The Hope of Survivors Newsletter
Volume 11, Edition 2, April 2014

Dear Hope of Survivors Family,

Hopefully, for most of you, Spring is finally starting to show up. It's been quite the bitter cold winter in Southwest Iowa and we are ready for some warmer temperatures. The seasons kind of remind me of the cycles we go through in life and ministry. Sometimes there is such a flurry of daily activity that it is like Spring and Summer with all the birds and animals flying and roaming about, while other times it's like Fall or Winter when we are able to hunker down and focus on long-term goals and projects. Surely King Solomon knew what he was talking about when he wrote, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." (Ecclesiastes 3:1)
At this time, we are grateful for the opportunity we had to exhibit and be in the spotlight at the ASI MidAmerica Convention in Kansas City, MO. Not only was The Hope of Survivors a featured ministry, but it was also a grant recipient. With the grant funds from ASI, we should be able to complete the next phase of renovations at the Renewal Center.

We’ve also changed the way the Renewal Center operates in order to make it more cost-effective and convenient for you. Rather than having to book your schedule around set program dates, you can now call us and schedule your own private session. For more information, please call (618) 983-6434 or toll-free (866) 260-8958 and ask for Vivionne, the program director.

Speaking of grants, we are grateful Versacare has funded three projects we’re working on: a second-run production of the DVD *Call It Anything But Love*, a youth documentary, and a Spanish-subtitled version of *Call It Anything But Love*. These resources will help us reach even more victims of clergy sexual abuse! We are also applying for funding from Norway Grants to open a Renewal Center in Romania. We don’t know yet whether this grant will be awarded, but we’d sure appreciate your prayers.

Finally, it is a great honor to announce that The Hope of Survivors is partnering with Baylor University to complete a research study on the experiences of survivors of clergy/pastoral sexual misconduct. I’ll be sending out more information in the weeks ahead so please be on the lookout. Your input is vital to the research being conducted!

Thank you for your prayers, encouragement, time, talents and financial gifts. The Hope of Survivors operates on a very limited budget and every gift—small or large—matters. If you’d like to make a one-time donation or even schedule recurring monthly contributions, please go to [http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/donate.php](http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/donate.php). Thank you very much!

God bless you,
Samantha Nelson
Vice President & CEO

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**Not A Relationship**

By Sheila
Calendar of Events

May 2-4, 2014
Los Angeles, CA
Southern CA Prayer Line Connection Campmeeting
Filipino Seventh-day Adventist Church
777 Colorado Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90041

Volunteers Gail & Elgin Jenkins will be exhibiting on behalf of The Hope of Survivors at this event.

May 23-26, 2014
Angelus Oaks, CA
Can U Hear Me Now? Youth Conference
Camp Cedar Falls
39850 State Hwy. 38
Angelus Oaks, CA 92305

Vivionne Keli will be exhibiting on behalf of The Hope of Survivors at this youth conference. Please stop by the booth if you’re in the area!

June 13-14, 2014
Tampa, FL
Preventing Abuse Conference
Tampa Airport Marriott Hotel
4200 George J. Bean Pkwy.
Tampa, FL 33607

The Hope of Survivors intends to exhibit at this conference, providing funding becomes available to do so.

Hope & Healing victim’s conferences are currently being considered in various locations and will be scheduled when funds become available to conduct such programs.

To schedule or sponsor a conference in your area, call (866) 260-8958. Check our website for additional details and the most current information.

Send HopeSpeak to a friend!

We hope you were blessed by this edition of HopeSpeak. If so, please feel free to forward it to a friend so they, too, can sign up.

When I was 19 years old, I had an extremely confusing and difficult experience. I have always described what happened to me as me being in ‘an inappropriate relationship with a man 17 years older than me’--and I carried a measure of shame and embarrassment over this for 25 years. However, in December of 2010, God revealed the truth and I saw things as they really were... I was not 'in a relationship' with a man 17 years older than me--I was sexually molested by the high-teen Sunday school teacher at my church. Read more...

A Massage Therapist Looks at Pastoral Boundaries
By Ray McAlister, MDIV, PhD, LMT

You’re staying late at your church finishing your sermon. Suddenly there is a knock at the door. You open the door to find yourself facing an under-age church member of the opposite sex tearfully distressed over a recent romantic break-up. You are alone in the building as your secretary has left for the day. It just started raining outside, and the youth rode a bicycle. What do you do? Read more...

La Esperanza de los Sobrevivientes Update
By Shyleene Rosado, Vice President, Latino Division

In 2013, there were 1,200 people who were reached or touched by La Esperanza de los Sobrevivientes through seminars, conventions and one-on-one communication.

