

Financial Woes Lead to Arrest Warrant of Founder of Teen Mania

When the Teen Mania founder failed to appear at a hearing between his organization and fellow ministry Compassion International, the court issued a warrant for his arrest.

Now, Ron Luce tells *Charisma* his lawyers advised him to avoid the hearing.

“Teen mania and Compassion International have been involved in a positive working relationship for over 10 years,” Luce says. “The last two years have been strained, as our disagreements have culminated in a lawsuit. I have personally reached out to the CEO at Compassion International to try to resolve and was referred to their VP of Legal. I was advised by Counsel, to *not* appear at a hearing in Colorado in September, as their court has no jurisdiction over companies or individuals outside of their state. I am not able to give details on the case at the present time, but we are working vigilantly to resolve (it) as soon as possible.”

A spokesperson for Compassion International declined to comment.

Compassion filed a lawsuit against Teen Mania last year for breach of contract, alleging Teen Mania failed to refund money Compassion paid to promote their child-sponsorship programs at Acquire the Fire conferences.

Acquire the Fire is a youth megaconference designed to ignite teens for Christ. While some praise ATF for how the event inspired them, others complain they too did not receive refunds when Teen Mania postponed or canceled events.

“Our event was at the end of January and they cancelled our event on January 20th—10 days before we were going to leave. Everything was paid. We have YET to see our refund from that—I have called several times and no one can help me,” one person posted on Facebook.

Another person who says she is an alumna says she is “filled with sorrow” over the direction of ATF and Teen Mania.

“ATFs were first postponed and then canceled, but only after taking a lot of peoples’ money for them,” she posted on Facebook. “They’ve had near-total turnover on the Board of Directors, and in the ministry staff. Much of the ministry’s customer service was outsourced, and now, what little staff that remains are no longer helping answer where the refunds are for canceled ATFs, or if there will ever be another ATF event anywhere, ever again. ALUMNI staff are not even responding to ALUMNI questions. I don’t know how it can get worse at this point. I hope we don’t find that out.”

Teen Mania reportedly canceled some events due to financial constraints. The organization has been strapped for cash in recent years and made significant plans to slash its debt.

Some of the corrections included plans to move the headquarters to a much smaller space and outsource certain work to set up Acquire the Fire events, the ministry expects to slash its annual overhead expenses by more than 90 percent from \$2 million to about \$175,000, *Charisma News* previously reported.

Part of the reason Teen Mania acquired an untenable debt load, Luce told *Charisma News*, was that when its finances were flush before the Great Recession, the organization borrowed to erect new dormitories and other buildings on its large east Texas campus. Donor support dropped dramatically, as it did for many ministries and secular charities, after 2008.