

Hope SPEAK

Dear Hope of Survivors Family,

The past few months have been a flurry of activity from training volunteer Wendy Schwitzer for the Canadian Division in June, presenting a series on healing in Bucharest, to ending August with a *Hope & Healing* conference for victims of clergy sexual abuse in Omaha. But, more about that in a moment.

August 1 kicked off the 2nd annual Clergy Sexual Abuse Awareness & Prevention® campaign (<http://www.clergysexualabuseawarenessday.com>), and several events took place throughout the month to raise awareness and facilitate healing, such as exhibiting at the annual ASI Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio. In addition to these events, we were blessed to have unsolicited publicity in a number of newspapers (*Bangor Daily News*, *York Weekly*, *Seacoast Online*, etc.), as several people wrote letters to the editor about the campaign and the need to address clergy sexual abuse. Awareness helps bring about education and education helps to facilitate prevention and healing. It is vital!

Shortly after returning from Romania, the *Hope & Healing* conference was held in Omaha, Nebraska, and it was incredible to see how the Lord brought such a vast group of people together to learn, share and heal by the power of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Martin Weber, board chairman, and Ted Vanderlaan, Esq., member of the board of directors, both assisted Steve and I as presenters during the conference and were quite a blessing to all who attended. This was the most booked conference we've ever held and included more husbands than ever before too, which is a very good thing. You can read the responses from some of the attendees in the Testimonials section.

On another note, after several discussions with our volunteers in Romania, the search is on in earnest for a suitable facility or property in Romania to serve as a healing center for victims across Europe. In the meantime, we are also pursuing obtaining NGO (nonprofit) status in Romania and the European Union.

Additionally, having a healing center in the U.S. is something we have dreamed of having for victims for many years. In fact, victims often ask us if there is a place they can go for healing, for reprieve. Our goal is to be able to give them this hope! Just recently, several possible options have been presented to us in Montana, Missouri, Tennessee and Massachusetts. The prices vary

from \$379,000-\$650,000. We are beseeching the Lord for His provision if this is His will. Please keep these endeavors in prayer and let us know if you can assist in any way.

I am reminded of Jeremiah 33:3, "*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*" Surely, the Lord has shown us great and mighty things and we believe He will bring them to pass in His time and way. Praise God for His faithfulness! Please keep all of us at The Hope of Survivors in prayer as we press forward as God leads.

God bless you,

Samantha Nelson

Samantha Nelson
Vice President & CEO



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The Hope of Survivors is a 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.

ASI Covention Update

—Sandy Kirkham

Raising awareness in the hopes of preventing clergy sexual misconduct and victim support are two of the goals of The Hope of Survivors (THOS). I saw both in action at ASI, as it was my honor and privilege to exhibit on behalf of the ministry at this year's convention.

It is not uncommon for someone to see our booth, pick up a brochure and ask, "Does this really happen? Do we really need a ministry for this?" Being able to raise awareness on this topic is vital. By failing to recognize clergy misconduct or acknowledge its existence denies healing and hope not only for the victims, but for the church and the offending pastor as well.

Our presence at ASI helped to accomplish the goal of raising awareness.

Victim support continues to be the main goal of THOS. Having experienced first-hand the love, support and understanding of the ministry, after dealing with my own abuse at age 16 by my youth pastor, I know how important this part of the ministry is.

I will share with you two examples from our time at ASI. The first was a young woman who said she just wanted to say "Thank you." Three years ago she picked up a brochure. She didn't read it for two years, but finally

deciding to read it, it changed her life. For the first time she understood what had happened to her was not love but abuse, and healing could begin.

Secondly, a young man in his early twenties said he too wanted to thank us, but on behalf of his mother. She had been a victim of clergy sexual abuse and found help and support after contacting The Hope of Survivors. This ministry *does* have an impact.

On a personal note, since the convention was held in my hometown of Cincinnati, my husband came by to visit, as well as some of my friends, to get a first-hand look at our ministry and to see what we do. I appreciate their love and support.



How Can I Help?

- **Celebrate The Hope of Survivors 10-year anniversary!** Contribute \$10 per month with ease by setting up monthly recurring donations to The Hope of Survivors. It's easy! Just go to www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/donate.asp and type in the amount you'd like to contribute.
- The Hope of Survivors has been added to IBM's list of charities that U.S. employees and retirees can choose from during annual **Employee/Retiree Charitable Contribution Campaigns**. Employees have several contribution options—automatic deductions from every paycheck, onetime payroll deductions, IBM stock contributions, or a pledge to write their own check to the charity. If you work for IBM, please consider supporting The Hope of Survivors through IBM's ECCC campaign. Thank you!
- Did you know The Hope of Survivors is listed on the social networking site **Facebook**? Check it out! (http://apps.facebook.com/causes/47537?m=33935&recruiter_id=12747904)
- No money? You can still support The Hope of Survivors! We will receive a penny each time you search the Internet using **www.GoodSearch.com**. You can also earn money by shopping at your favorite stores! Just be sure to type The Hope of Survivors in the charity to be supported box. Happy searching and shopping!
- You may also donate through **American Express Giving Express** by going to: <http://amex.justgive.org/nonprofits/donate.jsp?ein=65-1211701>.
- As a nonprofit organization, The Hope of Survivors may be listed as a beneficiary on life insurance policies, trusts, etc. Contact us to find out more!

