-day Adventist Church and Senior Chaplain for the Dalton Georgia Police Department. I commend you for your work and believe that we must do even more to assure that children and adults are safe from predators whether they be pastors or laypersons. We have hidden our heads in the sand way too long."—Elder Jim Cox, Pastor & Certified Master Law Enforcement Chaplain

"In addition to giving thanks to you for your help and support, I have to always give thanks to my friend. She was the one who got on the Internet and found your web site. If not for her, the guilt I was feeling would have overwhelmed me and led me to suicide. I did not realize anything about clergy abuse or that it was not my fault. Your web site changed everything. I’ll never forget my friend calling and saying to check out the web site because she said when she read it she got chills and thought, "This is it. This is what happened to you." She happens to have been a good friend of the pastor and his wife, too, so it was hard for her, but she reached out to help me. So many people were led by God to help me and most of all my fiancée, in his love, was able to stick with me and all the things he would say to me would mirror what you would say, and he hadn’t even read your information at the beginning, so it was coming from his heart. God is great and I give him thanks for what you and Steve are doing. I am so blessed!"—Midwest Survivor

"Great email. You read my words carefully and responded with steadfast support. It is refreshing to be heard so clearly."—L., Illinois

"I am just so very happy to have found you right now. I have to say your responses feel like balm to my soul because I can tell you listen to everything I say and that you understand what I am sharing. I really appreciate the love you have already shown to us. I am very glad that I went to your web site and admire the fact that you have done this and want to make your pain help other people."—D., Ohio

"Thanks again for your prayers & concern. It actually feels comforting to know someone out there understands about the effects of such pastoral abuse & to have someone show concern! Thank You! It means a lot!"—Survivor, SE U.S.

"I can’t tell you how much it means to me to know that you’re there. I pray for a peaceful existence one day, as you seem to have, and to be at peace with myself with God’s help. I pray for that so much."—K., Virginia

"You are very sweet and kind. I appreciate your encouragement."—A., Florida

"I thank God that you’re my messenger. You have no idea how much peace I have about my decision, and how much you have blessed me. You have helped me to see what the Lord’s will was from the beginning, I knew deep in my heart this is what He wanted me to do from the start, but I was letting worldly issues guide me, not the Holy Spirit that lives in me. Thanks so much for being here for me...I know that I’m in for a long haul and a rough road ahead and it is a comfort to know that you will be there for me through it all."—J., New Mexico

"I am so thankful God put you in my life. You have been a great blessing to me. I can talk to you like you were my sister. I do feel very comfortable sharing my thoughts and feelings with you. I really feel you listen to what I am saying and when I tell you I am in pain you don’t try to brush me off by saying just get over it. I am thankful that when I sent my story to you, you didn’t just delete it. I am also very thankful for when I have talked to you by phone you always end our phone call with a prayer. That has meant a great deal to me. Thank you."—M., Georgia

"The Hope of Survivors is a ministry that provides good information about CSA, with an added personal touch. Samantha, who corresponds with the women who have been abused, has e-mailed me, sent me books and brochures, and even a birthday card! She has given me hope during the darkest time I have ever known, as only a fellow CSA survivor can. She has also provided me with the names of two other CSA survivors; women I have become close friends with thru e-mails and phone conversations. Her brochures about CSA are the best I’ve seen; a crime that is often shrouded in confusion is brought to light with gentle truth and compassionate mercy."—T., Ohio

"I found The Hope of Survivors via the International Candlelight Vigil website in October of 2003. Since visiting The Hope of Survivors’ web site initially, I have come to know Samantha Nelson and her and her husband’s story, and I also have experienced the glory of hope through The Hope of Survivors’ mission.

I’m an adult female victim of clergy sexual abuse. It is a very, very painful recovery but The Hope of Survivors has supported me emotionally and in other ways and I know I’m not alone. I can truly say that the ministry of The Hope of Survivors has allowed me to grow spiritually, realizing that the pain and anguish I have experienced at the hands of my former minister was not the will of God, and that God is there to help me heal.

I’m very thankful for their ministry as it offers true hope for healing from the devastating effects of clergy sexual abuse. My hope is that The Hope of Survivors’ ministry continues to grow, educating and offering hope to women, congregations of all denominations, clergy and church officials."—K., Virginia

"I just thought of something the other day and thought I’d mention it. I have noticed such an incredible release in..."
my life from the past—I remember thinking, okay—it takes about 4 years or so and then you’re completely healed. (That’s still a long time!) And a lot of life has been lost or strained due to a bad choice by the perp. But I’ve really felt different the past couple months, and I think this is key: you told me to get rid of everything in my house that I could—things he gave me, memorabilia… I actually had a photo album devoted entirely to church people and events, and it was under my bed. Well, I got rid of that, the ring he gave me, all the papers for the attorney—I put it out of the house. What a difference it made—and I didn’t even consciously think of it—I just put it together the other day—had an “aha” moment—“so THAT’s why I’ve been feeling so much better!” So keep telling women that, who come to you for help—get rid of everything—every reminder of him… every gift he gave. There’s really something to that.”—T., Ohio

“Thank you so much for your web site. You have no idea what a great help it was for me. It really explains everything so well. I was in an abusive relationship with my pastor for a year and a half. I am so thankful you wrote about the confusion because I felt very confused throughout, because he kept saying this was from God…and I was to be become his next wife, the one God ordained for him. He used scripture continually through this whole ordeal. Scripture is hard for me to read now. Thank God for your ministry. What a blessing to others! You see, I don’t think women see this as abuse, they don’t understand. But thanks to you and your ministry and web site, it is so true, and everything makes sense now.”—A Survivor

As you can see, God is using this ministry to impact lives in a positive way. Please continue to pray for this ministry and those we serve!

If you are a survivor of pastoral abuse, we would love to hear your story and possibly make it available on this web site for others to read and renew their hope. You can use a pseudonym if you choose and rest assured that all personal information will be kept private and strictly confidential. Please contact us.

Please note: We do not necessarily agree with or endorse all the information contained in the survivor’s stories. We do, however, feel they have some valuable information that could be useful to you in your recovery. It helps to know you’re not alone, that others have shared your pain and have healed, by the grace of God, in their own time and way.

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart… — Psalms 34:18