Meeting Ron Bushman # FAC Harvest Room A 28th January 2015 4:30pm (b)

(Taken from notes written @ Milestones Restaurant following)
The purpose of the meeting to follow up on concerns on confidentiality issues amongst team members - see also the exchange of emails between Ron Buschman & Pendergasts in preceding days.Its unknown whether the protracted and difficulties communicating with him were due to Ron being absent from the city. The day before and without our knowledge Ron had removed us as facilitators for the next marriage course because of his suspicions. He had contacted another team couple - Brent & Rhea to take our place. Brent & Rhea were to be our co-facilitators.

#1 Issue was the sharing of confidential information between a member of the Marriage Matters Team and Jennifer, Barry would join the latter part of the conversation. It took place in the centre of the Prayer Chapel during the meet & greet part of the first & only team meeting Sunday January 19th. Essentially this member and his wife had become very frustrated with a couple they had facilitated Prepare and Enrich with and had tried to mentor. The member asked us " have you ever had to tell a couple they shouldn't get married?" Jennifer said this was not our role to do so

It was easy to recognize the couple who had caused the frustration from their ages and presence at the combined Marriage & Marriage Prep Course meal times. Our concern was that there had been no policy given on confidentiality. We did not find out who else the mentoring couple had shared this confidential information with.

Another strange part of the meeting was Ron sharing his experience with his and Teresa's P&E (Prepare & Enrich Study) they had done in the States. He seemed to blame Teresa (not present) for not speaking to him for 3 days after doing it. Second time he had shared this. It would also prejudice his decision not to let Marriage Matters team members see full copies of their own P&E results. Only Ron would see them all although we insisted he gave us a copy.

Later during the meeting (6 couples and Ron - Teresa was ill) there was a bantering about wasn't it a big surprise that a couple on the Marriage Prep course, identified by name had run off and eloped. Such excitement! We were uncomfortable that this information was handed out to members of the team who did not know the couple.

Our thought in approaching Ron was to try to use this as a teaching moment and help formulate a policy on confidentiality- certainly not reprimand the team members. Sadly much later another breach occurred on Main Street but we quickly said ask Ron or one of the professional counsellors for advice.

At the meeting with Ron on the 28th January and while Barry was present we would not name the team couple who had breached the confidentiality with us - we emphasized our purposes was to use it as a way to talk openly about a confidentiality policy. Ron was really anxious to find the names

We also shared concerns about the way the Prepare & Enrich were handled. Currently all were being administered by Ron or his assistant - he requested them, read the contents and then decided which team couple should deal with the couple. Said it was his right and responsibility as the Marriage Matters Leader. On one occasion it appeared a member of staff was also privy to the contents in communication with us.

Our thoughts were once you had a course couple wanting the take P&E the administering couple would take over - apply for the on-line link using the FAC expense code. Preferably those couples administering the P&E's would have built a relationship with the couple during the meal times. Once the P&E was over then all material destroyed. Barry & Jennifer used P&E manual as the basis for their arguments. Ron insisted he would carry on as before. We would subsequently hear he and Teresa had administered at least 6 of the P&E's. We have done over 60 FOCCUS inventories with pre-married couples over 15 years. We really do not know what experience Ron has?

His comments on several occasions about the troubles he and Teresa had in completing a P&E added to our worries. We also said it was disappointing not all Pre-Married couples were taking P&E even though they paid for it . There were no rebates to our knowledge and in fact Ron never shared the financial aspects of the ministry ever, only complained of his financial struggles. In all the years we used FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication Study) with couples we made it mandatory to have the inventory done. It accounted for 40% of the value of the course. As far we know the couple leading the Pre-Marriage Course have as yet not taken P&E training nor implemented it

We shared we felt the 1/2 day P&E training was insufficient to make Marriage Matters couples safe or confident to go it alone. We felt more training should be done. Perhaps role play some sessions rather like we did helping couples to facilitate FOCCUS. Ron said he had difficulties working with the Gerry the P&E trainer - he would only come when a good crowd was registered and was compensated properly. Ron seemed to blame everybody - seniors when they didn't listen to him during a recent luncheon, Harvest Ministries because they could not prepare the meals to fit his budget.