Thank you for supporting The Hope of Survivors!



In the Spotlight!

Denomination: Presbyterian Church (USA)

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

Yes, we do have a sexual misconduct policy at the denominational level. It can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/presbyterian-church-us-sexual-misconduct-policy-an/>. This applies to all employees at the denominational level including mission coworkers. Each synod, presbytery and congregation are mandated to have their own policies. Many use the denominational policy as a guide when writing their own.

How/where can victims or members of the congregation find out about the policy and

proper procedures for reporting abuse? Is there a specific person or office to contact?

There is a website <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/sexualmisconduct/>. It is being revised but contains this information.

Though we at the Presbyterian Center receive reports of alleged abuse, allegations against ordained clergy and certified Christian Educators are handled on the presbytery level. A congregation would act only on allegations against non-ordained staff (youth directors, music staff, etc.) and members with assistance from the local presbytery.

The denominational hotline number is (502) 569-5207.

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

Yes, it states, "Sexual abuse as defined in the Book of Order: "Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of office or position" (Book of Order, D-10.0401C).

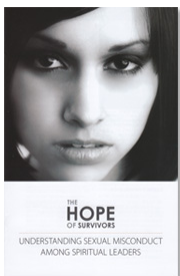
Submitted By and Position:

Susan W. Wright
Sexual Misconduct Ombudsperson
Presbyterian Church (USA)
(502) 489-2579



Resources

Understanding Sexual Misconduct Among Spiritual Leaders



Ever wonder what is really happening to you or someone you know? Are you trying to decide how to help someone who has been abused by a pastor? Or wanting to know how the church should address the issue? This booklet provides information for victims, spouses, youth, pastors and wives, church leaders and congregants, and an overview of the issue of pastoral sexual misconduct. It is a "must" for those who need answers and help! (8.5x5.5, 20 pages) Only \$2.95 each.

DVD: Call It Anything But Love!—The Steve & Samantha Nelson Story



Call It Anything But Love! is a true story of a couple's struggles and challenges as they overcome their painful pasts to find themselves in a spider's web of lies, deceit, adultery and abuse—at the hands of their pastor. \$15.00 each.

Order online at: <http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/products.asp>

We Are Not Alone

—Catherine Thiemann

What do all survivors of clergy sexual abuse have in common? Isolation. Whether a pastor preys on adults or children, whether we are his only victim or one of many, whether the abuse is physical or “merely” emotional and spiritual, we become isolated. First, we are asked to bear the terrible secret of the abuse. Then, if we report our abuser, we are silenced and shunned. If we try to talk to families and friends outside the church, they may blame us for our own misfortune. As a result, many of us stop talking about our experience altogether. Although a landmark study by the Baylor University School of Social Work found that more than 3% of churchgoing women have experienced clergy sexual misconduct as adults, each of us feels uniquely shamed and tainted.

If we are blessed with wise spiritual friends, we will hear that God is always with us. God tells us in Hebrews 13:5, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*” But because of the evil of pastoral sexual abuse, many of us find it impossible to trust the word of God. We feel betrayed and abandoned by God. Our friends’ words, and even the Word, seem like a hollow promise and a cruel cosmic joke.

That was my condition when I found The Hope of Survivors. I had already joined a new church, but a year later I still lacked any sense of God’s presence. My church met my need for community, so I had simply stopped hoping for God. But I had not stopped hoping for healing, and that is what brought me to my first *Hope & Healing Conference* in 2011. At that conference, I sat in the back row wiping tears from my face. I don’t remember most of what was said, but I do remember these words, repeated many times by every single speaker: “This was not your fault.”

Slowly, over the next year, the reality of those words began to sink in. I was not to blame for my pastor’s evil actions! What hap-

pened to me was not my fault! The shame belonged to my pastor alone. Relieved of that terrible burden, I found the courage to open up to a trusted group of women at my church. Over the course of several months, I gradually exposed the truth: I had left my former church because of clergy sexual misconduct, and an entire community of good people had cast me out and declared me worthless. My new friends did not cast me out. They listened, wrapped me with their loving support, and surrounded me with prayer. When I was finally blessed with a sense of God’s presence, I wept with joy—and my sisters rejoiced with me.

“What happened to me was not my fault! The shame belonged to my pastor alone.”

