

Did This Pentecostal Church Choke and Abuse a Gay Man to Rid Him of Homosexuality?

A gay man testified this week that leadership and former members of his church attacked and choked him “to break me free of the homosexual demons they so viciously despise.”

Matthew Fenner is one of 43 former attendees at Word of Life Fellowship Church in North Carolina pressing charges for years of alleged abuse.

The Associated Press released the evidence over in February with articles that detail how congregants—everyone from crying babies to crying adults—were regularly punched, smacked, choked, slammed to the floor or thrown through walls at Word of Faith Fellowship in North Carolina, pastored by Jane Whaley and her husband, Sam.

“She has a way of getting people to do things,” said ex-congregant John Huddle. “She knows the right words to say, the right buttons to push.”

Whaley reportedly tried to “purify” sinners and cast out devils by a process known as “blasting,” an ear-piercing verbal onslaught often conducted in hours-long sessions.

Word of Faith Fellowship justifies the practice with Scriptures like Acts 2:2 and Exodus 15:8.

“I saw so many people beaten over the years. Little kids punched in the face, called Satanists,” former member Katherine Fetachu told The Associated Press.

The church denies the allegations, telling media they’re “shocked and saddened” by the reports.

“We do not condone or allow abuse—in any form—at our church.

Period,” the Whaleys said in a statement.

They continued:

These false allegations were predominantly made by members of an extended family, with one of its members currently facing several legal battles, both civil and criminal. We believe these allegations are carefully targeted and timed to prejudice the jury pool, put pressure on the judges and elected officials and otherwise influence the public in an attempt to gain advantage in these legal cases. The allegations of this small group of people should be viewed in contrast to the number of faithful members in our large congregation. It is curious—and revealing—that those now speaking out have sat on their allegations for several years and only speak out at what they perceive to be an advantageous time. If our church is such an abusive place, why did several of the attorneys quoted in Mr. Weiss’ article allow their children to continue to attend our church and school for months after they withdrew from membership in the church? Further, it is notable that one of the most vehement critics quoted in the article routinely insisted that his infant daughter be cared for daily by the very individuals he now accuses of heinous abuse. False allegations have been made against our church in the past. Investigations at several levels of government have been conducted. We have been exonerated at every point. Although Mr. Weiss’ article references his review of various legal documents, it fails to educate the reader on these exonerations.

Five of the church members were charged when a gay man alleged they attempted to beat the “homosexual demons” out of him.

Police also investigated the church in 1999 for child endangerment, but the church was cleared of any wrongdoing.

“The line between religion and abuse, they are crossing it

quite severely. That's why I'm doing this. They have to know you cannot hurt people," said the man making the accusations in 2014.