

Email from Steve Nicholson - Vineyard USA National Board Member and leader of the Vineyard Association's church planting systems during Steve Morgan's time in the Vineyard

From: Steve Nicholson [REDACTED] >
To: Andrew Lumpe [REDACTED] >
Sent: Wednesday, March 24th, 2021 at 10:05 PM
Subject: Re: questions about background of Steve Morgan

Hi Andrew,

I do not believe that anyone in the Vineyard was aware of that background at the time. I don't think we were doing background checks in those days.

We do now have a process which includes an psychological assessment and a background check for all church planters.

And yes, I imagine that this whole thing could eventually emerge and come into the open.

Steve cut me off from any relationship with him and his network shortly after they left the Vineyard. Haven't heard from him since...

steve nicholson

From: Andrew Lumpe [REDACTED] >
To: Steve Nicholson [REDACTED] >
Sent: March 24, 2021, at 2:11 PM
Subject: questions about background of Steve Morgan

Hi Steve,

My name is Andrew Lumpe. My wife and I were originally a part of the Carbondale Vineyard (now Vine) and went on the Seattle Bluesky Church plant with Steve Morgan in 2004. I was a non staff overseer and vice president of the board at Bluesky and my wife the bookkeeper. I remember you coming to Seattle for a couple of retreats and know you were national church plant director and also close with Steve Morgan at the time. My wife and I were part of Vineyards in Kansas and Toledo before going to Carbondale and we've known David and Debi Stark since the early 1980s as we grew up in the same town in Kansas. I'm also close with Ben Powers and have remained in touch with him. It was hard for us when Steve pulled Bluesky and the other churches out of the Vineyard in 2005 but at the time we didn't feel we had much choice given the fact that we had moved our family to the other side of the country. Just the other day my wife found some old bookkeeping paperwork about the \$200,000 some dollars Bluesky paid back to the Vineyard as she wrote all the checks!

My purpose in contacting you is to share some information that I learned about Steve Morgan's background and ask if anyone in the Vineyard might have been aware of it. It's a rather long story and I'll try to be as brief as possible. In 2006-2007, not long after Morgan left the Vineyard, he started to exhibit signs of a serious mental breakdown. As an overseer, I was ready to ask him to take a leave and seek

professional help. He sent two other overseers to me to give an explanation for his anguish. They told me that when Morgan was 22, he was serving as a youth group leader in a church in his hometown. He was arrested for sexually assaulting a 17 year old male boy who was a member of the youth group. Physical contact with the victim was made. The case was adjudicated by the court but I'm not clear on all the details. The other two overseers told me to keep quiet about it, not tell anyone including my wife, and that I had to trust Morgan as my pastor because they did. Morgan only spoke with me about it once and that was to tell me that a one of the other overseers tried to locate the arrest record but couldn't and Morgan expressed great relief. After feeling pressured to keep it on the down low (bullied?), I did keep quiet about it but for years wondered about the implications.

We eventually went on another church plant within the network to San Luis Obispo, CA. In 2019, I began to think more about this especially in light of the increasing number of cases of clergy sex abuse. I was afraid to raise the issue within the network and started seeking advice from a theologian, abuse advocates, a christian reporter, a christian clinical psychologist, and David Stark. They all agreed that the leadership of Morgan's network needed to be aware of this dark secret. Most pointed me to a non profit group called GRACE and the director contacted me immediately expressing grave concern. He wanted to work with the network to conduct an investigation and help them work through the issues. GRACE actually went to Michigan to try to locate the arrest record but the case was apparently sealed to protect the victim. Morgan's network now has a Network Leadership Team of five pastors who have "oversight" over him. However, they are all his handpicked guys who he choose while in college and trained. I eventually sent a long letter to them outlining Morgan's background, included a list of questions, and asked them to work with GRACE. They refused to take any action and I eventually got portrayed as the bad buy in all of this resulting in hate mail and canceling of long term friendships.

We left Morgan's church network last year and started attending Mountainbrook Church (a Vineyard) which is now led by Rick and Becky Olmstead who graciously came in to help after the Thom O'Leary firing. We had a conversation with Rick and Becky about all that went down, why we were coming to Mountainbrook, and that we were hoping to just rest and get our bearings for a while. They were very supportive.

My questions for you are:

1. Do you know if anyone in the Vineyard knew about Morgan's sex assault background when he was ordained and planted two churches? David Stark, who was Morgan's APC, said he did not know. I know that Morgan went to Phoenix before the Seattle plant for some background checking but Ben Powers said he believes he could've avoided the sex assault issue during that process.
2. Does the Vineyard have any policy about pastors with sex abuse backgrounds? It seems that networks/denominations are starting to have to deal with this now and the Southern Baptists now won't allow it.

Thanks for taking time to read this long message. I'd be glad to speak more if you like and would even be glad to connect via phone.

Take care,
Andrew