

Hope SPEAK

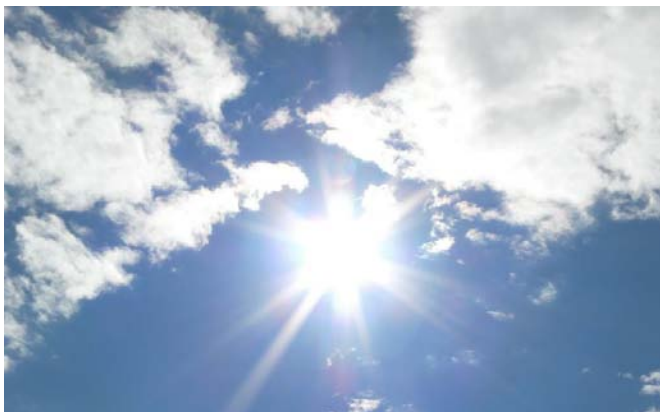
Dear Hope of Survivors Family,



I'm sitting here with quiet praise music playing on my laptop, thinking about Jesus and about you.

For those of you who have been victimized by sexual abuse from a "Christian" leader, my heart goes out to you. I too have been the victim of sexual abuse, but not as you have been. Fifty years ago I was assaulted by a stranger in a bus station, but never betrayed as you have been—betrayed by the man who, as God's shepherd in your life, should have been the safest person in the world to you.

That's why I started feeling sad this morning, thinking about what you went through. Then I started feeling angry, and appropriately so—the apostle Paul wrote, *"Who is made to stumble and I do not burn with indignation?"* (2 Corinthians 11:29). But peace comes to my heart as I realize that our God is greater than evil. Our Lord Jesus Christ conquered evil on the cross, along with the devil and all who implement his abuses. Soon Jesus will come back here from heaven, surrounded by angels of vengeance, to rescue us and execute His victory over the perpetrators of evil.



The Bible promises that *"God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels"* (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7).

This day of punishment and vengeance will be so fierce that God delays it in hopes that all men everywhere

will repent of their evil, confess their sins and become genuine disciples of our Lord Jesus. Although this merciful time of probation also delays our deliverance from this present evil age, we can rest even now in God's healing love and grace. Some days may be so difficult that all you can do is picture Jesus carrying you in His arms, like we see in those paintings at the Christian bookstore.

No matter what you have suffered, Jesus invites you now: *"Come to Me, all you who are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28). The heavier your burdens, the greater the rest in casting them upon our Lord Jesus. So let us rest in His healing love, escaping continually and confidently to heaven's throne of grace.

For those of you who are involved with me as servants and benefactors in the ministry of The Hope of Survivors, I hope you realize how much our Lord appreciates your involvement in this healing ministry of Jesus Christ. *"Your work will be rewarded," declares the*

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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.

**“Come to Me,
all you who are
heavily bur-
dened, and I will
give you rest.”**

Matthew 11:28

realizing that any check from me like that would bounce from here to Berlin. I'm comforted by what Peter and John told the sick man in need: *“Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, I give to you”* (Acts 3:6). Although I don't have much in the way of money, I do have other gifts that God has empowered me to invest

Lord” (Jeremiah 31:16). As we send our gifts to support this great cause, we are giving more than money. We are giving ourselves in service to the wounded lambs of our Lord Jesus.

Sometimes I wish I could add a couple of zeros to the online checks I write to The Hope of Survivors. But I have to restrain myself,

as a servant leadership for this ministry. (Please do pray for Steve, Samantha and me in our leadership of THOS.) Some of you actually do have more in the way of money. You can soar in the Spirit to new heights of giving, adding those extra zeros to your gift this month so that this healing ministry can move forward.

Together, we can make a difference. As sin abounds, God's grace through us will much more abound.

Grace, peace and love,



Martin Weber, DMin
Chairman of the Board, The Hope of Survivors
Assistant to the president and communication director,
Mid-America Union of Seventh-day Adventists.

