

HopeSPEAK

1

Dear Readers:

Exhilarating and exhausting! Those are the two words that come to mind when asked to describe the activities of the last quarter. So much has taken place and we have been blessed to see the Lord's hands bringing hope and healing to those we serve. Where do I begin to tell you everything?

On April 23, Steve and I presented a *Faith & Fidelity* conference to pastors and church administrators at the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Clovis, CA. Below are some of the comments we received:

"We had very positive feedback from the attendees, thank you for coming. Continue doing your ministry, it is greatly needed. It is not usual to get a victim's perspective, that's what sets you apart from others doing the same thing. God bless you richly as you continue to serve Him in this vital area."—Ramiro Cano, Executive Secretary, Central California Conference

"Excellent material!"—Pastor F. Anderson, CA

"It [the conference] magnified the responsibility that we have as pastors. Keep it up! Lift your voices!"—Pastor D. Tello, CA

"I learned a lot about "abuse" as opposed to "an affair." Very good info. I would recommend this to all pastors/church leaders."—Pastor, CA

"Just hearing the perspective of people who went through pain showed me how sexual misconduct can destroy."—Pastor T. Barnes, CA

We praise the Lord for what He is doing and we pray He will continue to open doors for us to raise awareness about this issue. To read additional comments, please visit http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/ff_testimonials.asp.

The following update is from Sandy Kirkham, our Interdenominational spokesperson:

"On April 24, I had the privilege of presenting the

Trust & Truth conference to the graduate students of Cincinnati Christian University as part of their ethics class.

It was my hope to not only help future pastors and church leaders understand the dynamics of pastoral abuse, but to also communicate the pain and devastation of this abuse from the perspective of a victim. I began with my story and journey of faith and healing since confronting my abuser in 2004. I shared how The Hope of Survivors had been instrumental in that journey. I followed with a brief presentation covering such key points as, why it is abuse, why it is not an "affair," response of the church and the role of forgiveness. The students were also given The Hope of Survivors' brochures.

Continued on page 2...

Volume 4, Edition 3, July 2007

Letter from the Vice President.....	1-2
Donor Profile, Creative Ways to Help, Volunteer Opportunities.....	3
The Voice of Thanksgiving.....	4-5
Classic Incest—In the Kingdom of God.....	5-6
Australia & Latino Division Updates.....	6
His Word.....	7
Calendar & Project Needs.....	8

The Hope of Survivors
P.O. Box 16
Thompsonville, IL 62890

Phone: (618) 983-6434 or (866) 260-8958
Email: Help@TheHopeOfSurvivors.com
Web site: www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com

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.

A period of questions and discussion followed. I found their questions both interesting and insightful and there was a genuine interest in wanting to prevent future abuse. I was grateful for the opportunity and proud to represent The Hope of Survivors."

Thank you, Sandy! We appreciate your assistance and willingness to serve in this area.

During May, Steve and I were blessed with the opportunity to serve primary, secondary and periphery victims in Norway at a ministry that had recently suffered the devastation of abuse by a spiritual leader. We conducted a *Faith & Fidelity* conference for ministry workers and church leadership, gave classroom presentations for the Bible School students (see photo), devoted many hours to individual counseling sessions, and tried to encourage and uplift everyone in the process. For weeks in advance we prayed earnestly for the Lord to prepare the way for us and to work through us. He blessed far beyond our highest hopes and expectations as we began to minister to hurting individuals and the power and grace of the Lord begin to work in their lives. Here is just one comment we received from a couple after we returned to the office:

"We were so grateful to have you guys come! I was a little skeptical before you came, just because of experience with other "professionals" on this topic, but we were so blessed. The most important part for me was your God-centeredness. It was obvious that you had a connection with Christ and your counsel reflected that. Keep it up."

