

CONVERSION PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT: Teen Challenge in NM  
By Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE (<https://www.cope.church> ) Dated: 9/15/21

The HEAL Mission of COPE has received 12 separate complaints from individuals and families alleging mistreatment, one former staff reported to HEAL Mission via e-mail "After finishing HS I worked at Teen Challenge for 10 (Over 12 years ago) years and saw many abuses. I was still troubled in many ways and was easily manipulated by the directors. It troubles me that I was a part of the abuse. I thought I was doing what I was suppose to do and what would help the girls. Discipline included cleaning a dumpster out with a tooth brush, being on talking restrictions (not being a loud to speak to other students for sometimes long periods of time). The living conditions were terrible. Girls and staff were demeaned and made to feel worthless if they were not a golden girl that week. Any time anyone disagreed or questioned the directors they were told they were disobeying God. They manipulated the Word of God to suit their needs. They would control staff and students in every way. Students were made to feel like they had to stay on as staff after graduation. I could go on and on," labor trafficking, coercive thought reform, and fraud/deceptive marketing at Teen Challenge programs in NM. Some of these complaints are referenced online and others remain confidential and on file with the church. With the intention of providing an opportunity for closure, clarification, and potentially peace, on 10/10/20 Rev. Angela Smith invited Teen Challenge of NM victims (families and survivors) as well as staff whistleblowers to provide a guest sermon. That invitation read thus:

"Dear Teen Challenge Survivors, Families, and Whistleblowers,

I know I've sent out a few Round Table Invitationals to you so far to participate in a round table discussion where Teen Challenge representatives were invited to participate as well to be printed to .pdf and act as one of the Sunday Sermons for COPE. See <https://www.cope.church/sermons.htm> for more info. Teen Challenge is on the HEAL Mission's "false prophets" watch-list and enrolled in the COPE Conversion Program intended to convert those enrolled to minimum honesty in marketing standards.

That being said, you are all Sponsors of the Teen Challenge programs enrolled in the COPE Conversion Program and placed on the HEAL Mission watch-list. See <https://www.heal-online.org> and <https://www.heal-online.org/thelist.htm> for more info. Teen Challenge has three ways off the watch-list. Those are death/closure, merciful release, and graduation. Merciful releases are based on Sponsor participation, date of last complaint on the facility/location, and whether or not the date of the last complaint is older than the requirement at law or by standards of practice to retain medical records. That standard would be based on academic disciplinary records otherwise which would be less time than the medical record retention laws in each state. If Sponsors don't participate, then an executive decision is made based on the remaining criteria to be at least as merciful as the US government or justice system. But, Teen Challenge of Arizona and Arkansas did get merciful releases. You can view the final report at <https://www.cope.church/tcazarprogress.pdf> which explains the number of complaints, nature of the complaints, as well as why those two were mercifully released.

I understand the round table discussion may have been too artful and enough have been done to make the point about how no one would likely voluntarily participate in a 24-hour confrontation with people with whom they disagree no matter the medium or venue. For those who've RSVP'd either way, I've been offering an alternative which is now going to be the standard going forward. A survivor of Benchmark (not a Teen Challenge program) has provided an individual guest sermon on his program which will be shared publicly in Wednesday night (10/14/20). That will be the first official guest sermon and I'm excited about it.

That being said, all of the Sponsors of Teen Challenge locations placed on the watch-list are receiving this message. You may submit a guest sermon at any time. All guest sermons will identify the sermonizers by first and last name but not provide contact details other than to submit inquiries to me unless you wish to share your contact info and then if you wish to it will be included. If no guest sermon is received and/or there is no participation of Sponsors of the placement of the Teen Challenge location that harmed you, and, the other criteria for merciful release are met, that location will receive a merciful release. Please provide any guest sermon you write in the body of a single e-mail message and be sure to answer the following questions:

1. Did you report fraud or other unlawful actions to the proper authorities? If not, why? If so, what happened with the reports? (So, 2 part question)
2. Why do you believe Teen Challenge (specify which location by city/state) should be denied merciful release from the COPE Conversion Program?

I apologize for the length, but, it will likely be the last one I send out for a while to the Teen Challenge survivor/victim/whistleblower e-mail list unless there is a third-party request seeking to interview for media or seeking testimony for any lawsuits.

Thank You In Advance,

Rev. Angela Smith"

Now, there was a vote on whether Teen Challenge (all locations including New Mexico) should remain on the watch-list initiated on March 3rd, 2020 where all Sponsors of that program's placement in the COPE Conversion Program were invited to participate. No one voted for merciful release or the equivalent at that time. HEAL Mission and the COPE Conversion Program recognize participation in the vote in March as recent enough participation even if Sponsors prefer more time to consider, write, and/or provide any guest sermon. While we understand this may be disappointing for Teen Challenge, it is the hope that this progress report helps explain the reasons for the continued enrollment/placement in the COPE Conversion Program. Additional or continued participation by Sponsors, including providing guest sermons or participating in future votes will impact whether or not the program qualifies for merciful release or remains

enrolled. Lack of participation by Sponsors where all other criteria for merciful release are met, will result in merciful release of the program.

Similar invitations will be going out to all survivor/victim/whistleblower e-mail lists and their respective programs placed on the watch-list. It may take some time to get through the entire list especially if enrollments pick up. But, we are working on it and everyone can submit Feedback at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> at any time regardless of position regarding program placement or enrollment.

To close, I remind everyone that there are remedies at law. Labor trafficking, rape, fraud (misleading marketing/false advertising), false imprisonment, kidnapping, battery, assault, and any crime or tort you could name are actionable at law. The HEAL Mission of COPE is prepared to assist all victims by providing reporting resources and information for the sake of justice and we appreciate all Sponsors who selflessly contribute content for the sake of informing the public to help those exercising due diligence avoid becoming a victim. Reporting Guide Available at: <https://www.heal-online.org/report.htm> and <https://www.heal-online.org/tcnm.htm> .