

Calendar of Events

June 29-July 9, 2005
St. Louis, MO—General Conference Session
(Exhibit at the Edward Jones Dome)

August 3-6, 2005
Sacramento, CA—ASI Convention (Exhibit)

August 28, 2005
Thompsonville, IL—Benefit Concert
Featuring Ullanda Innocent-Palmer, John Lomacang, Robert & Christine Salter and Steve Nelson. Free admission. An offering will be taken. Proceeds benefit The Hope of Survivors. Don't miss it!

We are continually scheduling church, victim/survivor and pastoral conferences throughout the U.S. If you'd like to schedule or sponsor a conference in your area, please call (618) 983-6434.

Please check our web site for the most up-to-date conference information and schedule.

www.TheHopeOfSurvivors.com

Current Needs...

- ◆ Educational DVD replication for upcoming conferences and conventions.
- ◆ Qualified volunteers to help with administrative tasks such as research, mailings, fundraising, etc.
- ◆ The development and printing of topical Bible studies for victims.
- ◆ The production and duplication of a general introductory video on clergy sexual abuse and the work of The Hope of Survivors.
- ◆ Operational expenses (phone, postage, etc.)

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

HopeSPEAK

Dear Readers:

This newsletter is going to be a little different than the others. In this issue, we will cover some of the most frequent questions we receive when discussing the ministry of The Hope of Survivors. We hope this will enable those who are unfamiliar with the effects of pastoral misconduct to get a clearer picture of the devastation that has nearly destroyed the lives of those who are touched by this form of abuse.

As you read this, we will be exhibiting at the Edward Jones Dome in St. Louis, Missouri, at the General Conference Session of Seventh-day Adventists. This event takes place every five years and is often held outside the U.S. This is a very unique opportunity for us, and we will be spreading the word about The Hope of Survivors to nearly 70,000 visitors who will, in turn, help spread the news about this ministry around the globe. Please pray for us, and stop by booth #326 between June 29-July 8 if you're in the area!

God has been good to us, and has provided in some very amazing ways. We were able to print the nearly 40,000 brochures needed for the General Conference Session at no cost. This saved a tremendous amount of money, as the printing of full-color brochures is quite expensive! When the shipment arrived, not only did we receive the 40,000 we ordered, but there was nearly 40,000 additional brochures, making a total of almost 80,000! Praise God, He has countless ways of providing, even above and beyond what we ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

Also, we are pleased to announce that we have been blessed with two new part-time volunteers. After many months of prayer, the Lord confirmed that Peggy Mahrt was to begin assisting us. Peggy officially started in May, and she has already been instrumental in helping complete a grant proposal. She will now begin handling some of the PR/Marketing aspects of The Hope of Survivors. Peggy is married to David and they have three children. She and David will be working together, under the supervision of The Hope of Survivors, to spread the word about pastoral abuse and The Hope of Survivors ministry in Northern California. We are very thankful for the desire that God has placed on their hearts to help others and to use their talents and resources to help us to reach the hurting and call the faithful. Thank you Peggy and David for your dedication, service and support.

We thank the Lord for providing assistance as the work continually grows, and we thank all who continue to support the ministry by prayer and donations!

Now, for some updates and recent news...

- ◆ Don't miss out on an incredible Gospel music concert August 28! If you can come, please do. Details are under the Calendar section.
- ◆ 3ABN Radio's *Crossroads* program aired our interview in May. The interview is now available on our web site. The *Issues & Answers* TV programs we taped in December aired in June on 3ABN.
- ◆ The long-awaited article in the U.K. *Marie Claire* magazine has been postponed indefinitely. The reporter is searching for a new publication.
- ◆ We have four new brochures to offer: victim, pastor, church and The Hope of Survivors. Contact us to request a new set.

May God bless each of you as you seek to do His will.

In His care,
Steve & Samantha Nelson

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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 clergy sexual abuse who are now thriving and 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 tax-deductible. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Q & A About Pastoral Sexual Abuse & Misconduct

What is pastoral sexual abuse?

Whenever a pastor, or any other individual in a role of spiritual authority, takes advantage of his/her position and power it is considered abuse. This is not only the case when children are involved, but adults as well. To bring this into focus, let's look at this example: if a medical doctor decided it was in his best financial interest to make a patient sick, rather than well, it would obviously be a serious offense and a very wrong practice.

