

# Vineyard Central

## Kevin Rains

### Network Summary

Vineyard Central began as a pretty typical (Vineyard) church plant though from the beginning God deposited some things that would lead us to some interesting places. In its first couple of years it grew from a small group in someone's home to 140 meeting on Sunday mornings at a community center in an urban neighborhood of Cincinnati called Norwood, replete with 25 minutes of worship in song led by a worship band, followed by a 30 minute "sermon and some ministry time (prayer for needs) to top off the dish. This was faithfully served up week in and week out by some dedicated staff and volunteers.

But, they were dreamers and longed for something more or at least something different. "Different" came in an unexpected package! The city condemned the building we were meeting in, giving us 48 hours to vacate the property. At our final meeting in the community center our pastor, Dave Nixon, divided the congregation into several smaller groups that were to church in homes until further notice. That was our first experience at home churching.

We had small groups, yes, but now that's ALL we had. There was no espousing a new model we discovered, and just "had to try." There was no other choice. Our experience later led us to understand the theological underpinnings and we eventually found our way to some good books, like Robert Banks' *The Church Comes Home*. Initially, however, we were thrown into the deep end and told to swim. With much effort and many set backs we learned to tread water. We're still learning to swim.

Currently we have a growing network of almost 20 gatherings for the purpose of discipleship and mission. These groups range from playgroups for moms, to communal households, to simple churches meeting in homes and cafes. The past year or so has been a journey of unlearning how to be a "church" (as that is popularly understood) to become a network of simple churches. The next leg of the journey, we believe, is becoming a church planting movement in greater Cincinnati and resourcing the same for other cities.

Vineyard Central is also involved in coaching over 20 church planters regionally through a monthly Greenhouse and many others farther out via email, phone calls, our web site, conferences and occasional visits.

#### Values and Activities

*Ancient* - Future: Learning from the accumulated wisdom and history of the church and finding fresh expressions for ancient traditions. We've been especially formed by monastic practices like communal living, praying the Hours, and hospitality.

*Decentralized*: The "office"/staff serves the needs/purposes of the house churches not the other way around. (i.e. we don't recruit volunteers for staff's vision... we resource the vision of the house churches). Office is for information flow and support... not a centralized hub of power and decision making... much messier than that... like the www...

*Simplicity*: Streamlined lifestyle, encouraged when it comes to finances to identify with the urban population we serve and free up resources for the harvest.

*Reproducible Models*: Everything multiplies... disciples, churches, leaders/coaches, leadership communities... everything, everyone.

*Urban Neighborhoods*: Our main "target" is impoverished urban neighborhoods. Serving a city over the long haul by buying property and moving in (incarnational) as owners not renters of passers-by.

*Communal*: Many in our network live together for purpose of deepening their experience of discipleship and mission.

#### Formative Resources

- Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and Missionary Methods by Roland Allen
- Raising Leaders for the Harvest by Neil Cole and Bob Logan

- Missional Church by Guder and others
- The 12 Traditions of AA (not the 12 steps, though those are good as well)
- Church Planting Movements by David Garrison
- Cultivating a Life for God by Neil Cole
- The Celtic Way of Evangelism by George Hunter
- The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell
- Idea Virus by Seth Godin
- Ancient-Future Faith by Robert Webber
- The Master Plan by Robert Coleman
- Spiritual Formation: Everything by Dallas Willard and Richard Foster
- The Church Comes Home and Paul's Idea of Community by Robert Banks
- Making Room by Christine Pohl
- Houses That Change the World by Wolfgang Simson
- Vineyard Central House Church Guidebook by Dave Nixon

#### **Family**

Kevin is married to Tracy. They have two children.

#### **Contact Information**

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