

Calendar of Events

January 9

Ooltewah, TN—Program Taping Steve and Samantha Nelson will join host Dr. James Marcum to tape a couple of TV programs focusing on healing from pastoral sexual abuse. Details on air times and dates to come.

February 20

Time: 1:00pm (CST)—Annual Board of Directors' Meeting

April (Date TBD based on funding)

Bucharest, Romania—Series of sermons on marriage, family, healthy relationships, abuse and other important topics for Christians today. There will also be individual counseling sessions for victims, and training will be provided for the new Romanian Division leaders and pastors.

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

Current Project Needs...

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

► Immediate need for funds for outreach projects.

► Funds for travel expenses, registration and exhibitor fees to conduct conferences and raise awareness through exhibits at conventions.

► Support for International Divisions' start-up costs (Australia, Scandinavia, Tanzania, Kenya).

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. Thank you for considering a tax-deductible donation to further the work of this ministry and bring hope and healing to wounded hearts.

HopeSPEAK

Dear Readers:

"Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." (Isaiah 42:9)

It's difficult to believe another year has past, and we stand on the threshold of a new year, with new opportunities and challenges. The Lord has blessed The Hope of Survivors and those we have served over the last five years, and we believe He has even greater things in store for the years ahead. But first, I want to share with you a report from Sandy Kirkham, our Inter-denominational Representative. She writes:

"On Tuesday, November 27, I had the privilege of representing The Hope of Survivors as I addressed the graduate students at Cincinnati Christian University (CCU) on the topic of pastoral sexual misconduct. I hoped, by sharing my story, not only to raise awareness, but also to help in preventing future abuse.

I was encouraged by the students' interest and questions about what they, as future ministers, could do. Much of the discussion centered upon the power imbalances that exist between a pastor and a member of his congregation. From a victim's perspective, I hoped to convey the conflict created in one's spiritual life when a trusted minister crosses the boundaries of his ministry, and how our view of the church often times becomes distorted when that happens.

I asked them to remember that many of the things most people would find comforting—like going to church, praying, seeking Scripture for answers, talking to their ministers—are things survivors of pastoral sexual abuse can't do, or have difficulty doing. I asked them to be sensitive to that. Healing is a painful and difficult process, and many of us must find it with our spiritual lives fractured and without the support system of a church. The good news is God can take that which was meant for evil and use it for good. I was very grateful for the opportunity given to me by CCU and their willingness to openly address this sensitive and difficult topic. I am also very thankful for The Hope of Survivors!"

Thank you, Sandy! Praise God for opening doors to provide much-needed education and training for pastors, church leaders and counselors—or those studying to enter those fields. It is our hope education will prevent future occurrences of pastoral abuse, and provide

a greater understanding and compassion for victims when pastoral abuse does occur.

We are pleased to announce the launch of an official Kenya Division, led by Hephzibah Akunga, a dedicated Christian who desires to help others obtain healing. Welcome Hephzibah! Read more about her at: http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/biographies/Hephzibah_Akunga.asp.

While God has many plans for us this year, He also has a few changes. **This will be the last printed issue of HopeSpeak.** Due to the high cost of printing and postage (\$1,000 per newsletter), **HopeSpeak will now become an e-newsletter.** To continue receiving it, please make sure we have your correct email address. *HopeSpeak* will continue to be available on our web site for viewing or download.

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The Hope of Survivors is an inter-denominational nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization funded by individuals who support the mission and goals of the organization; survivors of pastoral sexual abuse who desire to use their means to help others; and by grants from private foundations whose values are similar to those of The Hope of Survivors. All contributions are fully tax-deductible as allowable by law. Your support is greatly appreciated.



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That Fateful Day

—by Steve Nelson



As I look back over the past five years, sometimes I wonder why I suggested we start this ministry. Not that I am regretting it, no that's not it at all, but rather, why were my wife and I chosen to do this special work? I remember the day it came into existence. We were sitting in our living room one afternoon, and my wife Samantha was telling me how she wanted to help

our church community services department reach out to more of our local community. As she explained her vision, I couldn't help but think, "If you are going to spend all those hours doing service, why not help those who experienced abuse the way we have?" Before I knew it, the words came blurting out, "Let's develop a web site to help victims of clergy sexual abuse."

"What do you mean?" she replied.

"Well, I remember when our pastor was abusing you, I went online hoping to find help—just one other person who would say this was wrong, and what he was doing to you was abuse," I replied. "Well, there was nothing out there, not even one credible resource. So, if you really want to spend time helping others, why not use the talents we were given to develop a site to provide information about clergy sexual abuse? If we could help just one person who has been abused, or stop one person from being abused, it would be worth it."