In the months of January, March and August of 2013, Pastor Javier Huerta and his wife Gloria, volunteers for La Esperanza de los Sobrevivientes, offered four seminars in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Los Angeles, California. Through these seminars, they helped victims of abuse and educated the congregation by making them aware that clergy sexual abuse exists. Read more...

Canadian Division Update
By Wendy Lee, Vice President, Canadian Division

During 2013, I spoke one-on-one to a number of women at the Connecting Streams Leadership training event and handed out The Hope of Survivors’ booklet, Understanding Sexual Misconduct Among Spiritual Leaders, after the event. Also at the Crisis and Trauma Course I took in Calgary in June, I handed out the booklets to some counsellors who were also taking the course.

Additionally, I had several conversations with Evelyn Maiers (also a volunteer for the Canadian Division) about The Hope of Survivors and the present process of incorporation. We also had a meeting with the pastor of a local Seventh-day Adventist Church who gave us permission to use their church facilities to hold The Hope of Survivors’ meetings and conferences.

It is my hope that The Hope of Survivors-Canada will be officially incorporated in 2014.

UK Division Update
By Andrea & Anthony Shipwright

In May 2013, we were officially added to the list of The Hope of Survivors’ volunteers. This enabled victims located in the UK to have local support.

Victim support was given to several clients via email. One victim was given additional support in person. This offered the opportunity to help with emotional, spiritual and practical needs.
In November 2013, we travelled to Bucharest, Romania. Our 3-day trip enabled us to attend the premier screening of *Call It Anything But Love!* with Romanian subtitles. It also enabled us to spend several hours with Steve & Samantha Nelson. We discussed our involvement with The Hope of Survivors and what further work could be done. We agreed that we would begin the process of adapting the literature to UK English and the website, [thepofofsurvivors.co.uk](http://thepofofsurvivors.co.uk), would be created. This would be altered where appropriate to language and resources helpful to people in the UK. The Hope of Survivors’ PowerPoint presentations for conferences and other speaking engagements were also made available to us. Read more...

**Testimonials**

"...I just need to thank you for starting The Hope of Survivors. I cannot describe in words how essential your work has been for me, especially because there is not much information, openness and knowledge about pastoral sexual abuse in small Denmark. Thank you."--Denmark

"Thank you Hope of Survivors for all that you do. Your resources have gotten me through a very tough time, and I have recommended the website to my therapist and sexual abuse support group."--Facebook comment

"Being able to monetarily give to your ministry gives me a sense of purpose and a "good" to come out of the evil meant against me. I know there are many women who have suffered far worse pastoral abuse and sexual misconduct then I did and I want to be able to help them in any small way I can since I understand the enormous amount of shock, trauma and damage a predatory pastor, someone you trusted with your heart and soul, can inflict on someone."--PA

Read more testimonials...

**Immediate Needs**

* Funds to renovate the property to provide private bathrooms for each bedroom to ensure 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.
Clergy Sexual Abuse - Not A Relationship

Not A Relationship by Sheila
When I was 19 years old, I had an extremely confusing and difficult experience. I have always described what happened to me as me being in 'an inappropriate relationship with a man 17 years older than me'—and I carried a measure of shame and embarrassment over this for 25 years. However, in December of 2010, God revealed the truth and I saw things as they really were... I was not 'in a relationship' with a man 17 years older than me—I was sexually molested by the high-teen Sunday school teacher at my church. He sought out the most vulnerable, emotionally needy person that he could find, and he used his position of authority, trust, and endorsement by the church to manipulate me and take advantage of me, to exploit my vulnerability and to use me for his sexual amusement and excitement. When the full weight of that fact hit me—I was completely undone.

Of course, there were things that made me vulnerable to this process. My home life was quite dysfunctional; I am the youngest of four, and knew my whole life that my mother never planned a fourth child. My parents were both quite emotionally disconnected from me and, looking back, I see my emotional neediness even as a young child. My mother was a pretty heavy drinker and on medication for depression for years, and often threatened to leave when we kids got on her nerves. My father was very angry and would often throw fits of rage, very often while driving. I very rarely felt his approval, and never felt his love. As well, there was a strange, highly sexualized vibe in the home. Once my brothers were older, my mother would buy 'all the men' a Playboy calendar every year for their Christmas stocking. One of my brothers was addicted to porn, with literally STACKS of magazines in his room, three to four feet deep. This brother, who was seven years older than me, started sexually abusing me when I was perhaps around 10 or 11. One of the incidents involved a friend of his, where they came into my room after a night of drinking and I awoke to someone molesting me.

