



It was a horrible feeling twenty-nine years ago. Church officials would not keep their promises. My perpetrator remained in ministry but more importantly, I felt such immense pain that I was not sure I could continue to live. I knew there were other survivors out there and wondered if they felt the same debilitating hurt and if so, how they coped with it. I thought they might hold the wisdom I lacked. I looked for other survivors and asked if they would be willing to talk.

From the very first survivor who spoke to me I began to recognize that I was not alone. Then I took a bigger risk and signed a contract to pay for a room in a hotel to hold a support group meeting for a weekend. About a dozen survivors had promised to attend. Some even paid a registration fee but as the date approached many informed me they wouldn't be able to make it after all. That Friday morning I held a news conference and told the Chicagoland media that a support group for victims of priest sex abuse would be meeting at the Holiday Inn. The word spread and by the end of the weekend over two dozen survivors had attended. There was unanimous agreement that the weekend meeting was a success.

Besides finding tips on coping with the pain I felt that we bonded as survivors. It filled me with hope and convinced me to keep on. Since then, I have had the amazing fortune of meeting so many brave survivors who made me feel as though I belonged. Many were generous and agreed to facilitate support group meetings in other cities. Many supporters learned of our efforts and decided to help. The SNAP organization grew.

Somewhere in the past twenty-nine years you got involved and I want to thank you for doing so. To be honest, my heart is overflowing with gratitude to each of you. Words fail to express the extent of how grateful I feel.

I am extremely grateful to each of you who shared your story with me. Your courage and creativity in responding to the evil you endured continues to inspire me every day. And I am also grateful to all of you who listened to my story and believed me. It affirmed me when others tried to minimize or deny my experience. To all of you who support SNAP your generosity and openness in desiring to help others takes my breath away. Thank you for all you have said, given and done.

It has been the greatest honor of my life to have found and been your president for the past 29 years. Change however is inevitable and I will no longer be working at SNAP. Please know that I leave with love in my heart for each of you. I remain your friend.

The bond that we share is not broken by my leaving this position. When you have a bad day, are unsure of how to cope or where to turn, please grab on to the knowledge that you are not alone. We have done great work together and the work will continue. I have confidence that each of you will ensure that the truth is told and continue to work to keep children and vulnerable adults safe.

This is a time of a major transition at SNAP. It is moving from a founder led organization to one that is board led. I have every confidence that the strength you and the board members have shown as survivors will keep the organization strong.

Lastly, please know that the recent lawsuit filed against SNAP, as the others in the past which have no merit, had absolutely no bearing on my leaving. The discussions and process of my departure has been ongoing. The SNAP office moved from Chicago last October.

My new email address is: [blainebarbara@gmail.com](mailto:blainebarbara@gmail.com)

I wish you continued healing, strength and peace! You continue in my heart and I remain so grateful to you,

*Barbara Blaine*

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