A Sad Farewell



It has been my privilege to serve the last five years on the Board of The Hope of Survivors with the last three of those as chair. When Samantha and Steve first conceived of this ministry in 2002, and then contacted me, and the rest of the original board members, in 2004, I don't think any of us could have known just what it would look like five years later. What we did know was the Lord our God was in it and the real leader. Because of a recent move and added travel responsibilities in my work for the Adventist church, I have chosen to step down from this ministry for the present time. It was not an easy decision and yet, to keep some level of balance on the personal side of life, I have found it necessary to do this.

The good news is the hundreds of victims that have risen above that level and that label to a status of victor and growth in the grace and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. The good news is that somewhere, in some way, we may have prevented some sinful activity through our materials and the conferences that Steve and Samantha continue to conduct. The good news is evident in those victims who now volunteer for the ministry and the validation by our own surveys and the Baylor University acknowledgement. There is more good news in that the ministry has gone international and is reaching out to women and men around the world with a vision of God that begins to eclipse their view distorted by what happened to them and replace it with a vision of God that comforts and encourages.

The bad news is, we have not stopped all Clergy Sexual Abuse and neither have we eliminated the need for education within church leadership circles as to how to appropriately respond to victims. We are, after all, still in this world and still dealing with yet-to-be-converted hearts and temptations that never quite seem to go away. So the need for the ministry continues unabated.

My prayers for The Hope of Survivors will continue. Samantha and Steve have graciously asked if I might serve in a consultant/advisory capacity, and to occasionally write for the ministry. I am happy to do what I can. I have every confidence in Elder Martin Weber. His spiritual depth and courageous heart are wonderful assets to any ministry and particularly this one. We work in the same building so we will continue to connect when it comes to The Hope of Survivors.

Blessings to you all.



Thomas Lemon

A Season of Change...



The Hope of Survivors is taking its next step forward by making some major changes that will position us to serve optimally with extremely limited resources. It's not easy, and it will require

adjustments on everyone's part and many prayers but, it's all good. As the Scripture states, there is *"a time to every purpose under the heaven,"* and God has revealed now is the time for more of His purposes to be fulfilled. Now is the time for change.

For starters, the last remaining original board member, other than Steve and myself, and most recent board chairman, Tom Lemon, has resigned his post due to his new position at the Mid-America Union Conference. Tom has been a tremendous blessing to The Hope of Survivors and we are sad to see him resign as chairman, but are pleased he has agreed to continue to serve in an advisory capacity for the ministry and will speak at conferences and contribute articles when available to do so. You certainly haven't seen or heard the last from him and, for that, we are especially grateful.

Martin Weber, current director and vice president of the pastoral education division of The Hope of Survivors, has been voted in as the new board chairman. We have full confidence Martin will be able to assist us in leading this ministry according to God's will and expanding the outreach so more victims can receive the help they need and more pastors and church leaders will be educated about clergy sexual abuse so it can be prevented.

Steve Nelson remains as president and continues to serve on the board of directors, however, due to his many duties in pastoring a four-church district, he will no longer retain the position of chief executive officer. He will continue to speak at conferences and contribute in various ways as time permits.

Finally, I will be making changes as well. With the added responsibility of being chief executive officer, in addition to my current positions as counselor, director, vice president and secretary/treasurer of the organization, it has become necessary for me to make a very difficult decision. I have been blessed to counsel and provide support for nearly 600 victims of clergy sexual abuse since The Hope of Survivors began nearly seven years ago. I am encouraged each time I see God work in a victim's life to restore her faith in God and to bring healing from such devastating abuse. My care and concern for all victims, everywhere, has not diminished, yet my capacity to serve each one who contacts the ministry

is no longer feasible. I will continue to speak at conferences, contribute to the newsletter and occasionally work with victims directly, but I must recognize that it's humanly impossible to fulfill all the responsibilities I have now and, therefore, I have decided to step aside from the counseling and victim support positions I have held for so long. Doing so will permit me to focus more on the development of the organization—the very thing we did in 2002 which made it possible for many of you to find the help you need on the web site and through the brochures.

In focusing on the greater good of the organization and those it serves, we will be able to reach more people with the message of hope and healing God desires them to hear. We will be able to develop more videos, educational materials and do more interviews through radio, TV and printed media. This will bring greater awareness of the issue, as well as of The Hope of Survivors mission and services.