Another email came from the director of the Bible School, "Thank you for all you have done at ... our foundation. Your being here sure was building bridges.... The students also appreciated the time you spent with them and the counsels you gave them. Your time with the German girl ... was a Blessing, as she is "growing" in leaps and



bounds within a short time! Praise the Lord!" Truly, we can echo the words of the Psalmist when he declared, "O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep." (Psalm 92:5)

Among other things, the Lord has answered our prayers for resolution in the matter of the healing center. We prayed for the door to be closed on the one facility if it was no longer His will, and we are relieved to announce the home has been sold. We praise God He never closes one door without opening another! We now have the opportunity to purchase a 4-bedroom home for use as the healing center at a more affordable price—only \$65,000. Please join us in praying for the speedy fulfillment of this promise. Several people are waiting anxiously to come as soon as it opens. If the Lord impresses you to donate

for this particular project, please write "Healing Center" on your check. Thank you!

There are many other projects in the works right now, and we look forward to the new youth brochures (currently at the printer) that, we pray, will be a tremendous resource to young people. We are pleased to announce the church and youth brochures will also be printed in Spanish, and we have developed a new pastoral sexual abuse fact sheet that will be available soon.

If you would like to be inspired by reading testimonies and seeing what the Lord accomplished last year through The Hope of Survivors, you may download our newly released 2006 annual report at http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/you_can_help.asp.

We have seen and tasted, in part, how true the words and thoughts of Revelation 15:3 are, "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Thank you for your prayers and support. May God be with you. —Samantha Nelson

Donor Interview & Profile

Phenessa, wife and mother

Victim of pastoral sexual abuse by a satellite pastor at one of Atlanta's megachurches.

How did you first become aware of The Hope of Survivors?

I found The Hope of Survivors ministry by searching the Internet for how to heal from clergy abuse.

What made you decide to become involved with and support The Hope of Survivors?

The Hope of Survivors was instrumental in helping me through one of the most horrific experiences. I felt that I had no way out and their ministry gave me comfort, hope and renewed faith in the One who could heal me. They helped me to understand what happened to me and how to move past it. They were always there to answer any questions I had, to pray for me and give me Scriptures to meditate on during my hardest times.

Do you plan to remain involved and support The Hope of Survivors? If so, why?

No doubt about it! I could not imagine not being supportive of The Hope of Survivors. They've helped me move beyond my pain and strengthened my walk with Christ through, and after, such an awful experience.

Creative ways to help...

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.Good-Search.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, offering more

than a million bestselling products including books, movies, music, electronics, housewares, gifts and more. Every purchase generates a substantial donation to The Hope of Survivors. Check it out today!

Are you accumulating frequent flyer miles you'll never use? Don't let them go to waste! Donate them to The Hope of Survivors so we can conduct more conferences with less travel expenses. Call today to find out how!

You can also donate through the **American Express Giving Express** by going to: <http://amex.justgive.org/nonprofits/donate.jsp?ein=65-1211701>.

Thank you for supporting The Hope of Survivors!

Volunteer Opportunities

Are you interested in helping others who have been victims of pastoral sexual abuse through this ministry? Current openings include: Conference Coordinator, Media Liaison, Biblical Counselor and Fundraiser. For more information, visit http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/volunteer_opportunities.asp.

"At this time God's cause is in need of men and women who possess rare qualifications and good administrative powers; men and women who will make patient, thorough investigation of the need of the work in various fields; those who have a large capacity for work; those who possess warm, kind hearts, cool heads, sound sense, and unbiased judgment; those who are sanctified by the spirit of God, and can fearlessly say no or yea and amen, to propositions; those who have strong convictions, clear understanding, and pure sympathetic hearts; those who practice the words, 'All ye are brethren'; those who strive to uplift and restore fallen humanity." *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 7, p. 249*

Recommended Reading

We highly recommend *Drowned In Living Water* by Rachel Clarion available at <http://www.lulu.com/content/821779>.

The Voice of Thanksgiving—by Hope Bencho

We are living in the last days and perilous times are here. *“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”* (2 Timothy 3:1-4)

The churches of today pretend that Scriptures like these are not in existence and they act like these things only take place in the world. How sad we do not have to even go outside the church walls to see these acts in operation. The so-called church of today has forsaken Jesus, the Fountain of living waters, and they have broken cisterns that cannot hold water (Jeremiah 2:13). The truth is disregarded and, even in the very presence of Jesus, they are so full of the world and spiritually corrupt they cannot hold the truth. They have perverted the Word of the living God and they are a “perverse nation.”