I attended the *Hope & Healing Conference* again on August 26, 2012. This time, I felt entirely new. Rather than weeping in the back row, I was able to reach out and connect with some of the other survivors. We shared stories, and I felt less alone. Again I heard, “This was not your fault.” I heard two more truths that may bear fruit this year. These insights may be helpful to other readers, so I will share them here.

First: Our pain is real and profound. Dr. Martin Weber, the Chairman of THOS Board of Directors, is a former law enforcement chaplain. More than once, he had to ring a doorbell in the middle of the night to tell someone that his or her loved one had been killed on the highway. He sat with them during the early hours of raw grief. Yet he has never witnessed greater emotional devastation than what he sees in victims of clergy sexual abuse. In my case, when I was suffering the most deeply, I was also providing support to a friend whose child had leukemia. I admit: a part of me sometimes wished she and I could change places. She had strong support from

“She had strong support from dozens of friends, and I couldn’t even tell her what had happen to me. What we suffer is real.”



Hope & Healing Conference Panel
Dr. Martin Weber, Ted Vanderlaan, Esq., Samantha Nelson,
Pastor Steve Nelson



dozens of friends, and I couldn't even tell her what had happened to me. What we suffer is real.

“I don't have to be defined by the terrible thing that happened to me. I am, first and foremost, God's beloved daughter.”

Christ is already bearing fruit in my marriage, in my relationship with my children, and in my community volunteer work. But Dr. Weber gave me a new insight—it can even bear fruit in my physical appearance. When we recover from clergy sexual abuse, many of us try to protect ourselves by becoming sexually invisible. Perhaps we overeat; perhaps we dress with less care. My case is more complicated, but by no means unique: I developed anorexia because of the abuse, so my healing required a substantial weight gain. In healing, I learned to focus on emotional balance and wholeness rather than physical “perfection.” And yet, as Dr. Weber says, “It's OK to be pretty.” What will that truth mean in my life? Only time will tell.

Fellow survivors—sisters and brothers in Christ—we are not alone. The Hope of Survivors is for us and with us. God is for us and with us. We can find strong, true support in our own communities. I pray that all of us will live into this truth and find the courage to tell our stories, and in the process heal our souls and heal our church.

Second: Just as I grew from victim to survivor, I can grow from survivor to something entirely new. I don't have to be defined by the terrible thing that happened to me. I am, first and foremost, God's beloved daughter. My identity in

Testimonies from *Hope & Healing* Conference, Omaha, NE

“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

International Divisions Contact Information and Updates:

Australia Division

Coralie Roll (Administration)
 Arlagene Groves (Victim Support Services)
 Phone: (866) 260-8958 extension 6 (from U.S.)
 or (in AU) 07 4615 2430
 Web: www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com
 Email: Coralie@TheHopeOfSurvivors.org
 Email: Arlagene@TheHopeOfSurvivors.org

Prayer Request: Please keep our volunteers in Australia in your prayers, as they are going through challenging times. Also, please pray the incorporation process can be completed right away so THOS-AU can become more active in raising awareness, as well as funds.

Latino Division (La Esperanza de los Sobrevivientes)

Shyleene Rosado-Maldonado
 Phone: (866) 260-8958 extension 2
 Email: Ayuda@LaEsperanzaDeLosSobrevivientes.com
 Web: www.LaEsperanzaDeLosSobrevivientes.com

ASI Convention Update—Latino Division —Shyleene Rosado

One of the aims of the annual ASI convention is to afford each ministry in attendance the opportunity to share its importance and relevance to the work of spreading the Gospel. Each and every one of these ministries has a common denominator, to preach the Word of God so that the Gospel may be known in all the world. The methods employed to carry light and hope to others vary from ministry to ministry. Some ministries focus on education, others in health, and others in providing food and housing to children and people who have been abandoned and forsaken in other parts of the world.



The Hope of Survivors (THOS) was present at the 2012 Convention with the theme “It’s Time... To Be About Our Father’s Business”. This was my first experience attending this convention, and I paid special attention to each ministry present there. I noticed that THOS was one of the few ministries seeking to reach for Christ the people who have been damaged and devastated by physical, sexual, and emotional abuse by those who were called to watch over God’s flock. Following are comments shared by the Spanish community who came in contact with our ministry:

“I never heard of a ministry like this one. It is very necessary these days.” –CA

“I can’t believe this happens in our church. I thought this only happened in Catholic churches.” –FL

“Today, more than ever, this is a very necessary ministry. May God continue to provide.” –MI

“I had the opportunity to hear about your ministry at GYC. I sincerely thank you.” –TX

What impacted me the most was seeing young people, between the ages of 17 and 25, approach our booth and share with me their personal experience, or one of a friend who had been abused in some way; and later thanking us for the existence of THOS ministry and the work on behalf of those who have been abused. My heart filled with joy! I could see the fruits, even if small, of the labor that THOS and each of the directors and volunteers have contributed to educate young people and prevent this type of abuse at all costs.