My mom had an aneurysm in her brain when I was 14. After spending six months in the hospital, she returned home but was brain damaged, and she really ceased functioning as a wife and mother. At this time, her drinking escalated significantly and, over the next five years, she had quite a few serious medical issues which culminated in her death when I was 19.

Not long before Mom died, when I was almost 19, I moved to a small city about 45 minutes from home to take a course at the college, and started attending the Pentecostal church there. That was where I met George*, a 35-year-old divorced man who played the guitar and had an amazing singing voice. He had also just moved into town, and the church was very excited to have someone with his talents around; there were his obvious musical abilities, but he also had been a pastor. His credentials had been revoked when his marriage dissolved, but really, he was a pastor except for that ‘technicality’ of having no credentials. He very soon was handed the high-teen Sunday school class. He was exceptionally charismatic and charming, and all the single women his age were throwing themselves at his feet. However, curiously, he was more interested in hanging around with me—a naïve 19-year-old girl who had a hole in her heart big enough to drive a truck through, that was desperately looking for the love, acceptance, and approval that she never really had growing up. He saw that neon ‘needy’ sign on my forehead and he instigated a friendship with me.

The initial point of contact was music; as mentioned, George played the guitar and had a beautiful voice, and I play the piano and sing as well, but nothing like him. There were many MANY opportunities to be alone together in this context, and soon we were quite a team when it came to special music at church. From this platform developed a close, intimate friendship where we could talk about anything, and where he was, at first, in a ‘big brother-helper’ kind of role. Right from the beginning it was inappropriate, but I didn’t (couldn’t) recognize that. He would confide in me about his pain over his failed marriage, and not being able to see his boys, and also would share how frustrated he was sexually, and how hard it was to know that he was not able to remarry (toeing the denomination’s line
regarding divorce and remarriage at the time). He made no attempts to hide the fact that he was very attracted to me, and would express it often. Every conversation was laced with sexual innuendo and flirting, and he took wicked pleasure in making me blush. I don't remember when or how, but the first physical contact was him massaging my back and neck, and the massages very quickly turned sensual and were not confined to my back and neck. At first it was fun and exciting—to have someone as handsome and kind as him showing such interest in me, and at the very beginning the massages and other touches were quite thrilling.

I sought him out because of how special he made me feel; he would smile a smile that would light up the room when he saw me, and was so caring. He complimented every aspect of me—my looks, my body, my musical abilities—and it was like a cool, refreshing rain to a parched desert. However, the relationship progressed quite quickly as he pushed it further and further on an intimacy level both emotionally and physically. I just wanted someone to love me, to make me feel worth something... but soon, on a subconscious level, I knew that for me to have his "love" and "acceptance" there was a price I had to pay.

He always knew where I was staying, and would just show up late at night, parking a few blocks away and walking to avoid detection. I never invited him—but I never told him not to come either, nor did I send him away. As things progressed, he was always the initiator/instigator of any physical contact and I would basically not react; I was frozen. He became the pursuer—and I was powerless. I didn't like the direction things always ended up going in, but I didn't even know what to say, let alone how to say it. I didn't want to reject him, because there was way too much at stake; I was a gaping pit of emotional starvation for attention, and I could not lose him. It became an odd dance; I was happy to see him and spend time with him, but when he would start massaging/ fondling/pushing the envelope, the further it went the less responsive I became. Mom had always said, "You need to be a virgin when you get married," and I was a good Pentecostal girl, so I believed that as well. However, due to my childhood experiences and the lack of any meaningful dialogue about things of a sexual nature, I had very poor boundaries, so really had no way of drawing the line anywhere except at the very last stop before things went TOO far. I had broken up with my previous boyfriend (Thomas*) because of this very issue. Therefore, as George pushed things further, I would just shut down. I have no idea why he never pushed past my lack of response and raped me, because at one point, he said "Thomas should have raped you, because then you wouldn't be so hung up sexually." However, he never took things to that point. Looking back, that was a small mercy in the midst of it all.

The only way I can describe how it was is I think he saw himself as a 'sex therapist', and was 'helping' me with this area of my life—like he wanted to give me the gift of being free from the hang-ups that he had diagnosed me with. There were times I really wondered what he was getting out of all of this, because his attention was always focused on me. I didn't give back anything physically to him ever, and he never requested anything. We actually never even kissed; it truly was like he was trying to give me the gift of sexual ecstasy, but I wasn't being very responsive.