It may be a surprise to find the word “unthankful” listed in 2 Timothy 3:1-4, but let’s think about it for a minute. We can look around and see that people are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, they are without natural affection, and they are unthankful. If we look at all the new fads of religion, we can see a generation that is not called by God; but one that is self-centered, arrogant and ungodly, and individuals who refuse to lay aside hate. They walk according to the appetites of the flesh and have no strength to govern their lives. The more they get, the more they want, having all the promises of God is not enough. The Word of God is not enough and they run to every conference that offers up “praise and sacrifices” that is a strange fire to God; *“...and Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord...”* when they did this (Numbers 3:4). 2 Timothy 3:7 says they are *“ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*

God has a people that will bless the Lord at all times and His praise shall continually be in our

lips (Psalms 34:1). We will not offer God strange fire, but we will worship Him in spirit and in Truth. According to Philippians 2:14-15 we are to *“do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”* God is displeased with complaining and Numbers 11:1 says, *“And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.”* When we complain and become unthankful day after day, God is not pleased with us. God may not physically consume us with fire, but the consequences are just as bad for us spiritually.

Unthankfulness and all the words listed in 2 Timothy 3:2-5 will consume us like fire and they will rob of us all the good things that God has to offer us. From the very minute our eyes open in the morning, a praise of thanksgiving should be on our lips; but so many times we find ourselves wishing the day would just end. If we allow these dark days of complaining to continue, we soon fall into Satan’s trap. Yes, all of us will have days when things just don’t go right; but it is the attitude in which we handle the situation that matters. If we keep allowing this to continue, darkness and despair will soon overtake us; and soon we will find ourselves snared by the fowler. You might think that something so small could not lead to devastation, but this is the last days—perilous times—and, even if we give Satan just a small foothold, seemingly small things can lead to our demise. You might just start out with simple complaining and being unthankful, and then you will become discontent with everything and everyone.

We can listen to many voices and, if we listen to the voice of the enemy, it will lead us to destruction. We must listen to the voice of Jesus, the One that can speak to the storms and cause them to cease. We must listen for the voice of the Shepherd, the voice of the Way, the Truth and the Life! The Bible says the sheep know the voice of the Shepherd and will follow him. The sheep does not even know the voice of a stranger, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow*

me: *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*" (John 10:27-28) Help us, God, to listen for your voice and to turn deaf ears to the many voices of the enemy, and help us in casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Just as we can listen to the voice of the enemy, our own voice can speak many things, death and life are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21); but we have the power to choose which voice to listen to. Remember to be like the sheep. If you don't know the voice, do not follow it.

God has "...a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9). If you know you are part of this "holy nation" be thankful and praise His name. Psalms 26:7 says, "*That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.*" Voice means a medium of expression and the right or opportunity to express choice or opinion. The voice of complaining, bitterness, hate, envy and strife is expressed too often; it is our right to stand up and let the voice of thanksgiving be heard. Let us replace the voice of depression, with the voice of joy and praise (Psalms 42:4); and it is time for the voice of triumph (Psalms 47:1) to be heard across the land. It is time for the voice of thanksgiving to be heard and to tell how wonderful the works of Jesus are!

Hope Bencho writes from West Virginia and currently volunteers as a grant researcher and assists with other projects as she is available.

"To all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God the moment of greatest discouragement is the time when the Divine hand is nearest. They will look back with thankfulness upon the darkest part of their way. From every temptation and every trial He will bring them forth with a firmer faith and a richer experience." *The Desire of Ages*, page 528.

Classic Incest—In the Kingdom of God—A Testimony by K.

Like many, I saw my professors as interpreters of the Kingdom of God. I held an M-Div. and was a UM missionary when I divorced my husband. When I began a Ph.D. program at the seminary, I continued in therapy with a professor of counseling and pastoral care because the sexually abusive relationship with my husband had begun when I was 14; I did not want to minister to others without having dealt with my past.

In my eyes, Dr. P. had saved me—I told him I trusted him with my life. That is when he began to tell me how other sexually traumatized clients found healing through being touched, hugged and held by him "in a safe manner."