As we spent the next few hours recalling our experience, my wife busily wrote pages of questions, those unexplainable thoughts and feelings we had while going through such a devastating experience. Now, several years later, we no longer have the questions, but we do have many of the answers.

Our reflection on that experience brought back many painful memories. Memories that for some time had haunted our minds and nearly destroyed our faith in God, the church, and any pastor, for that matter.

It all seemed to have started one fateful Saturday morning. Everything had been going well for us over the previous couple of years. I had changed careers, and my wife and I had started a web site development company. The Internet was in its infancy, and our company was doing very well. We dreamed of using our skills to develop ministry web sites, which included helping our local church gain a web presence. Looking back, that decision to help our church had a big impact on what happened that day.

Several weeks prior to that day, I noticed things beginning to change, nothing I could put my finger on, and no real concrete evidence pointing to the problem, but my intuition was telling me something was wrong. My wife and I had always been very close, sharing everything couples who are best friends do. However, things were different. She seemed distant and started talking more about her health problems. Even though she had several physical problems, these had always been dealt with, and we both knew what was going on, but she stated she knew she would be getting progressively worse and it would be best for us to separate for a while.

The moment she said those words, I knew something serious was going on, but it had very little to do with her health. She had always told me she never wanted us to be apart, but now she was saying she needed to spend some time on her own. These words cut right through my heart, but nothing I said seemed to make a difference. I wracked my brain trying to figure out what was going on, but nothing made sense.

Desperate, I turned to the only person my wife said she felt comfortable talking with—our pastor. Little did I comprehend that morning how that decision would impact the rest of our lives. I can still recall many of the events in vivid detail. I was leading out in song service when, all of a sudden, the reality of what my wife had been telling me hit like a ton of bricks. As I felt the tears starting to well up in my eyes, I stopped singing and hurried out of the church. I ran into the parking lot, looking for a place to be alone. Finding seclusion behind a tree, I stopped, but the tears would not.

A few minutes later, I found myself in the pastor's office, sharing details of our life and asking for help. His calm voice gave me some sense of assurance, but inside there was still a nagging thought, one that would not stop hounding me, *this is not a good idea*. I expressed my concerns about having my wife counsel with him, because we had become friends over the past several years. He assured me this would not be a problem, that he could separate the friendship from counseling. "Don't worry," he said. Setting up an appointment for later that afternoon, we went back into the sanctuary for the remainder of the service.

At the appointed time, my wife and I drove toward the church. She dropped me off near a local park while she went on to her appointment. As I walked down a path leading to the park, I suddenly had an overwhelming impression. It was almost as if a voice spoke to me and said, "You have made a deal with the Devil!"

Startled, I looked around to see who could have spoken those words, but no one was there. As I continued walking, those words kept resounding through my

ship with a loving, caring Heavenly Father, is truly a God-send. This explains why people from all over the world have contacted Steve and Samantha in the US. The needs are great—far more than two dedicated people can meet—and this is why I am blessed with the opportunity of joining Steve and Samantha in this ministry.

It has been nearly two years since I accepted an invitation to join the ministry, and it has been about 18 months since I began working with clients. Arlagene Groves also become a representative here in Australia about 6 months ago, in order to help with the increasing needs here in Australia. So far, all the clients have been referred to us through The Hope of Survivors in the US (either because they are in our region, or because Samantha has been unavailable due to ministry commitments or a much-needed sabbatical). Soon clients will be able to directly access our service here in Australia via the web site. This will be a big step for the Australian branch of the ministry and we request your prayers as we take this step.

A considerable amount of time has been spent investigating the best way to structure The Hope of Survivors in Australia to comply with local regulations and still protect its vital connection with The Hope of Survivors in the US. This has been complicated by the seemingly endless amount of red tape for operating a nonprofit organisation, particularly in regards to fundraising, which is an essential part of any charitable organisation. This not only varies from country to country, but also from state to state, of which Australia has six, and two separate territories. At this point in time, it has been decided that Arlagene and I will be representatives of The Hope of Survivors in the US without a local separate entity. This appears to be the best option for maintaining the values and mission of The Hope of Survivors in the US, even though this may limit some fundraising efforts in Australia.

Personally, I feel very privileged to be part of a ministry that is making a real difference in people's lives. I feel blessed beyond measure to be working with Steve and Samantha and the rest of the dedicated volunteers. Your continued support and prayers are appreciated as we all strive to effectively minister to those affected by pastoral abuse wherever they are.