My living situation changed and I got a roommate, which had a significant effect on things. I just remember things getting awkward, and as he no longer was free to advance my 'therapy', well—there was really nothing there. After being in my life for about 18 months, he just moved away. I don't really know why, because we never talked about it. He did seem hurt, so perhaps he felt I chose a roommate over him? Regardless, he just withdrew his affection and left. I really thought that I loved him, although I didn't get why he always had to have his hands up my shirt. I called him one evening, feeling lonely and sorry for myself. He told me that if I moved there we could live together, but he wouldn't marry me—supposedly because he thought I could do better. I didn't see how I was going to move anywhere, and so that was it.

Looking back, I see things SO much differently. He really was a deadbeat; he went from place to place housesitting or staying in someone's empty room—taking advantage of the caring and generosity of the congregation. He had very few real-world skills so could only find odd-job type work and never had a lot of money. He really couldn't relate to women on any other level except sexually; he was often flirtatious with married women. At one point, two fellows in the church lodged a complaint about him. One was a friend of mine who had let George crash at his house for a while and this was when things with me really took off. They went to the pastor and told him that
George was (in my friend’s words) a wolf in sheep’s clothing. I don’t know specifically what they discussed, but there was never any follow-up on it that I was aware of, and no questions were asked of me. Our “relationship” was a secret; we never talked about it, but it was understood that other people wouldn’t ‘get it’ so we needed to not act like we were a couple. Therefore, much of the time we spent together was secret get-togethers late at night and stolen moments in obscure places... which all added to the tension and also the guilt, shame, and confusion that I felt.

I have no idea where he is, if he’s alive or dead, or if he has ever been brought to justice for being a predator. I would be very surprised if I am the only one that he abused. I know that the police charged him with molesting a stepdaughter four or five years later (he remarried a few years after he moved away), but he was not convicted. I have not filed any kind of official complaint, and don’t even know where to start to do that—or if I wish to. Thankfully, this experience did not cause me to turn my back on the church. There was a brief time during the George scenario where I was pretty disillusioned and probably would’ve dropped out of church if I hadn’t been involved in the music ministry. However, because of the nature of the abuse and my age, his role at church, and my lack of any attempt at confrontation or resolution, I never really associated this experience with “the church”. Indeed, it was only in 2010 that I saw it for the egregious abuse that it was. It was at a woman’s retreat through the church where I entered into the most excruciating, remarkable, and ultimately freeing journey of healing that I ever could have imagined. I am so very grateful that I didn’t blame the church, because it has been the church, church programs, a pastoral counselor, a Christian psychologist, and the loving support of friends at church that God has used to heal these wounds from my past.

About two years along in my healing journey I was searching on the internet for someone—anyone—who might be able to relate to what I had been through, and I first found a website called Tamar’s Voice. When it explained on the front page what clergy abuse was—I cried. I had never heard that term before, and I can’t describe how it felt to know that there was a name for what had happened to me. A few months later I discovered The Hope of Survivors website, and realized they had a Canadian liaison! I contacted her by email, and discovered she not only lives in the same province as me, but in the same city as well! We have met for coffee a few times, and it has been so incredibly helpful to have someone who KNOWS what this is all about, and not just one person—but a whole community. The website has so many stories and resources and it truly is a lifeline to those of us who desperately need HOPE while we are frantically trying to survive and recover and heal.

I absolutely love Jeremiah 29:11, which says, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” God is trustworthy, and will bring total healing. He draws near to the broken hearted, he will replace beauty for ashes, and he will finish that which he starts. He wants you to know that he was there when you were abused. His heart was broken by the travesty that was inflicted on you, and he wept. He longs to redeem the hurt and pain, to restore you to wholeness, and to surround you with his love. The healing process for me was excruciating, yes. It took courage and trust, yes. Writing this out, going into all these details has been very painful, yes. But Abba Father has been and continues to be so very real, so present, and is closer than my very breath. He is trustworthy.

*Pseudonyms

[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 website 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.
A Massage Therapist Looks at Pastoral Boundaries—Ray McAlister, MDIV, PhD, LMT

(From the April 2014 edition of HopeSpeak)

You’re staying late at your church finishing your sermon. Suddenly there is a knock at the door. You open the door to find yourself facing an under-age church member of the opposite sex tearfully distressed over a recent romantic break-up. You are alone in the building as your secretary has left for the day. It just started raining outside, and the youth rode a bicycle. What do you do?