In the isolation of his seminary office, Dr. P. justified his free-lance psychology, stating that women were not understood by his colleagues, nor helped by standard practices—he was "willing to bend the rules" for the sake of our healing. He defined his actions in terms of "the Kingdom of God," and promised to never shame, reject or hurt me. He told me he had "adopted me" as a daughter, transforming himself into a father/God figure who would heal my past and always defend me. I trusted him. I wanted healing.

He set ground rules in which touch was ok, except touching his genitals. I felt too uncomfortable to question that further, for I had no intention of touching him sexually and was embarrassed to imagine his touching me at all. Yet he was already describing clients having needed to be held by him, unclothed, in order to feel his "safe touch." The seminary community respected and praised this man and I began to want to do all the right things for him, to please him as a daughter wishes to please her father, and trust the logic that he shaped:

- ▶ you seek healing;
- ▶ this is how God can heal the hurting child in you;
- ▶ this is the safe place where I can help you experience a father's love;
- ▶ I am safe. I will not reject you or shame you or

hurt you because you are my special daughter and I am your father in the Kingdom of God and this is what is best for you—our secret.

Yes, I wanted him to know I trusted him to heal me. Yes, I would follow the “rules” that no longer seemed so shocking because I trusted him as my father—like God in the flesh—as he hugged me, sat me on his lap and pulled my shirt over my head to hold my breasts...

Only after reading the description of pastoral grooming which was posted on The Hope of Survivors, did I begin to understand how horribly my therapist—a seminary professor of pastoral care and former pastor—had violated me for 2 years. But the tragedy did not begin, nor end, with Dr. P. In therapy with Dr. P., I had begun to have flashbacks of situations that had taken place with another professor—Dr. W.—who was not only my advisor, but also the dean in charge of my area of study. The flashbacks created tremendous guilt, for I did not understand the vulnerability that previous sexual abuse creates in a woman. To the world around me, I was strong and intelligent, the mother of three beautiful children. I had been called “super mom” and my marriage appeared to be storybook-perfect to those around us—we kept up the image, but the image was tearing me apart.

I have learned that my therapist had been allowed to continue a clinical practice within the seminary and as a professor of pastoral counseling even after confessing to seminary leaders that he had sexual intercourse with a former client in his clinical office—before I was a client of his. The seminary kept it a secret. “Daddy’s little secret.” Classic incest—in the Kingdom of God.

[To read the full testimony, visit http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/stories/classic_incest.asp.]

If you are a survivor of pastoral sexual abuse who has been helped by The Hope of Survivors, we would love to hear from you. If you’d like to share your story on the web site or in a newsletter, you may submit it to help@thehopeofsurvivors.com. You can use a pseudonym if you choose and rest assured that all personal information will be kept private and strictly confidential.

Australia Division Update

The nonprofit paperwork is still in progress for the Australia Division, though operations continue as part of The Hope of Survivors (U.S.). Meanwhile, the number of clients is growing and Arlagene Groves has joined Coralie. Welcome Arlagene! Read her bio at http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/biographies/Arlagene_Groves.asp.

The Hope of Survivors—Australia Division

P.O. Box 466
Drayton North QLD 4350 Australia

Phone: 07-4630-2983 (in AU) or (866) 260-8958 (from U.S.)

Web: www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com

Email: Coralie@TheHopeOfSurvivors.org

Latino Division Update

We want to praise God for what He is doing in the Latino Division, La Esperanza de los Sobrevivientes! Cesar & Carmen Carmona have been actively raising awareness of the issue of pastoral sexual abuse and the ministry through various churches, while Irma Murray has been working steadily on translating the upcoming youth brochure and the remainder of the web site into Spanish. We welcome Shyleene Rosado who joined the ministry in April. She is currently completing her practicum hours to fulfill the requirements to receive her professional counseling license, and she has chosen to complete her 500 hours with La Esperanza de los Sobrevivientes. She will be serving as counselor to Spanish-speaking victims. Thank the Lord for supplying the people we need for the Latino Division!