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With a new year, comes a new opportunity to live for Jesus and to experience health in every area of your life—emotional, physical and spiritual. It is our hope you will take advantage of this opportunity and allow Christ to make you a new creation this year. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

May God bless you,
Samantha Nelson

Recommended reading...



Reaching the Hurting—A Biblical Guide for Helping Abuse Victims is a powerful tool for individual growth, small group Bible studies, and women's ministries. It covers a range of topics, and is not specific to pastoral sexual abuse. Order your copy today at <http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/products.asp>. Only \$7.95 plus shipping!

Samantha and Steve Nelson are Co-Founders of The Hope of Survivors. They strive to facilitate healing in the lives of those who have been wounded by a spiritual leader.

The ministry is founded on the commission in God's Word, which calls us to "...comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

—2 Corinthians 1:4



11 arrived, I presented the *Faith & Fidelity* conference to ministerial students, pastors and those who came from the community, since it was open to all. Below are some of the comments I received:

"Eye-opening! Most of the ministers...have never been faced with the fact that making improper advances toward the opposite sex is abuse. [As a result of this conference] they were able to vow loyalty and purity, and to be aware of the dangers of being close 'to the edge.' They also had the opportunity to learn how to minister to victims of abuse. Shyleene knows the material, has the experience, and the personality to impact others. Thanks to her, and to this ministry."—Dr. Efraín Velásquez, Director of Theology & Music Dept., AAU

"Excellent material! I will use it in the Youth Society."—Ministerial Student, AAU

"I agree 100% with what was discussed in this conference. It is a real necessity to send the message that this is pastoral sexual abuse. This is a good orientation for the young men and future pastors."—Frank Legaer Torres, Leader in the church in West Puerto Rico

I have more than enough to thank God for at this point, but His blessings did not end here. On October 19, I had the opportunity to be a guest on the radio program, *Moment*, with host Anni Baez. During this radio program, I discussed pastoral sexual abuse and how victims can find hope and healing. After the program Ms. Ana Rodriguez, who helped with the program, stated, *"This ministry is very necessary in order to provide protection, security, and to help prevent people from losing their faith due to abuse. This ministry must be promoted and supported!"* Then, Ms. Baez expressed, *"For me, this program was a blessing. The orientation will help people understand this as abuse, and will help women to not continue to suffer in silence, but to seek help, to overcome, and to feel valuable in the name of Jesus Christ. This radio program will help others."* Many thanks to Anni Baez and Paraíso Radio for the opportunity to share this message of hope with the radio listeners!

In addition to AAU and the radio station, I also visited the Adventist Hospital (Bella Vista) Chaplaincy depart-

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ment; the Union and Association Women's Ministry Department; the Regional Hospital in Mayaguez; the Adventist Church in Guaynabo; and many others. My prayer is that God will continue to prepare the way for me as He has done. My request is found in the beautiful verse of Psalm 86:11, *"Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name."* Please keep the Latino Division in your prayers, as we have the possibility of conducting additional conferences in Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic and New Jersey.

Australia Division Update

—by Coralie Roll



Greetings from The Hope of Survivors 'down under.'

The need seen by Steve and Samantha for a division here in Australia, and in other parts of the world, confirms pastoral abuse is a worldwide problem. It crosses International borders just the same as it crosses the bounds of religion, denomination, age, gender, social and economic status. Wherever there are leaders with spiritual authority, there is the potential for the abuse of that power. Spiritual authority is not the problem, but rather, abuse of the power attached to it. It truly is a form of abuse, which is devastating and soul destroying. The effect on the victim is the same whether they are from the US, Australia, New Zealand, Kenya, Tanzania, Norway, or any other country. Lives are broken. Families can be, and are often, torn apart. Churches are devastated. Victims are often left without a spiritual home. They struggle to pick up the pieces. They struggle to find where Christ fits in the abuse which happened at the hands of one of His spiritual representatives here on earth. Those of you affected by it will know exactly what I am saying. You have lived with it. You have felt its devastation. It may be a worldwide problem, but at the same time, it is a problem demanding more than blanket solutions void of personal touch.

Mostly there is no need to travel far from home to find organisations dedicated to helping victims of the various forms of abuse or abuse in general. However, it is a rare find to discover an organisation specifically dealing with pastoral abuse and the unique problems faced by a person in this situation. To find an organisation that also deals with the spiritual disillusionment and helps to rebuild a victim's faith and relation-



head. *A deal with the Devil, a deal with the Devil.* "What did they mean?" I wondered. It would not take long before I found out.