While in pastoral training, my seminary addressed issues like these to some extent. It wasn’t until I started massage therapy school that I was most deeply exposed to principles of ethics and boundaries. The massage therapy profession, especially in Western countries, has had to recover from a past of being associated, often accurately, with the sex industry. In a field where clients are often naked under a sheet, maintaining high standards of professional propriety is paramount. In a world where the ministry professions are now associated, often accurately, with sexual impropriety, it might do clergy well to be educated in such a manner for their work. In this article, I will share principles from the Bible and from my experience in the massage therapy profession to show how clergy can live lives above reproach in that profession.

A Look at the Scriptures

Before this journey gets underway, I must make it clear that this document is not intended to offer legal advice. At least, in America, laws concerning behavior of clergy are less strict and are usually enacted long after they are in the rest of society. These ideas are designed to help one fulfill the higher responsibilities of maintaining upright character, avoiding unnecessary temptation, and shunning even the appearance of evil.

Let us begin by looking at the story of Joseph resisting sexual temptation in Genesis 39. It must be understood that Joseph was a slave, and so, certain options of escape were unavailable to him. He behaved as righteously as he could, and sets for principles from his experience for how ministers can in their situations of greater freedom.

When Potiphar’s wife began making sexual advances at Joseph, Joseph responded with several measures designed to uphold purity. (Genesis 39:7-12) First, he spoke with clear words that he was unwilling to engage in such behavior and that such would be a sin against God. Even if he and Potiphar’s wife were to consent to such behavior, it would have been a wrong against her husband, a child of God, and so, it would have been a sin against God. Then the text says that Joseph refused to lie beside her or to be with her. He made it a point to adhere to standards high enough to keep him away from tempting situations. Finally, when she grabbed him insisting he have sexual relations with her, he did the only thing he could: leaving his coat in her hand and fleeing. Unfortunately, for him, as a slave, she was still able to use the situation against him and have him thrown in prison. Nonetheless, Joseph did the best he could and would eventually be blessed by God for his purity of character.

Boundaries in the World of Massage

In massage therapy school, they teach about two different kinds of boundaries. Personal boundaries are limits I set in a relationship in order to protect myself. Having a limit concerning how many massages I do in a day would protect me from injury and burn-out. Professional boundaries are designed to protect clients. Refusing to divulge information about my last massage protects that person from a curious client who doesn’t need to know. In many cases there is an overlap and a personal boundary ends up being a professional boundary. Making sure my wife is present when a female client comes for a massage protects me against accusation and the client from concerns of abuse. In Joseph’s case, refusing to even be near his master’s wife was a personal boundary as it related to Joseph’s spirituality and a professional boundary as it related to the sanctity of his master’s marriage.

When I started massage school, one of our first assignments was to write an essay describing our ethical boundaries we would have in our practices. I decided that I have no moral objection to massaging females, but that I would want my wife present to protect the client and me. All clients also sign a consent form that says they know that making sexual advances at my wife or me would result in the immediate termination of the massage. I even use professional terminology to limit confusion. I am a massage therapist, not a masseur, as the term, “therapist,” sounds very medical. I do massages on a massage table, and I discourage the use of the term “bed” for the apparatus. As required by law, I obtain parental consent before massaging a minor and clarify with the parent or guardian exactly what is expected of me.

I was even taught how to recognize the beginning signs that I might be developing feelings for a client or vice versa. If I begin to greatly look forward to a certain client’s presence or make extra and unusual sacrifices for such a client, it could mean that I should refer said individual to another therapist. Fortunately, maintaining all other boundaries properly has prevented this from being a problem in my business.

These matters are of highest importance to massage therapists. Not only do schools teach these guidelines, but there is an abundance of books on the subject of ethics and boundaries as they relate to massage therapy. Those preparing for licensing examinations are encouraged to spend much time studying ethics and boundaries.

Boundaries as They Relate to Ministry

Because the profession of pastoral ministry is plagued with so many sex scandals, it may be even more important for our “shepherds” to have strict personal and professional boundaries in their work. These will protect the minister from accusation and the congregants from being taken advantage of or made to feel uncomfortable.

Ministers should have well-explained policies concerning interaction with minors and those of the opposite sex. In America, a male clergy member should have a trusted female nearby when counseling a female, especially a single female. The minister’s wife, a secretary, deaconess or retired female congregant are all possibilities. Everyone will feel more comfortable. A minister should not work closely with any minor without consent of parent or guardian. Jesus and the apostles never did their evangelism by “picking off” children from their parents for conversion.
Ministers must pay close attention to their feelings when doing counseling. A good understanding of transference and countertransference are necessary when helping any other person through a struggle and sorting out the unusual emotions and behaviors associated with both. The warning signs of developing feelings for someone are no different in pastoral ministry. A minister may need to refer a congregant to a trusted associate if the feelings just cannot be controlled. A relationship with an honest spiritual accountability partner can also be useful. The accountability partner might warn the minister if something just doesn't seem right about a relationship.