La Esperanza de los Sobrevivientes

The Hope of Survivors—Latino Division
P.O. Box 16
Thompsonville, IL 62890

Toll-Free Phone: (866) 260-8958

Web: www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com/Espanol

Email: Latino@TheHopeOfSurvivors.com

His Word—by Steve Nelson

As a shepherd, he promised to give his all to be faithful, just and true. His word was the only guarantee he could offer but, for his flock, it was enough. Would the vow and the promise he made stand the test of time, or was his word like shifting sand? The years rolled on and those who trusted him believed he would always keep his word. It wasn't until that fateful day when his genuine character was revealed, that others discovered the truth. Once caught, he pleaded that he was "just a man." And, as a man, the temptation was too great to endure and he should not be held accountable for his actions.

Some saw through his deception and were outraged by the poor excuses given to escape the penalty of sin. With absolute clarity they could see through the weakness of such an argument and inadequate defense. His defense could not absolve his guilt, or lessen his responsibility. The punishment must fit the crime. But do we always need to keep our word? Are there times when a promise can be broken or a vow un-kept?

Jesus made promises, too. He promised that if we would believe in Him, take Him at His word and give our lives to Him, we would have eternal life. But what if he failed to keep His word? What if He decided it wasn't convenient to follow through with His promise? After all, plans and circumstances do change. Imagine, as Jesus comes to the cross, His mind becomes overwhelmed with the gravity of what lies ahead and, at that critical moment, He decides keeping His word is too difficult. He might have said, "it's not convenient, the cost is too great." Where would you and I be today, if He'd said that? We know the answer, but do we comprehend the reality behind keeping our word? If God was willing to keep His word no matter what the price, do you think He expects us to keep our promises to Him, too?

In today's world, promises seem to be conditional upon the circumstances around us. Many Christians commit their lives to Christ but, when difficult times come, they easily disregard their vow to serve, live and be like Jesus. It is much easier to compromise than to fulfill a promise. But who is really benefited when we negotiate with our con-

science and fail to keep our word? If compromise benefits us this time, who profits when they compromise us? This becomes circular destruction. If everyone can disregard their promises in order to gain, it's only a matter of time before someone else will not keep their promises to us and we will lose so they can win. If we are truthful, we can see that each compromise slowly destroys and erodes our ability to do the right thing.

This is where integrity counts. It is integrity that fulfills a vow. Integrity is unflinching in the midst of adversity and temptation, even if it's inconvenient. The Bible says let your "*yes be yes.*" (Matthew 5:37) In other words, we can't change our minds, go back on a promise and still keep our word. This is why those in positions of trust and authority are held to a higher level of accountability. And this is why all Christians need to be "*doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*" (James 1:22)

A compromise—whether it's failing to keep a commitment, pledge or promise, or by a pastor failing to uphold the high calling he's been given—is never gain, but always loss. We lose integrity, respect and, ultimately, if unrepentant, we will lose eternal life. We deceive ourselves if we believe that it can be different with us. The fruit of the first compromise brought untold misery and destruction to this earth and, ultimately, death of God's dear Son. If we look to the cross we can see the high cost of selfish gain. In the light of eternity what will it "*profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" (Mark 8:36)

Compromising integrity is the reason the ministry of The Hope of Survivors came into existence and why many who are reading this article have been the recipients of great heartache and pain. Adhering to principle is how we can rise above the world around us and, by God's grace, we can show others that keeping our word is the most valuable asset we can ever obtain.

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



8

Calendar of Events

August 1-4

Louisville, KY—ASI International Convention
Kentucky International Convention Center
221 Fourth Street
Louisville, KY 40202

The Hope of Survivors will be exhibiting Wednesday-Sunday. All are invited to attend.

August 9-17

Skøtselv, Norway—The Heartgood Foundation
Steve and Samantha Nelson will be presenting meetings and conducting individual counseling sessions.

August 27

Redding, CA—Fundraising Event
Prime 11 Cinemas Monday Sponsorship Program
Arranged by volunteers Peggy & Dave Mahrt, The Hope of Survivors will be the recipient of 15% of concession sales collected at Prime 11 Cinemas on August 27.

September 12-15

Nashville, TN—American Association of Christian Counselors 2007 World Conference
Opryland Hotel & Convention Center
Nashville, TN

The Hope of Survivors will be exhibiting at this conference in order to raise awareness of pastoral sexual abuse among counselors and church leaders. All are welcome to attend.

Current Project Needs...

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

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.

THE **Hope**
of Survivors

P.O. Box 16 Thompsonville, IL 62890

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