I know this joy is not exclusively mine. I know this was also Christ’s joy when He was on earth.

“It was Christ’s joy to help those in need of help, to seek the lost, to rescue the perishing, to lift up the bowed down, to heal the sick, to speak words of sympathy and consolation to the sorrowing and the distressed. The more fully we are imbued with his Spirit, the more earnestly we shall work for those around us; and the more we do for others, the greater will be our love for the work, and the greater our delight in following the Master.” *The Colporteur Evangelist*, Page 39

We need God and the Holy Spirit everyday to complete the work to which we have been called. I give thanks to God for allowing me to know of and work for The Hope of Survivors.

Hope & Healing Conference Update—Latino Division

—Pastor Javier Huerta

Many people, of course, are surprised when we review the definitions of abuse. Some have had first-hand accounts, being themselves victims. I do find that, in this culture (Latino) and still in the church, some of the men feel that these seminars attack them. However, we try to explain that in the majority of the cases of abuse, women are the victims and a slight minority are men.

With respect to clergy abuse, in my own district, we had a case of clergy abuse, of which I was absorbed in one year in trying to bring peace and healing with the families involved and, though that colleague is no longer in the ministry, the effects of the damage linger. Several individuals have talked to me about their own experiences with the former pastor—from verbal abuse to financial and sexual abuse.

It seems to me that the more successful a man becomes, the more difficult for him to stop, or confess his faults. He has too much to risk; he has too much to lose; too many people will be hurt. Even his success becomes a trap. He has a reputation, and an image that he does not want to lose (but that's all it is, an image). That's why this seminar is so important, to prevent so much hurt and disappointment.

Canadian Division

Wendy Schwitzer (Victim Support Services)
Email: wendy@TheHopeOfSurvivors.org
Web: www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com

Prayer Request: Please pray The Hope of Survivors-Canada will be able to incorporate very soon. Most of the members for the board of directors are in place, but funds are needed to pay for the filing fees. Also, please pray for Wendy's comfort and peace, as her father passed away recently.

Romania Division

Romulus Chelbegean (Vice President, Romanian Division)
Email: Romulus@TheHopeOfSurvivors.com
Web: www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.ro

Romanian Division Update

Recently, Steve and Samantha traveled to Romania to help bolster the fledgling division of The Hope of Survivors there. To read about God's wonderful blessings,

please visit: http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.com/news_notes/Romania_division_update_August_2012.asp

Prayer Request: Please pray The Hope of Survivors-Romania will be able to incorporate as an NGO in Romania and the European Union quickly and easily. Pray for our volunteers in Romania, who face many trials and struggles, and for the funds needed to purchase a healing center so we can offer hope to those abuse victims who have no hope.



Pastor Steve Nelson and Pastor Mihai Papadopol at Balta Alba



Lora and Dan Diaconu from Omedia



Denisa Stamate interviewing Samantha Nelson

Calendar of Events

October 16, 2012

Omaha, NE—Shattering the Silence Tour
University of Omaha—Nebraska
3424 N. 90th Street
Omaha, NE 68134

Steve & Samantha Nelson will be sharing their story of clergy sexual abuse, exhibiting on behalf of The Hope of Survivors, and raising awareness of the issue of clergy sexual abuse during this campaign. As stated by the director, "The Shattering the Silence Tour and Documentary/Research Project begins August 1, 2012, and will be kicking off from Shreveport, Louisiana. We will tour the U.S. advocating prevention of child sexual assault, researching the current needs of our communities, and producing a film documentary of the process."

October 21-26, 2012

Steve & Samantha will be out of the office for a training event in Wisconsin.

February 22-23, 2013

Philadelphia, PA
The Justice Conference

Board members Jennifer Schwirzer and Ted Vanderlaan will be exhibiting on behalf of The Hope of Survivors at this conference. Please stop by! More details to come.

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



July 14-19, 2013

Amsterdam, The Netherlands
33rd Congress of the International Academy of Law & Mental Health

Board chairman Martin Weber will be presenting on behalf of The Hope of Survivors at this conference. More details to come.

Hope & Healing victim's conferences are currently being considered in various locations (i.e., Long Island, NY; Jacksonville, FL; Denver, CO; etc.) 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 web site for additional details and the most current information.
www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com

Immediate Needs

- Monthly operating expenses (postage, office supplies, utilities, website hosting—THOS maintains multiple websites, printing, etc.), staff, educational materials and victim assistance.
- Conference and convention expenses for raising awareness and providing assistance to victims (meeting space rental, meals, travel, materials, etc.).
- Funds for further establishing foreign divisions to provide support to victims in other countries.

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
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OF SURVIVORS

P.O. Box 6553, Omaha, NE 68106