Ultimately, since clergy in general, don't have explicit legal guidelines to follow, it's up to the minister, in consultation with the Bible and other spiritual leaders, to develop the best boundaries for the situation. This makes this task even more important. Ministers represent God, and people will be drawn toward or away from God based on their experiences with their spiritual leaders.

As for the situation mentioned at the beginning of this article, there is no one solution that would work for all ministers in all countries. If the minister decides to let the minor into the church because of the rain, one possibility might be to call a parent or a trusted church member of the same gender as the minor and have that person listen in on speaker phone. That way, at least, there is a witness. This may be the type of situation where one must rely on prayer and the Holy Spirit for wisdom. Whatever happens, ministers must be as prepared as possible with policies in place to prevent scandal. It's human souls that can be healed or destroyed and the Lord's Name that will ultimately be profaned or exalted.

Dr. Ray McAllister is passionate about his relationship with God. He enjoys spending time in prayer and Bible study, writing poetry, and serving others. In August, 2010 he received a PhD in Hebrew Scriptures. In April, 2013 he was licensed as a massage therapist. Dr. McAllister is totally blind. He's the first blind PhD from Andrews University's seminary, and the first totally blind person in the world to get a PhD in Hebrew Scriptures. Dr. McAllister sees his blindness as an opportunity to more deeply see the beauty of God's love and guide others to do the same.

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart... — Psalms 34:18
The Hope of Survivors - A Massage Therapist Looks at Pastoral Boundaries - Clergy Sexual Abuse

A Massage Therapist Looks at Pastoral Boundaries — Ray McAlister, MDIV, PhD, LMT
You're staying late at your church finishing your sermon. Suddenly there is a knock at the door. You open the door to find yourself facing an under-age church member of the opposite sex tearfully distressed over a recent romantic break-up. You are alone in the building as your secretary has left for the day. It just started raining outside, and the youth rode a bicycle. What do you do?

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Boundaries in the World of Massage

In massage therapy school, they teach about two different kinds of boundaries. Personal boundaries are limits I set in a relationship in order to protect myself. Having a limit concerning how many massages I do in a day would protect me from injury and burn-out. Professional boundaries are designed to protect clients. Refusing to divulge information about my last massage protects that person from a curious client who doesn't need to know. In many cases there is an overlap and a personal boundary ends up being a professional boundary. Making sure my wife is present when a female client comes for a massage protects me against accusation and the client from concerns of abuse. In Joseph's case, refusing to even be near his master's wife was a personal boundary as it related to Joseph's spirituality and a professional boundary as it related to the sanctity of his master's marriage.
When I started massage school, one of our first assignments was to write an essay describing our ethical boundaries we would have in our practices. I decided that I have no moral objection to massaging females, but that I would want my wife present to protect the client and me. All clients also sign a consent form that says they acknowledge that making sexual advances at my wife or me would result in the immediate termination of the massage. I even use professional terminology to limit confusion. I am a massage therapist, not a masseur, as the term, "therapist," sounds very medical. I do massages on a massage table, and I discourage the use of the term "bed" for the apparatus. As required by law, I obtain parental consent before massaging a minor and clarify with the parent or guardian exactly what is expected of me.

I was even taught how to recognize the beginning signs that I might be developing feelings for a client or vice versa. If I begin to greatly look forward to a certain client's presence or make extra and unusual sacrifices for such a client, it could mean that I should refer said individual to another therapist. Fortunately, maintaining all other boundaries properly has prevented this from being a problem in my business.

These matters are of highest importance to massage therapists. Not only do schools teach these guidelines, but there is an abundance of books on the subject of ethics and boundaries as they relate to massage therapy. Those preparing for licensing examinations are encouraged to spend much time studying ethics and boundaries.

Boundaries as They Relate to Ministry

Because the profession of pastoral ministry is plagued with so many sex scandals, it may be even more important for our "shepherds" to have strict personal and professional boundaries in their work. These will protect the minister from accusation and the congregants from being taken advantage of or made to feel uncomfortable.

Ministers should have well-explained policies concerning interaction with minors and those of the opposite sex. In America, a male clergy member should have a trusted female nearby when counseling a female, especially a single female. The minister's wife, a secretary, deaconess or retired female congregant are all possibilities. Everyone will feel more comfortable. A minister should not work closely with any minor without consent of parent or guardian. Jesus and the apostles never did their evangelism by "picking off" children from their parents for conversion.