This has been a difficult decision for me to make, as my heart is so closely knit with so many of you, as we have stood side-by-side through possibly the greatest trial of your life. Though I may not be in consistent contact anymore, you will remain in my heart and prayers. This is not the end of The Hope of Survivors or my work for the ministry. This is the beginning of something even greater, the next phase in God's blueprint for His ministry.

As an organization dedicated to serving you and leading you into a closer relationship with Jesus, we have done our best to find other volunteers who are willing to assist you, and future victims, through the healing process. We still seek funding to employ a full-time counselor but, until that is available, we greatly appreciate the willingness of our volunteers to step in and assist in this time of need. You may receive responses from Coralie, Arlagene, Buffy, Jennifer, Phenessa, Josephine, Heather, or others. Rest assured they are all committed to helping you and to retaining confidentiality and professionalism in all their interactions with you.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:"—Ecclesiastes 3:1

Please keep The Hope of Survivors and all who are blessed by its ministry in your prayers and continue your financial support. We seek the Lord's blessing as we move forward, following His leading and working together to end the prevalence of clergy sexual abuse.



May God be with each of you,

Samantha Nelson

Samantha Nelson, BCBC, CBT; Co-Founder, V.P. and CEO of The Hope of Survivors

Was it an Affair?

—Coralie Roll, The Hope of Survivors Australia Division Representative

A 'passionate new Christian' is how she used to describe herself. Emma wonders what it would be like to feel passionate and alive again. At the moment she fluctuates between feeling numb and being in the depths of absolute despair.*

Five years ago when Emma and her husband joined the church, the pastor took them under his wing. He became their close friend and helped the family through a particularly difficult time when Emma's mother died. He knew about the abuse Emma had suffered at the hands of her father as a child, and she showed her care and compassion. He gained her confidence and she trusted him implicitly. He was 28 years older than her and she often thanked God for placing him in her life to show her what a true father could be like. She felt a special bond.

One day the line was crossed and the relationship became sexual. He told her their relationship made him not only a better person, but a better pastor and how his prayers for protection were being answered so they could share this extraordinary love. She appreciated his encouragement and acceptance of her, but a sexual relationship was not something she wanted. She tried to say no, but he said she wanted the relationship as much as he did. She did—just different, more like it was in the beginning.



“Along with this trust comes a power–power which can be used to help us grow spiritually or used to exploit our vulnerabilities.”

She pleads with him to think about his wife and asks for their relationship to go back to the way it was. He tells her there is no going back, he can't live without her. He adds that if she tells anybody, it will be her word against his and nobody will believe her, after all he has been a pastor for over 30 years.

Is this just a case of 'falling off the rails' and 'falling into love'? Is this an affair? Are they equally responsible?

There are times in our lives we look to those more experienced than ourselves for guidance, such as when we are new in our faith or experiencing trauma or grief. We look for leadership and invest in this person a sacred trust—trust to define our problems and help us find solutions. Along with this trust comes a power—power which can be used to help us grow spiritually or used to exploit our vulnerabilities.

What makes a person vulnerable to this sort of abuse of power? Steve and Samantha Nelson, from The Hope of Survivors Ministry list some of the reasons a person may be vulnerable:

1. Past or current sexual, physical, verbal or emotional abuse.
2. Low self-esteem (failure to see yourself as valuable in the Lord's sight).
3. Marital problems.
4. Trauma, sickness or death in the family.
5. Personal health problems.
6. Depression.
7. Financial problems.
8. Excessive stress.
9. Attending church alone.
10. Cultural diversity.¹

Any person with spiritual authority can abuse this power: a priest, an elder, a rabbi, a deacon. They can be paid employees, but many times are volunteers within an organisation.² Of course, most spiritual leaders remain true to their

high calling but, sadly, there are some who don't. This is a problem affecting every denomination, and it is not a new problem. Ellen White addressed it in her day saying, *“There are more men of this stamp than many have imagined, and they will multiply as we draw near the end of time.”*³ **“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. In the day of God, when the great Ledger of Heaven is opened, it will be found to contain the names of many ministers who have made pretensions to purity of heart and life and professed to be entrusted with the gospel of Christ, but who have taken advantage of their position to allure souls to transgress the law of God.”**⁴

