

NO Labels YES Grace

from Lori Berg



PazNaz member and Executive Director of Foothills Pregnancy Resource Center (FPRC), Lori Berg, just went on record with the Center's parent company, Heartbeat International, saying, "We need some fresh new language around here. Just calling ourselves Pro-Life isn't the whole story. When we call ourselves that, a prospective client might believe that we are going to try and make her mind up for her. As if we could! As if we wanted to! I think a better use of words that describe what we do and who we are might be the 'pro-choices' people."

Before Pastor Tara Beth came to PazNaz, I visited the Missioalliance website to read articles that she had written. One, in particular, was titled *"When Abortion Suddenly Stopped Making Sense - The Church's Response"* The article referred to a pregnancy center in the metropolitan Chicago area she had a relationship with. As I read about Caris (Greek for "grace") Pregnancy Center, I coined a new phrase for FPRC. The way Caris speaks of their mission is exactly the way Foothills Pregnancy Resource Center describes their work. *We are indeed the "Pro-Choices people because we are Pro-Grace!" Pro-Grace ... that's it!*

I never cared for labels and by not using them to describe the work of Foothills Pregnancy Resource Center, I caught the attention of Becky Shevlin, the president of LA County's Commission on Women. "I am very honored to have chosen Lori Berg as my choice for the President's 2016 Woman of the Year Award. Lori is a shining example of resiliency and tenacity; she is one who works with such devotion and passion to provide services, hope, love, and healing to so many women, their partners, and their families."

Coming into the life-affirming community of Foothills Pregnancy Resource Center over seven years ago, I developed a heart for shifting the conversation surrounding sexual integrity and related issues, but particularly abortion, to take on a more welcoming, less divisive tone. So the center's staff, paid and volunteer, elect to call themselves the "pro-choices people." What that looks like is quite simple. A client will hear all the options about all of her possible choices. Each client is spoken with intelligently, compassionately, and

non-judgmentally so that she (they) might make an informed choice.

I believe, like Pastor Tara Beth's sermons from June, that FPRC is called into a very specific, missional place. The average client is someone who typically does not feel as though they have a safe place to explore their situation. And it is oftentimes at their darkest moments where Jesus, the Lover of their souls, meets them. I can't count how many times a client has told me they have nowhere to turn. Due to the openness and open arms at the center, clients unpack all that's going on in their lives and begin to explore for themselves how Jesus is in their midst.

I don't believe the pregnancy center's assignment is to conform to a prescribed format, helping only those clients who follow through with a pregnancy while discarding and dismissing those who don't. One of my favorite authors and theologians is Peter Scazzero, former pastor of New Life Fellowship Church in New York City. He says that, "By failing to let others be themselves before God and move at their own pace, we inevitably project onto them our own discomfort with their choice to live life differently than we do. We end up eliminating them in our minds, trying to make others like us, abandoning them altogether or falling into a 'Who cares?' indifference toward them. In some ways the silence of unconcern can be more deadly than hate."

It's much larger than a cause. We're not here only to front a movement. Foothills Pregnancy Resource Center makes life-changing connections with its clients. Some are choosing to parent. Some have had abortions. Some are learning to reconnect with healthy people. Some need support and help within the community. But we also wish to connect with those who haven't felt any particular connection with "The Pro-Life Movement," due perhaps to its seeming indifference towards anyone who dares believe differently than it does. The pregnancy center is not

a "movement," but rather a church-like place. Church-like because, like Jesus, we want to meet someone in their hour of need with the heart and love of Christ. Out of such a meeting comes the conversations and practical application of our knowledge, services, points of connection, and so forth. A movement, in and of itself, may be very black and white. It doesn't 'grow feet' and enter into a person's life. Whereas in a center like ours, we engage with clients at some of their most crucial moments. Our hearts and ears are open to truly hear. We are carefully trained to offer each client the most up-to-date scientific, medical, and spiritually compassionate care; but beyond our providing a safe place along that client's journey, we long for our clients to have the firsthand knowledge that they are loved, valued, cherished, and purposed.

Pregnancy centers like FPRC have been taking some heat in recent months. A spin on the streets suggests that we force feed our clients propaganda. Nothing could be further from the truth. On a recent trip to the center, a state assemblyman cheered the work of FPRC exclaiming that he had no idea how fair and broad its services were! We really empower an individual by talking about the whole truth ... including how wide our Father's love is for each and every client.

All of the programs and services that FPRC provides are free and confidential. As a fully state licensed medical clinic, FPRC offers: pregnancy testing, limited obstetric ultrasounds, counseling where a woman hears about all of her options, weekly women's support group, mentorship for guys, materials assistance (food, clothing, diapers, etc...), parent's

discussion groups, post-abortion care and classes for women and men, and a variety of special events.

We are all wired for mission! Foothills Pregnancy Resource Center is one of many outstanding community partners and ministries supported by PazNaz. Perhaps, while reading this, you have wondered if volunteering for FPRC might be a great fit or outlet for your "wired-ness." Non-profits are largely volunteer-powered and we would like to extend the invitation for you to call, come by for a quick tour, or visit our website.

PazNaz will be the home of Foothills Pregnancy Resource Center's annual Funds and Friends Raising gala event on Friday, November 4. Gilmore Hall will be the site of an inspiring program, guest speakers including some of PazNaz's very own, a delectable meal catered by PazNaz's culinary team, and a wonderful silent auction. Non-profit organizations can only thrive when supported by individuals and faith communities like PazNaz. Each January, *Sanctity of Life Month*, Lori shares a brief word about the work of the center. A host of families and individuals from this local church home are active in their service and support of FPRC. But beginning this year, I invite you to take a closer look at who we are and what we do. Always remembering, it's not about the labels ... but all about the grace!

- Lori Berg

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Post-Abortion Helpline: 626-241-5997
Monday/Wednesday/Friday: 11:00 am-3:00 pm
Tuesday/Thursday: 2:00-7:00 pm