

**“If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.”**

**- Romans 12:8**

In 1999, Rev. Dr. Kevin Dudley had a vision of a new congregation with a non-traditional approach to worship the function of the congregation that would engage Christians and attract the unchurched.

Ten years and many locations later, the Rev. Dudley’s vision of a non-traditional church that ministers to the real-life struggles of its members was realized this spring when the Church at North Pointe held worship services at its new location in Columbus, OH. The Detroit, Michigan native’s wife, Gail, also an ordained minister, is the part of the pastoral staff and their children Alexander, 23 and Dominiq, 15 are active in the Church at North Pointe’s Youth Ministry.

“Our vision from the beginning was simple: Offer people the ‘real life’ that Jesus Christ provides so that we can *be* the church,” said Dudley, the areas of emphasis being Dynamic Community, Meaningful Worship and Radical Ministry.

“We have sought intentionally to resist the barriers of traditional church in our worship, practices and organization, yet want always to leave room for God to work in us and through us as God chooses. Claiming our mission to ‘receive, release and reproduce the life of Christ’ makes the difference in the lives of those within our community who have to deal daily with the relational, financial, emotional, psychological and physical burdens of being alive in this broken world. We believe the Gospel has something to say and that we have

to be the ambassadors and representatives to prove that what God graciously offers to us is real.”

In addition to his pastoral duties at The Church at North Pointe, Dudley is Affiliated Professor of African-American Studies and Director of African American Relations at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, where he earned a Master of Divinity. He earned a Doctor of Ministry in Leadership from Ashland Theological Seminary where he is currently Adjunct Professor of Practical Theology. He is also Adjunct Professor of Religion with Ohio Christian University.

Before answering God’s call, Rev. Dr. Dudley had diverse professional experience in the secular world including an elementary school assistant, police officer and business owner. “I have always felt that God was preparing me for something more,” said Dudley.

“I believe my call to the ministry was gradual, but when I was 24-years-old sitting in a church service after recommitting my life to Christ, I recognized clearly God was leading me to serve in ministry leadership.”

Dudley and Rev. Gail’s leadership and the faith and perseverance of all involved were instrumental in the growth of North Pointe. The group was initially a small worshipping community that assembled in diverse settings from the chapel area of a local church, to hotel meeting rooms. Its first public service was August 15, 2005.

Jamie Speakes-Gibson has been with The Church at North Pointe since the beginning. “I remember when we did Bible Study at Donato’s Pizza community room and then worshipped at Christ the King Polaris. I truly enjoyed the praise and worship time and Minister Dudley’s preaching. That is the main reason that I began going: He is truly is

a man of God with integrity who has genuine concern and love for his members. That is truly refreshing.”

In 2006 the group secured a full-time leased space and two months later became an Authorized Worshipping Community in the ELCA’s Southern Ohio Synod. The congregation increased, relocated again and in December 2007 officially became part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. “Without a doubt the source of our growth -- at least one family a week -- has been the presence of the Holy Spirit,” Dudley said. With the increase in size, there was less pressure to initiate marketing strategies, events and outreach to the unchurched. “We emphasize our worship and study life together so that the supernatural result is growth,”

Before becoming pastor of The Church at North Pointe, Dudley spent three years as Director of Youth, Mt. Olivet Baptist Church in Columbus, OH; two years as Director of Ministry, New Salem Baptist Church, Columbus, OH; and five years as Pastor at Mount Zion Baptist Church, in Oberlin, OH.

Gabrielle Hudecek, currently an Executive Secretary at Southern Ohio Synod has known Revs. Kevin and Gail Dudley since Rev. Kevin’s was a student at Trinity Lutheran Seminary and she worked as the Administrative Assistant to the Academic Dean. “I recognize him as a man of integrity, standing firm on what the Gospel speaks. His interpretation is clear, and as my teenage son has said, ‘He preaches what relates to people today.’ It’s an ‘in your face’ ministry, yet it affirms God’s grace, love, mercy, and forgiveness in a fallen world.”

Hudecek, who recently graduated from Trinity Seminary with a Master in Lay Ministry, had the honor of taking two

courses with Rev. Dr. Dudley. “He also has served in his role at the seminary as an advisor, pastor, colleague, confidant as well as a friend,” she said.

“I am drawn to the ministry at North Pointe because of the attitude, the energy, the excitement, the genuine welcome of the pastor and parishioners, the preaching of the Gospel, and the African American worship experience that I recall from my youth,” said Hudecek.

Curt Carlton, his wife and three children have been members of TCNP for nearly a year. Carlton, who is also a Vision Team Leader, appreciates Rev. Dudley’s non-traditional approach to worship. “After looking around for several years my family and I were able to find a church that provides a healthy and growing Christ-centered life. The Church at North Pointe doesn’t have all the traditional guidelines from years ago,” said Carlton. “I’ve seen many churches on the decline because they are stuck on traditions that have nothing to do with salvation and our life on earth. God has been constant through the years but today’s times are different. The Church at North Pointe teaches sound doctrine and offers real life through Jesus Christ. Not only do I enjoy being there, my wife and children love it too.”

