



Guiding Change:

*A Life That
Moves Others
Forward*

OUR CULTURES | *Stories That Shape Us*

Interview and story by Ronald Hale

When Kimberly Fortune walked into Eagle Erie that morning, she didn't expect anything out of the ordinary.

It was just another church retreat with a group of teenagers who had learned to stay guarded in rooms like this. But from the moment the students arrived, she could feel the hesitation in the air.

One girl crossed her arms and said flatly that she didn't want to be there. Others stayed quiet, waiting to see how long they would have to participate before the session ended.

Kimberly didn't rush them. She didn't try to win them over with big words or force the moment to change. Instead, she remained, giving the room time to settle, because experience had taught her that trust does not arrive on command.

Slowly, things began to shift. The same girl who had refused to engage finally spoke up and joined a group activity. By the end of the program, she was laughing with the others, fully present in a way that hadn't existed when she first walked in.

"When they're with me, they're mine," Kimberly says. "I protect them, guide them, and challenge them like they're my own." For her, that belief is not a slogan. It is a responsibility.

Kimberly grew up surrounded by service, even if she didn't recognize it at the time. Her father spent more than fifty years working in law enforcement and emergency response. He would leave home at all hours, responding to calls that most people never saw, and return exhausted but still attentive to his family.

Even when no one was watching, he was helping others. During snowstorms, he would clear driveways for neighbors without being asked, making sure people could get where they needed to go.

"He never made a big deal out of it," Kimberly says. "He just did what needed to be done."

Her mother influenced her in a different but equally strong way. Coming from a large family, their home was always full of people and conversation, and everyone helped out.

"That was normal for us," she adds. "You take care

of people. That's what you do." Without realizing it, she was learning what service looks like when it is demonstrated instead of spoken.

As she got older, Kimberly saw women leading with real authority, and it changed what she believed was possible. "It showed me early that leadership wasn't limited the way some people think it is."

Still, her own path wasn't straightforward. She explored different directions and applied for leadership roles in churches, but not every door opened. One rejection stayed with her longer than the others.

"I remember sitting on my bed, reading the email, and crying," she shares. "I started wondering if I misunderstood everything I thought I was called to do." Instead

of forcing her way forward, she took a moment to think. She still knew her life was meant for service... *it just didn't feel clear where yet.*



The turning point came when she preached at Mount Zion. Something about that day felt different. The room was attentive in a way she couldn't ignore. People were not just present: they were engaged, connecting with what she was saying.

Afterward, she stepped outside, trying to process what had just happened. Her sister didn't hesitate. "That's your church," she said.

Later that night, Kimberly reached out to the chairman of the deacon board with a question she had been holding onto for some time: *how would people feel about a female pastor?*

*"I take care of the ones who
take care of everyone else."*

The response came quickly. "This is an answered prayer." She read it more than once, because she was still learning how to accept what it meant. Soon after, the process moved forward, and the call came that confirmed what had been forming all along.

"I just remember sitting there thinking... this is really happening," she recalls.

Today, Kimberly serves as the **first female Pastor at Mt. Zion in its 157-year history**, while also working in social services, where her focus remains the same: people who spend their lives giving to others.

Her work is less about instruction and more about restoration... helping people recognize when they are running on empty, and reminding them that it is not only allowed but necessary to slow down.

"There were times I was showing up for everything and everyone," she says, "but not really checking in with myself."

So she encourages something simple but often overlooked: slow down, reset, and return with intention. When asked how she handles all her responsibilities, Kimberly doesn't pretend to have a perfect answer.

"Some days I don't manage it well," she points out honestly. "I have to reset and try again."

That honesty is part of what makes people trust her. She does not speak from a distance. She speaks from experience.



*“A strategic, faith-driven visionary
helping others grow.”*

Over time, a few lessons have stayed with her. One came from a mentor who said, “Don’t despise your Egypt.” To Kimberly, it means hard seasons have purpose, even if it’s not clear at the time.

“They prepare you,” she says.

Another lesson changed her approach to leadership. “You’re not the captain of the ship,” someone told her. “You’re the tugboat.” A tugboat doesn’t demand attention. It moves something much larger with direction and patience, guiding it gradually until it turns.

“That’s how I lead,” Kimberly explains. “Not by forcing change, but by guiding it until people find their way forward.”

If she had to describe her purpose in a single line, she keeps it simple. “A strategic, faith-driven visionary helping others grow.”

For those who have experienced her programs, sessions, or simply spent time with her, the lesson is clear: Kimberly stays until change happens and knows exactly when to step back. That is what they remember most.



Her faith is more than words; it is visible in everything she does.

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