Ministers must pay close attention to their feelings when doing counseling. A good understanding of transference and countertransference are necessary when helping any other person through a struggle and sorting out the unusual emotions and behaviors associated with both. The warning signs of developing feelings for someone are no different in pastoral ministry. A minister may need to refer a congregant to a trusted associate if the feelings just cannot be controlled. A relationship with an honest spiritual accountability partner can also be useful. The accountability partner might warn the minister if something just doesn't seem right about a relationship.

Ultimately, since clergy in general, don't have explicit legal guidelines to follow, it's up to the minister, in consultation with the Bible and other spiritual leaders, to develop the best boundaries for the situation. This makes this task even more important. Ministers represent God, and people will be drawn toward or away from God based on their experiences with their spiritual leaders.

As for the situation mentioned at the beginning of this article, there is no one solution that would work for all ministers in all countries. If the minister decides to let the minor into the church because of the rain, one possibility
might be to call a parent or a trusted church member of the same gender as the minor and have that person listen in on speaker phone. That way, at least, there is a witness. This may be the type of situation where one must rely on prayer and the Holy Spirit for wisdom. Whatever happens, ministers must be as prepared as possible with policies in place to prevent scandal. It's human souls that can be healed or destroyed and the Lord's Name that will ultimately be profaned or exalted.

Dr. Ray McAllister is passionate about his relationship with God. He enjoys spending time in prayer and Bible study, writing poetry, and serving others. In August, 2010 He received a PhD in Hebrew Scriptures. In April, 2013 he was licensed as a massage therapist. Dr. McAllister is totally blind. He's the first blind PhD from Andrews University's seminary, and the first totally blind person in the world to get a PhD in Hebrew Scriptures. Dr. McAllister sees his blindness as an opportunity to more deeply see the beauty of God's love and guide others to do the same.
In 2013, there were 1,200 people who were reached or touched by La Esperanza de los Sobrevivientes through seminars, conventions and one-on-one communication.

In the months of January, March and August of 2013, Pastor Javier Huerta and his wife Gloria, volunteers for La Esperanza de los Sobrevivientes, offered four seminars in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Los Angeles, California. Through these seminars, they helped victims of abuse and educated the congregation by making them aware that clergy sexual abuse exists.

La Esperanza de los Sobrevivientes once again participated in the ASI International Convention in Orlando, Florida, with an exhibit booth. This opportunity allowed me and my husband Carlos to provide information about clergy sexual abuse and prevention to people who gathered at this event from all around the world.

Also this year, La Esperanza de los Sobrevivientes participated in the Clergy Sexual Abuse Awareness & Prevention® campaign during the month of August by using Facebook as a media outlet to encourage and educate others about this topic. We want people to understand this type of abuse exists and help them know how to prevent it. If someone has already been abused, we provide useful resources so they can overcome the physical, emotional and spiritual abuse they have suffered.

*You may contact the Latino Division through its website.*
The Hope of Survivors - UK Division - April 2014- Clergy Sexual Abuse

UK Division Updates—Andrea & Anthony Shipwright
In May 2013, we were officially added to the list of The Hope of Survivors' volunteers. This enabled victims located in the UK to have local support.

Victim support was given to several clients via email. One victim was given additional support in person. This offered the opportunity to help with emotional, spiritual and practical needs.

In November 2013, we travelled to Bucharest, Romania. Our 3-day trip enabled us to attend the premier screening of Call It Anything But Love! with Romanian subtitles. It also enabled us to spend several hours with Steve & Samantha Nelson. We discussed our involvement with The Hope of Survivors and what further work could be done. We agreed that we would begin the process of adapting the literature to UK English and the website, thehopeofsurvivors.co.uk, would be created. This would be altered where appropriate to language and resources helpful to people in the UK. The Hope of Survivors' PowerPoint presentations for conferences and other speaking engagements were also made available to us.

Throughout 2013 we both spent a great deal of time reading and researching the subject of clergy misconduct and looking at how we, as The Hope of Survivors' volunteers, could educate to implement changes in churches. We were also able to offer some input to the rewriting of the vulnerable adult policy for a UK denominational organisation that oversees and provides policies for more than 2,000 churches in the UK.

In order to better serve the victims who reach out for help, I began my training in counseling in 2013 as well.

In 2014 we began with the editing of the US website text to make it suitable for UK English. The domain name was reserved and is currently under construction. When complete, it will contain all the relevant support and information that the US site offers, but it will be in UK English, and several of the external links will lead to UK information. Once this is done, we will begin doing the same editing to the brochure, Understanding Sexual Misconduct Among Spiritual Leaders. This will then go to print for distribution in the UK.