The person in the position of power has the responsibility to maintain appropriate boundaries. Grenz & Bell put it this way, *“Regardless of the situation that he encounters, the pastor always retains the respon-*

“The impact of being abused at the hands of someone you trust so completely, who then uses that trust to hurt you, is life-long and manifests itself in ways you don’t always recognize.”

of the church and Jesus Christ, the greater responsibility always lies with the person who holds the ordained position—the power and authority.

Emma is hurting badly. She wonders how she could have been so stupid. It is not a matter of intelligence though. If she had been approached by the pastor from an intellectual perspective for a sexual relationship, he would not have made it to square one, it is because he took advantage of her emotional vulnerabilities that he was able to secure her trust and affection. She feels humiliated and degraded.

After repeated requests for him to leave her alone, she makes an official complaint with her church organization. She realises the risk she is taking of bringing her pain and humiliation out into the open, but after learning the pastor had done this in a previous congregation, she is determined to stop it from happening to others.

The pastor is stood down while the investigation takes place, and the rumours begin to circulate. True to his word, he is denying it all. He spreads the word that she was making passes at him and, when he turned her down, she became hurt and angry and is making up the allegations to get back at him. Church members become confused and divided. Most refuse to believe he is anything but a loveable person who can do no wrong. She is accused of being a seducer.

sibility to control his personal behaviour and focus on the healing of the [congregant]. The person who is unable to do so has no business in the ministry.”⁵ When a spiritual leader takes advantage of a woman who is in his spiritual care, he robs her of the respect she deserves as a child of God. Just as important, he also loses the opportunity to show her that her value as a woman is not linked to her ability or availability to act out her sexuality—an opportunity many of these women have never had. As a representative

When her family started attending church they committed to going regularly. Now they are isolated from their spiritual family. Church is not a safe place for them—the sideways glances and the whispering, one of her children has been taunted that the pastor is her mother’s boyfriend. Now they go for long drives instead of attending. The children miss church and don’t understand what is happening, but Emma cannot face the cold stares and the whispers. She desperately wants pastoral care for herself and her family but none has been forthcoming.

Such situations rock a church to its core. Many people are left shocked, disillusioned and in a state of disbelief. Often the victim is blamed, and the offender made to look like a victim. Even if the spiritual leader confesses, the emphasis of the church is usually on looking after the leader and his spiritual restoration, leaving the victim in a spiritual desert. Many lose their faith in God. Some lose family and friends. Most stop attending church and many no longer even pray. Sandy, a victim, described it this way, *“The impact of being abused at the hands of someone you trust so completely, who then uses that trust to hurt you, is life-long and manifests itself in ways you don’t always recognize. It is a deep, deep pain. Because of his abuse, I no longer will allow myself to be alone with a minister again. I no longer pray out loud for fear someone will see me as weak, vulnerable and easy prey. My children have never had a bedtime prayer with their mother.”*

The result is devastation. Devastation for the victim and her family. Devastation for the offender and his family. Devastation for the church as a whole.

Greater understanding and recognition of these issues will help us face the devastation. When we are better prepared we can more effectively minister to the victims, offenders and their families. We will also be in a better position to withstand the battering the enemy wants to give us individually and corporately as a church.



Pastor Tom Lemon, V.P. for Administration of the Mid-American Union Conference brings home the poignancy of damage the devil wreaks in the life of a leader and a victim.

“The abusive pastor or spiritual leader has allowed himself to go a long way down the track before he ever commits the crime of abuse. But until the crime is committed, he likely doesn’t realize just how far he has already strayed. When once the deed is done or the pattern begins to unfold, the huge distance from

the Lord becomes readily apparent. And it can seem like too enormous a gulf to bridge to ever get back. So the abuser doesn't try, at least not very hard. Rather he continues to medicate his spiritual pain with fleshly anaesthetic which is addictive. And the Evil One laughs obscenely at his success over human weakness."