What I did not know at the time was that we had been set up. Like a cat patiently waiting to catch its prey, our pastor—our friend—had been setting a trap to destroy our marriage. He had used our friendship to gain access to my wife, and in doing so, had been able to exploit any thought, misgiving, or misunderstanding we had experienced into monumental problems and irreconcilable differences. The seeds of doubt, already planted, were quickly shooting up in a harvest of destruction.

Over the next several months, I watched a marriage that was once growing, begin to wither and die. Nothing I seemed to say or do would make things better. As the abuse continued, we began to argue more and more. Each argument drove the wedge of separation deeper, and soon there was a vast, dark, foreboding chasm between us, which no bridge could connect.

After months of agony, suicide attempts, untold heartache and destruction, it finally ended. The pastor who was supposed to be the shepherd of his flock, the one who would lay down his own life to protect us—the sheep under his care—was finally revealed as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Through urgent prayers and Divine intervention, his mask was removed and everyone clearly saw how he had betrayed sacred trusts. It took my wife quite some time to be able to process through all his lies and deceitful sentiments but, in the end, she too finally understood that he was a fallen minister whose heart had been corrupted and was unworthy of the high office he had been given the privilege to hold.

Now, years later, sitting in the safety of our home where time has separated us from all those painful memories, we are able see that what had been meant for evil, God had in return brought good. No, we would never wish to experience such a tragedy or travel that road again but, from this side of the journey, we can say it was worth the pain. You may wonder, how could this be? The answer is quite simple. God has used our experience to save more than just "one."

In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus said, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Testimonials

"Your web site really made things clear to me. The biggest thing The Hope of Survivors did for me was like turning on a light in a dark room. It has raised my awareness of inappropriate behavior in people. God opened my eyes to see a whole lot more...the light bulb came on. I am so grateful for The Hope of Survivors' web site. It's been liberating!"
—Minnesota

"It really helped me a lot to speak with you. It helped me to see many things differently and I found, again, a loving God. Thank you very much for the book [Reaching the Hurting—A Biblical Guide for Helping Abuse Victims]. I have nights where I can't sleep because the situation at home overloads me, and then I read in the middle of the night in the book and, after a while, I find rest again—rest in Jesus. I want to let you know that there are many days I think of our little contact at EBS and how much the Lord blessed me from that. Even though I may not have so much time to write you more often, you should know that you are also in my thoughts and prayers."—Germany

"Over the weekend I have had a chance to explore, more deeply, The Hope of Survivors' web site. Reading the other testimonies, and listening to the interviews, as well as listening to Steve's sermons... all of this has helped me so much. I want you to know how thankful I am to God for you in this ministry. After feeling so alone for seven years and feeling like I had to hold on to this secret for the rest of my life, I know now that there is support."
—Mississippi

Praise be to God for the work He is doing for *"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."*—Psalm 147:3

Greater Than My Pain

—by K.D.

Growing up, my parents were always faithful to take me to church every Sunday. As I entered the youth group as a teenager, I became very involved in the youth choir, was on the leadership team, and my life outside of school consistently revolved around church activities. I began to understand what it meant to have a relationship with Christ, and was thankful for friends and mentors who encouraged me in my faith. Unfortunately, in a sinful, fallen world, even those close to us can betray us. One of my pastors made the choice to abuse the position of trust and authority he was given, and so began a cycle of abuse that lasted almost five years.

It was a gradual process, and my thoughts are fuzzy on how it actually began. I looked up to him and his wife; they were well loved by the church and became dear friends of our family. They counseled and mentored me, led me in Bible study and youth activities, and I felt blessed to know them. I liked the attention and friendship my pastor gave, but I knew it was wrong when things became physical, and I was confused. Sometimes I just wanted to scream; sometimes I hated him; but I felt powerless to stop it, even when I tried. He said he would lose his job and his family if I told, and I didn't want to be responsible for that. But I was a shy kid, and I think he was pretty certain I would stay quiet. And for many years, he was right.

I entered college, not fully understanding what had happened, but silenced and guarded. I felt vulnerable and different, and identified my differences from peers as flaws. I was ashamed, and for all outward purposes I hid that part of me, but my soul was in turmoil. Over

the years, I became more and more withdrawn from relationships with people, giving in to my fears and shying away from the abundant life that Christ had planned for me.

Finally in May 2007, I contacted The Hope of Survivors. It took almost three years after my first discovery of their web site before I finally reached out. Until then, I was convinced I was alone with this burden that no one understood, despite my personal search to prove otherwise. Through the compassionate and caring counsel of Samantha and Sandy, God not only provided healing, but allowed me to find my voice, a voice that had been silenced for too long.