We have established some contacts in the UK who will be able to advise and assist with making The Hope of Survivors—UK a registered charity to enable us to collect grants, donations and gift aid. Some potential trustees have been made known to us and we will be following up on these in due course. It is hoped that, by the end of 2014, we will be in a position to be a presence at Christian events in the UK and offer information, support, seminars and talks at events.

*You may contact the UK Division through its website.*
The Hope of Survivors - Testimonials - Clergy Sexual Abuse

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.).

“…I just need to thank you for starting The Hope of Survivors. I cannot describe in words how essential your work has been for me, especially because there is not much information, openness and knowledge about pastoral sexual abuse in small Denmark. Thank you.”—Denmark

“Thank you Hope of Survivors for all that you do. Your resources have gotten me through a very tough time, and I have recommended the website to my therapist and sexual abuse support group.”
—Facebook comment

“Being able to monetarily give to your ministry gives me a sense of purpose and a “good” to come out of the evil meant against me. I know there are many women who have suffered far worse pastoral abuse and sexual misconduct then I did and I want to be able to help them in any small way I can since I understand the enormous amount of shock, trauma and damage a predatory pastor, someone you trusted with your heart and soul, can inflict on someone.”—PA

“What wonderful news! Prayers of praise to our loving Lord for this evidence of His care for your dedicated work for Him. May His blessings continue! And healing be found by all who come! God grant renewed strength for each day!”—CA

“I am thrilled, Samantha, to read how Maranatha Volunteers Intl. is involved in the renewal center. All I can say is, Praise. The. Lord! May He bless you and your husband abundantly for hanging in there with this critical, difficult, but absolutely necessary ministry!”—AL

“You and Steve started us on a healthier path of healing than we were headed-in. Your coming brought back people (for your event) who had left the church. The event also brought healing to those who have stayed. …I pray that the leaders see that healing is still needed. Your presentation also helped people to reflect on the boundaries that need to be created to prevent such an event from happening in the future. This is a lot of value for this ministry (looking forward), too.”—West Coast

“Thank you for your commitment to advocating in behalf of victims of Clergy Sexual Abuse. The survivor community is unified and strengthened due to your daily work. May your faith become your reality. May the joy, peace and love of this winter holiday season delight you daily. On behalf of survivors all over the world, we sincerely appreciate you. May God bless you, increase you, and make you a thousand times more than you are.”—MD

“The Hope of Survivors, specifically you and Steve and your ministry, have been pivotal in my healing.”—NY

“Thank you so much! Your website helped me so much!! I will continue to send you prayers and support! You guys are amazing!!”—OK

“I read on this web site [www.thehopeofsurvivors.com] for hours last night and this morning. It’s unbelievable to me how common this is. …I’m not alone for the first time in a year and a half. …Thank you!! You [Wendy] don’t know how it feels to just know others have been here and gotten past it. There's hope for me...”—Survivor
"Thank you so much for your email and the encouragement and understanding you have shown! I ran across this website and was so blessed to hear other’s testimonies, as well as have an outlet to share my own story. …I will make sure that I stay in touch and my plan is to make donations because I truly believe in what you all are doing! One day I pray I can be a part of the ministry in some way!! Once again thank you for all that you and The Hope of Survivors team are doing, seen and unseen! This is a much-needed ministry and God’s truth must be revealed so that we, as a Body of Christ, can continue to fight this unspoken battle!! God bless you, Heather!"—TX

“It is a privilege to be contacted by you [Samantha] directly. I have watched your videos and love what you all do. Thank you so much for serving God in this way. Your ministry has helped me so much. I would LOVE to be contacted by a volunteer victim support service rep from THOS. …Again I am so appreciative and you all are in my prayers! “—NY

“Thank you for what you guys are doing it is the only website / place in the world that understand this.”—UK

“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 are 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 would not be here if not for your strong opposition to Satan in my trying time of abuse and recovery”—IA

“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 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

“Thank you for your kind and encouraging words. They are apples of gold in settings of silver to me.”—FL

“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

“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

“Thanks again [Wendy] for all your love and support, and God tells me you ARE in the RIGHT job—you know just what to say when that person needs to hear it!”—Victim, Canada

“My church has been devastated by news of our pastor having an ‘affair’… Your website says that people do recover from this. This website is the only thing that has made sense in the past 3 weeks…”—FL

“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 web site and typing up my story has already resulted in a miracle in my heart. I am grateful to have found your web site."—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 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 hurting 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 well—more than ever—a need for all the seminars and conferences you do.”—WV

“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 overpowered 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 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 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(10,15),(988,989) 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.