*When the victim is trapped by this crime, she is often on her way, or trying to be on her way, back to wholeness from brokenness. Of course wholeness, including spiritual growth, is the last thing the devil wants. So he sets her up for abuse by the human she is seeking a path to wholeness from, sending her back into the abyss out of which she has started to climb. And again his laughter is loud and ugly."*⁶

Let us not give the Evil One the upper hand, let us do our best as a church to pull together and resist his attacks. Let us remember how hard the devil attacks those who are working in our churches to spread the gospel, and how he will do anything to discredit our Saviour and His church.

Let us as a church, act promptly to thoroughly investigate allegations and, if found to be true, take appropriate remedial action. When an alleged offender is found responsible for this sort of abuse, let us pray the steps he has taken down such a path will be reversed and he will decide with the grace of God to walk a different path. Let us treat offenders with compassion as we hold them accountable for the damage they have caused and remember, "there but for the grace of God go I."

Let us listen attentively without prejudice and bias when alleged victims and their families tell of their experience even though their complaint is against a leader of the 'flock' and seems completely unbelievable. Only 2% of these complaints are found to be without basis.⁷ Let us have compassion and understanding for them when they tell their heart-wrenching stories.

Let us remember Emma and her family and not abandon them to a life of spiritual isolation.

**Emma is a composite character of real victims, preserving anonymity and confidentiality of actual victims.*

1 Steve & Samantha Nelson, www.thehopeofsurvivors.com

2 <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1997/october6/7tb090.html>

3 Ellen G White, Vol 5 Testimonies to the Church, (Pacific Press, 1948), p 141

4 Ibid, p 143

5 Stanley J. Grenz & Roy D. Bell, *Betrayal of Trust*, (Baker Books, 1995)

6 Pastor Tom Lemon, www.thehopeofsurvivors.com

7 http://www.advocateweb.org/home.php?page_id=73

http://www.advocateweb.org/home.php?page_id=100

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Special Thanks

We'd like to thank all our directors and volunteers for their dedication, self-sacrifice and commitment to serving God through the Hope of Survivors and ministering to the needs of victims of clergy sexual abuse. Please take a moment to pray for the following individuals who have made significant contributions to the success of The Hope of Survivors and those it serves.

Board Members

Tom Lemon (outgoing Board Chairman)

Martin Weber (incoming Board Chairman; V.P. Pastoral Education Division)

Steve Nelson (President)

Samantha Nelson (Vice President & CEO)

James Marcum (Director)

Irma Murray (Director; Latino Division Representative)

C.A. Murray (Director)

Jennifer Schwirzer (Director)

Steve Grabiner (Director)

Chuck Burkeen (Director)

Ray Hartwell (Director)

Herb Douglass (Director)

Volunteers

Robert & Debbie Withrow (Accounting)

Peggy & Dave Mahrt (PR/Marketing)

Coralie Roll (Australia Division Representative)

Jill Morikone (Executive Assistant)

Sandy Kirkham (Spokesperson/Victim Support Services)

Alina & Gabriel Ciur (Romania/Scandinavia Division Representatives)

Arlagene Groves (Australia Division Representative/Victim Support Services)

Shyleene Rosado & Carlos Rosero (Latino Division V.P./Victim Support Services)

Karen Danka (Graphic Design Assistant)

Hephzibah Akunga (Kenya Division Representative/Victim Support Services)

Buffy Halvorsen (Victim Support Services)

Josephine Mweu (Victim Support Services)

Phenessa Jones (Victim Support Services)

Calendar Project Update

Due to the lack of funds received for the calendar project, we have decided to include the case studies that were submitted to us in the next several newsletters. We hope you will be blessed by these testimonies of God's grace and healing power and that you will remember to pray for these individuals and for The Hope of Survivors.