The faith that had seemed to betray me, was the same faith that brought me through the pain. God was always pursuing me, even when I was not always faithful to Him, and He extended grace to me, an undeserving sinner. Our God is Sovereign, and no circumstance is beyond His ability to redeem. In Genesis chapter 50, Joseph's brothers are afraid that he will hate them and try to pay them back for the evil they did to him. Instead, Joseph's response is *"Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today"* (Genesis 50:20, ESV). God is always greater than my pain. God will bring justice to evildoers, and He uses our suffering to bring glory to Himself. What greater purpose could there be?

I thank God for giving me the courage to contact The Hope of Survivors. The love and support I've received from Samantha, Steve, and Sandy has been invaluable and I don't like to think of where I might be without it.

Creative ways to help...

NEW! This is your opportunity to nominate The Hope of Survivors for a monthly drawing for \$10,000. Please visit <http://www.sharesome.org/nominate.asp> and enter your nomination now!

Don't have any money? You can still support The Hope of Survivors! We will receive a penny each time you search the Internet using **www.GoodSearch.com**. Money from advertisers will go to The Hope of Survivors without you spending a dime!

Do you shop online a lot? Then shop through **iGive.com** and earn money for The Hope of Survivors each time you order from nearly 700 popular merchants online!

Also, **Giveline.com** is an online store created for the community-minded shopper. Every purchase generates a donation to The Hope of Survivors. Check it out today!

Thank you for supporting The Hope of Survivors!

Frozen Heart Fly Free

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Haunted by questions
Can there really be an answer?
Troubled by a chorus
Can there really be a song?
Searching for a sign
That there will someday be meaning
To a past that now only seems to sigh.

*Frozen heart fly free
And stretch the wings God gave you
Shattered hope, come alive
And stretch your weary legs
For the King is on His throne
And you have not been abandoned!
Healing has come.*

Chained up in fear,
Can there really be freedom?
Shackled in silence
Do you still have a voice?
Deceived into doubts
The say someone hears you.
Why doesn't He answer?
Why doesn't He come?

*Frozen heart fly free
And stretch the wings God gave you
Shattered hope, come alive
And stretch your weary legs
For the King is on His throne
And you have not been abandoned!
Healing has come.*

Every stumbling stagger
Every staggering step
Is another step closer
To the hope that is yours
And soon you will sing...

*Frozen heart fly free
And stretch the wings God gave you
Shattered hope come alive
And stretch your weary legs
For the King is on His throne
And I have not been abandoned!
Healing has come.*

~~~~~  
This song was written by a friend of mine after I mentioned to her something of my past. This was the cry of my heart for so long, and although I still struggle sometimes, I know that God has never abandoned me. Finally, I can say...healing has come.  
—K.D. (*Greater Than My Pain*)

## Latino Division Update: God Prepared the Way

—by Shyleene Rosado

I was enthusiastic about my upcoming trip to Puerto Rico in October to visit family and friends, to complete the paperwork for my counselor's license, and to raise awareness of The Hope of Survivors (La Esperanza de los Sobrevivientes in Spanish). Before I left, I had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Efraín Velásquez, Director of the Theology & Music Departments at the Antillean Adventist University (AAU) in Mayaguez, PR. While he had previously expressed an interest in having a conference for the pastors, once he found out I would actually be in PR, he said, *"be prepared to present the Faith & Fidelity conference to the pastors and ministerial students on October 11."* My reply was, *"Wow! Look how God has prepared the way!"* We may have plans, but God opened the door and showed me the path He had prepared for me.

God directed every step as I prepared to fly to PR. On the plane, I sat next to a young man, wondering if I should talk to him or not. The Holy Spirit impressed me that I needed to speak to this man. Since we were both on our way to PR, we had plenty of time. The verses in 2 Timothy 1:6-9 came to mind and I began to converse with this man. He was flying to PR because his grandmother had died. Together, we opened our Bibles and discussed life and death. Then, I took the opportunity to tell this young man about the ministry of The Hope of Survivors. He was quite surprised and went on to tell me that he had never heard of the ministry, but knew there was a need for it. He told me his father is a pastor and would appreciate the ministry. I gave a set of our Spanish brochures to him to share with his father. God continually instructs us, as Psalm 32:8 declares. This was the beginning of a wonderful trip.



I had a full agenda and prayed for God to give me strength to do all I had planned. Instead of the 12 appointments I had scheduled, it turned out to be 50! At each of these appointments, I presented the work of the ministry and asked people to consider supporting it. When October