We got no response to how the costs of the courses were determined. When the Pre-Marriage course went from a weekend to 5 nights the costs rose from $140 to $200 to cover the cost of two extra meals. Was it to lesson competition with Dynamic Marriage.

The atmosphere was becoming progressively strained. Ron recounted he was upset at a December meeting with two other Marriage Matters couples when Barry had insisted the Marriage & Marriage Prep Course must have a good quality and well presented meals. Felt Barry had pressured him in front of others. Barry tried to say he was thankful fro Teresa intervention to correct this but Ron aggressively said don't you dare bring my wife into this. End of topic! We remember being the last to leave and joking at their front door about sharing tooth brushes.

We shared concern about a recent Marriage Matters promotional video that focused almost totally on Marriage 911 with Shane & Kim. He claimed he had no knowledge of what the communications team had done. He saw it the same time as everyone else did. We asked for better involvement in all aspects of promotion. We asked that all members of the team are given a chance to join the promotional stands on Main Street.

We asked there be properly organized team meetings with agendas and follow up.

Towards the end of this discussion Ron said he had removed us from running the Marriage Course due to start the following day based on his suspicions that our concerns on confidentiality were with Brent & Rhea (our co-leaders). He had contacted them the previous day and appointed them in our place. Quite how his logic worked when he suspected (and had no proof) we had a conflict with our co-leaders.

Jennifer asked did you seek advice on this decision? Did he seek pastoral advice? He said he was the leader and had the authority to make any decision . We asked could we appeal? Ron said no.

Afraid after some heated discussion with Jennifer trying calm to Barry & Ron down Barry called Ron a control freak and he and Jennifer left the room. After an in-depth discussion Jennifer said she felt that she needed to go back and talk to Ron alone.

Jennifer account
We would seek advice from trusted friends before acting further
agreement to continue the conversation

We went out to have a decent meal and a glass of wine to try to gain some peace after a very unsettling experience. Barry made notes on a napkin.

At 8:00pm Jennifer took a call from Ron. He said he had reconsidered and we would be allowed to lead the course. He said “Jennifer you are an amazing woman…I love you”

The following evening Ron told the Marriage & Pre-Marriage couples he wished to make a statement on confidentiality. Basically it was that nothing could be shared about what went on in the dining room or sessions. Frankly we were puzzled and concerned he had not felt it necessary to seek input from us or other team members. Frankly nothing Nick & Sila say or anything we share is confidential. In fact we want them share as much as they can with their families, in their homes, over the coffee machine in their workplaces etc. We ask them to be ambassadors for the courses.
Ron’s only real experience on confidentiality was with the Dynamic Marriage Course where deep confidences are shared in a group environment and must not leave the room .

Ron made no attempt to help Brent & Rhea and ourselves overcome the suspicions that must have been evident. We left totally perplexed on how Ron could possibly help couples under this care deal with conflict issues.

We decided to show some grace to Ron and put our heart and soul into serving the couples for the next 7 weeks working very cooperatively with Brent & Rhea. We were away for several sessions and Brent & Rhea seemed to do really well. When we got back we did offer them more opportunity to lead but they declined.

To all intents and purposes this very unsettling meeting with Ron was our effectively the end to our participation in the ministry.

We would attend three marriage related bible studies with a small number of the Marriage Matters team. We understood the purpose of these sessions was to build a higher level of connectedness between us in pursuit of being better leaders.
We were always shut down when we tried to ask any team organizational related questions - communication, regular team meetings & follow up etc. Patrick & Karen who facilitated the Marriage Prep Courses and Brent & Rhea were never in attendance at any of these.

We can only think of rare opportunities we or others on the team influenced any decisions - FOCCUS to P&E. Mentoring approach, promotion, evaluations, when courses would run and who would run them, when special projects would occur . Ron was the boss!

Overall sense from about mid 2014 was that though Ron described us as mentors to him and Teresa they felt threatened by own passion for marriage ministry and service . That we wanted to take over. We assured them several times this was not the case. We merely wanted to use the gifts that God has given us to serve couples and families.

Signed as a true statement of our experiences

Dated

Barry Pendergast Jennifer Pendergast

His son and the Jewish Centre - “they are the people that killed Jesus”