Jim and Alli, Washington

“Feeling isolated and unable to ask for help, I kept the secret he required me to keep. I was groomed, manipulated, and sexually exploited by our Senior Pastor. With no apology offered, refusing any responsibility, and with nobody willing to hold him accountable, he ran

when I finally told on him. I was not the first woman to be compromised during a counseling session with this man. The Church swept it aside, lending our family little to no support or protection. My husband stood by me from day one. He is my dearest friend, and the love of my life. His support has been without end. A special verse to me is Psalm 62:5, *“Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him.”*

“God used The Hope of Survivors in helping me find my feet on this rocky path. Their unconditional love and support held me through many painful months. Through the knowledge they shared about Clergy Sexual Abuse, and their willingness to be used by Him, I found the way to healing. Samantha, you were a lifeline for me, in the darkest hour of my life...I will always be grateful. Thank you Hope of Survivors!!!”

Testimonials

“This new life is pretty wonderful. Even with all the ... medical things going on I am still having the most wonderful life ever. I thank God every day for coming into my life and bringing you and Steve into my life. I believe with my whole heart that He sent you guys to help me not die and learn more about God.”—IL

“Thank you so much for all your help the past few months. When I first emailed you, I had no idea how beneficial it would be. The advice you have given me has always been sound, and your patience, respect and encouragement have been incredibly helpful. At a time when I felt very much alone, it was so important to know you were there. ...I wanted to send you this [donation] as an expression of thanks.”—Canada

“I cannot bring to explain the relief I already feel over sharing this with you, someone who understands. I've read some of the things on your site, and after reading your own testimony, I knew I had found someone who knew exactly what I was talking about.”—IL

Current Project Needs...

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

—*Hope & Healing* (victim's) conference expenses (meeting space rental, meals, travel, materials, 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.

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Calendar of Events

October 23, 2009

Cooranbong, NSW—Avondale College

A revival vespers program focusing on spiritual healing and having a genuine relationship with Jesus.

October 24, 2009

Hamilton, NSW—Hamilton Seventh-day Adventist Church

A revival series focusing on spiritual healing and having a genuine relationship with Jesus.

October 25, 2009

Newcastle, NSW (Australia)—*Hope & Healing* Conference

Time: 10:00am-4:00pm (Sunday)

Location: Compassion Australia Conference Room, 30 Warabrook Blvd., Warabrook, NSW 2034

Cost: FREE. However, there is a \$20 charge per person for lunch. Registration Deadline is October 22.

Also, *Talking Life* radio interview on 96five with host Peter Janetzki.

October 26, 2009

Newcastle, NSW (Australia)—*Faith & Fidelity* Conference

Time: 1:00pm-5:00pm (Monday)

Location: NNSW Seventh-day Adventist Church Conference Office, The Chapel, 112 Lake Road, Wallsend, NSW 2287

October 27, 2009

Cooranbong, NSW (Australia)—*Faith & Fidelity* Conference for Theology Students

Time: 2:00pm (Tuesday)

Location: Avondale College

October 28, 2009

Sydney, Australia—Meeting with Adventist Safe Place Services

InFocus TV interview for the Hope Channel with host David Gibbons.

October 30, 2009

Brisbane, QLD (Australia)—Mount Gravatt Seventh-day Adventist Church

Time: 7:00pm

A revival series focusing on spiritual healing.

THE **Hope** of Survivors

P.O. Box 27 Effingham, IL 62401

October 31, 2009

Brisbane, QLD (Australia)—Mount Gravatt Seventh-day Adventist Church

Times: 10:50am AND 2:00pm (Two Meetings)

A revival series focusing on spiritual healing.

November 1, 2009

Brisbane, QLD (Australia)—*Hope & Healing* Conference

Time: 8:45am-2:30pm (Sunday)

Location: Nudgee Golf Club Conference Room, 1207 Nudgee Rd., Nudgee, QLD 4014

Cost: FREE. However, there is a \$20 charge per person for lunch. Registration Deadline is October 22.

November 17, 2009

Cincinnati, OH—Cincinnati Christian University

Location: 2700 Glenway Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45204

Sandy Kirkham, The Hope of Survivors' inter-denominational spokeswoman, will be presenting a *Trust & Truth* conference to the graduate students in the Practical Ministries class. The goal for this presentation is to help future pastors and church leaders understand the dynamics and devastation of pastoral sexual abuse from a victim's perspective.

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

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