When we think about a pastor's moral fall, it becomes more difficult for many people to see it as abuse because their feelings and emotions are involved. However, when a woman seeks spiritual advice from her pastor and he chooses to distort the truth so he can emotionally and physically take advantage of her, it is abuse, although many people mistakenly refer to it as an "affair."

Why is this abuse?

It is abuse because there is a tremendous imbalance of power, authority, knowledge (Biblical training), experience and responsibility, and often age, between a pastor and a congregant. There can be no mutual consent to a relationship of any kind, especially not a physical one.

What is the difference between adultery and an affair?

Modern-day dictionaries tend to define adultery and affair as the same thing, implying that there is a mutual consent or agreement on behalf of both parties. The fact is there cannot be mutual consent between a pastor and a congregant due to the power and authority imbalances.

If society can recognize that a counselor is acting inappropriately or abusively when he seeks a relationship with a counselee, shouldn't we then, as Christians, more easily recognize that if a pastor who represents Christ, will twist Scripture to deceive, manipulate and coerce a vulnerable person, he is betraying his sacred trust and is guilty of abuse?

Is this really a problem?

We need only to look at the news to see how prevalent this really is in our day. However, it is

not a new thing. Jude 1:4, *"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Sadly, sexual abuse and abuse of power in these types of situations is far too common, even epidemic, in our country and around the world. Unfortunately, many of the men who violate the appropriate boundaries are "repeat" offenders who continually exploit woman after woman.

Are there a lot of women who try to seduce their pastors?

There may be some women who are attracted to power, or to a certain pastor. However, in those cases where the pastor is said to have been seduced, one must ask a significant question. Would she be after him if he were not the pastor? If so, then the pastor should take steps to protect himself and his ministry. He is always responsible for maintaining appropriate boundaries.

Isn't the responsibility for what happened 50-50 between the pastor and the woman?

This is difficult for many to understand. While everyone is individually accountable to God for their thoughts, words and deeds, the pastor is first and foremost responsible for maintaining propriety in all relationships, whether he is counseling, working or serving on a committee. The pastor has a high calling and is, therefore, much more accountable to God, himself and others for his behavior.

If and when the woman sees the evil developing, she can and should say no to any inappropriate advances. But "can" and "should" assume both are relating on an even level of equality. While every case is different, emotional ties that enable healing can make saying no extremely difficult. It is also important to realize that there is a level of automatic trust that allows a woman to open herself up to the pastor. If the pastor is claiming that the relationship is "God's will" it can appear that to say no, would be going against God Himself.

In the end then, it is ultimately the pastor who is responsible to protect the boundaries, the reputations, and the integrity of his office and of his counselees. It is the pastor who is expected to "Just Say No;" first to the temptation and himself,

and then also to the relationship.

"When ministers thus take advantage of the confidence the people place in them and lead souls to ruin, they make themselves as much more guilty than the common sinner as their profession is higher."—*Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5*

Shouldn't we just "forgive and forget"?

You need to recognize that the pastor has violated a sacred trust and ministry that God has called him to uphold. The pastor is the shepherd of the flock and, as the shepherd, it is his duty to guard all of Christ's sheep. However, if he has abused his position, he has become a wolf in sheep's clothing. Given the enormity of the violation and the breach of sacred trust, the pastor can NEVER expect to have the trust or responsibility of God's people again.

While we should forgive others for what they have done and how they have hurt us, forgiveness doesn't always mean reconciliation or, in the case of a pastor, restoration to the pulpit. Many people think that if you forgive someone, you have to be reconciled, otherwise, you haven't shown forgiveness. While this may be our desire, it is not likely that the victim will "forget" any time soon, nor will she or others be able to "forgive" if justice is not forthcoming. Ultimately, it is God alone who gives the ability to forgive others for the wrongs they have done. Forgiveness comes in His timing.—*Written by The Hope of Survivors Staff*



Steve and Samantha Nelson are co-founders of The Hope of Survivors. Together, they share how God brought them through the devastation of clergy sexual abuse. By God's grace, they seek to educate the public and to bring hope and healing to those who have been affected by this trauma.

A Word From Our Readers

"Thanks for your continued prayers! You are a blessing to me...and I thank God that He led me to your site. He knew that I needed someone that would tell me the truth, and help me to see things for what they truly are and keep me thinking straight and right." – 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

"You are a living testimony to the power of Jesus and I only hope one day I will follow in your footsteps. All that you say inspires me, though I still find it really hard to believe for myself for my own healing." – 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... 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