Rev. Dr. Dudley’s unconventional approach encompasses communion, the actual worship service and how members of the Church at North Pointe are perceived as parishioners. “Rather than people coming forward to receive communion, we have teams of people rotating each week to bring the trays to them,” he said. “Each week there is a different team so that all can participate both in serving and receiving. We also don’t pass trays for offering, but leave baskets on the altar. Any time before, during or after service people are encouraged to give as the Lord

releases them as an act of authentic worship and not as an empty formality or forced routine.”

“Ours is a free-flowing worship experience with no paper, hymnals or programs.” said Dudley. “We sing, share and pray for 45 minutes or so, I preach and we go home. Worship leaders and musicians are extremely gifted and lead in a call-response fashion so that the service is very dynamic and experiential. People who don't read well or who don't read music can follow along. While we sometimes do traditional hymns; much of our music is contemporary. The hour and a half we spend together doesn't seem like it because our time together is energetic and participatory.”

Worshippers are considered “partners” in ministry as opposed to members of a congregation, which helps them recognize their value and contribution. “We focus primarily on corporate worship and discipleship with the majority of our congregation participating in our weekly Bible studies,” said Dudley. “The Word of God declared and lived is absolutely central to our development.”

Lori Elmore, a member of the church's Vision Team joined North Pointe's congregation in 2006. Her duties as a team member include developing policies and by-laws, employment opportunities, and interface with the Magnification department, the church's music ministry. “The ministry has been a blessing in my life,” said Elmore. “This is a church and congregation that sincerely loves its membership, with the love of Christ. The grace that has been shown is like none I've ever experienced and I've been apart of organized religion all my life. I've learned more in the three-and-a-half years (here) than I have at any church.”

Dudley emphasizes that believers should understand that “church” isn't limited to a physical building; believers should worship God in their personal and professional lives to effect positive change and in their daily interactions with others. “Rather than an overabundance of weekly meetings or ‘in house’ ministries, we encourage people to serve Christ in our respective places of involvement and influence,” said Dudley. “Our partners in ministry serve with other congregations, group homes, local mission initiatives, and with local outreach programs, but more than that, the people at the Church at North Pointe are excited about ‘being’ the church on their jobs and in their communities. Making no apology for our particular expression of community, we don't try to exist as everything for everybody like many in our consumer culture demand. Rather we focus on being authentic and liberated in our embrace of the Christian life.”

“The most amazing part of our community is among our young people, who have claimed an entire corner of our sanctuary,” said Dudley and “We would like to continue to expand opportunities to ministry to and with them. We also want to expand our community and economic development goals. We are dreaming big. Beyond our worship life on Sunday we want to be able to worship God by growing infrastructure to address the broader educational, vocational and health needs of our community. “

Rev. Dr. Dudley's son Alexander is a youth leader who believes his “main task is to encourage and inspire younger people with the Word of God.” He tries to be practical and relevant “without tainting God's Word” while keeping things interesting.

“I believe in fun so I try to be as humorous as possible while sharing how

serious God is and how we live our lives as God's people rather we be young or old." Alexander often relates to Biblical figures David and Timothy because of his own age and youthful appearance, which causes some not to take him seriously. "That enables me to relate to the youth in a real and honest way. I don't talk down to them. I am able to talk *with* them and share *with* them who they are in Christ and how they should live for Christ.

"As I have begun to lead the youth I have begun to realize many of the youth are hungry and thirsty for the Word and truly want to please God; this is exciting to me.

"My goal as a disciple of Jesus Christ is being a leader/trendsetter. I do not want to be like anyone else but Christ, and my hope for the youth is that they too strive to be leaders and trendsetters as a result of being followers of Christ.

Alexander emphasizes his parent's "tremendous" influence on his ethos and outlook. "Not so much by what they have said but by how they live their lives. I'm just grateful they allow me to be who I am. I am forever grateful to God for placing these people in my life."

"Pastor Dudley is truly a man sent from God to equip the saints for the work of the ministry," said Lori Elmore. "His teachings are relevant to a today's world, and are basic enough for a 'fifth grader' to understand. He really knows how to 'connect the dots', but more importantly, Pastor Dudley meets people where they are, just as Jesus did. We love him with the love of Christ, completely." Elmore's husband Clinton is also a member of the church who "came to know Christ and is experiencing 'real life' because of Pastor's teachings, because of his love for humanity, and because of the grace that he extends to all

believers." The couple's wedding in June, 2009 was the first at North Pointe and was celebrated in the church's spacious new facility which was formerly Ryan's Steakhouse.

"We have also been able to create an environment and atmosphere where believers allow their uniqueness to dictate their contribution within the broader framework of our vision and mission," said Dudley. "People are free to be themselves. People who visit with us feel welcomed, are blessed by an inviting and transformative worship experience, are under no pressure to become something they are not, and hopefully can sense that Jesus is alive with The Church at North Pointe."

Speakes-Gibson, who has a son, Spencer and a daughter, Amber said, "When we first began going my kids would tell me about his sermons and that is when I knew that they were paying attention for the first time. When you have a man that can reach and teach the whole family it is a blessing."

"When you enter The Church at North Pointe, you are no longer a visitor," said Gabrielle Hudecek, "You instantly become family...One in Christ!"