

# Lake Pointe Church: Rustic, authentic, cost-effective youth facility

By Carol Badaracco Padgett

## Lake Pointe Church at a Glance

### Size:

*8,500 average weekly attendance on all campuses*

### Multi-size Campuses:

*Dallas, Rockwall, Mesquite, Sulphur Springs, and a cowboy church in Sabine Creek Ranch east of Rockwall*

### Denomination:

*Southern Baptist*

### Style of Services:

*Contemporary, seeker-aware*

### Key Events:

*Ministry Fair (booths set up for individuals to select ministries in which to serve); Vacation Bible School; Fall Festival (community outreach parking lot); satellite host site for annual Willow Creek Summit; Quarterly - Lake Pointe University (lay training, one-half day on campus); Quarterly - Marriages That Last seminars (one-half day on campus); youth camps*

Lake Pointe Church sits in a suburban area east of Dallas, Texas, where a lake wraps around an affluent boating community. The area also houses several major high schools and, like many communities, a number of people not attending any church in particular.

After Lake Pointe Church opened a successful baseball-themed children's building on its main campus in 2000, the staff began to consider a special spot for older youth as well. "We made the youth facility the focus of our capital campaign in 2002," says Senior Pastor Steve Stroope. On Easter of 2003 Lake Pointe unveiled Pier 4:19, a themed environment that has thrilled area youth and rewarded a congregation that worked so hard to pull it off.

## Pier 4:19

The idea of a pier is a natural in this boating environment. But Lake Pointe's Wes Hartley, media pastor, explains the significance of the 4:19. Hartley says the youth venue got its name from Matthew 4:19: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." As a fitting response, area youth bring friends to Pier 4:19 to experience Lake Pointe's message for youth and its excellent entertainment in a wholesome atmosphere.

Hartley explains that Pier 4:19 isn't just interestingly named; the name fits the 55,000-square-foot stand-alone facility. Even though the facility was cost-effectively constructed with tilt-up concrete construction, plain old sheet rock surfaces were passed over for specialized touches that make Pier 4:19 an authentic hang-out for youth.

Hartley says that Pier 4:19 features distressed brick recovered from a downtown Dallas building on one wall and old barn wood treated for fire code in other sections. Buoy rope such as one sees floating in the water near a pier is hung strategically about the interior. Stained concrete graces the floor and a manhole cover (no – it doesn't open) helps lend an urban feel to the interior as well.



Photos courtesy of Dwight Smith



Pier 4:19 got its name from Matthew 4:19:

*“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”*

David Shanks, president of Dallas, Texas-based HH Architects, a company that works with churches in the design of specialized facilities – and the design mastermind behind Pier 4:19 – says old metal siding helped add to the pier feel. “We also scouted out antique shop finds, such as a port window from an old ship,” he says.

Shanks reports that area youth were so interested in the building, they would come to watch it being constructed. “During the construction phase, kids came to play basketball outside and to watch and see what we were doing,” he says.

Stroope agrees that part of the initial draw of Pier 4:19 was in its interesting, clever details. “We were able to use the pier concept because we’re a lake community and because of Matthew 4:19. [Churches must] pick a theme that will stand the test of time. Move away from cheaper plastic ‘fake’ themes and use real materials that communicate authenticity and quality,” he advises other churches considering theming.

**Photos (above): Theming can be implemented in a cost-effective manner by making use of recycled materials, such as distressed brick taken from an old building demolition site in the community.**

**Photos (below and left): Providing numerous comfortable hang-out areas promotes use of the facility at times other than just for services.**



Hartley adds that the Pier 4:19 facility is authentic even down to the smallest of details. "The doors are not finished. They're rough, stainless steel; very cool," he says.

### Special Features

While Pier 4:19 may be rustic in appearance, it is totally hard-wired with the latest technology to help deliver Lake Pointe's message to youth, as well as extraordinary sound for fun.

According to Hartley, "Pier 4:19 is acoustically sound. It has a rock'n roll sound system, moving lights and the whole smash."

Geared toward youth activity, the facility also sports hang-out spots such as two 3-on-3 basketball courts, Xbox game stations, two pool tables, a café for soft drinks and snacks, a 1,500-seat auditorium, a wooden deck overlooking a sand volleyball court, and even a skate park for skateboarders.

"We have a skate shop and a minister for skate ministry," Hartley explains. "We have the whole support of the church for our students. There's a disconnect in some churches between the kids and the adults, but not here."

Stroope says the skate park in particular helps Lake Pointe reach out to the unchurched youth in its community. "We also host weekly outreach services in the Pier 4:19 auditorium for middle school students (The Net – Wednesday nights) and high school students (The Shore – Thursday nights)," he adds. And he says that attendance at these events has soared since Pier 4:19 opened.

Hartley describes weekly high school gatherings at Pier 4:19 this way: "Midweek there are some 600 high school kids crawling all over that place. Attendance is through the roof."

Stroope says that when new youth attend, parents often follow. "Attendance has grown, both in youth

and in worship, as youth have visited with their friends and then have invited their parents to attend, who then bring their younger children," he says.

### Construction Benefits, Maintenance and Security

Even though Pier 4:19 looks authentic and many of its decorative materials are old, the building shell underneath is cost-effective because it is completely new. As Shanks says, "We took a new building and made it look old." The result is an energy-efficient structure, Shanks says. And he adds that his company, HH Architects, worked with general contractor MEDCO Construction of Dallas, Texas, on Pier 4:19 as well as on Lake Pointe's themed children's facility.

According to Denward Freeman, MEDCO's president, tilt-up concrete construction is not only cheaper than brick, but it allowed Lake Pointe to create higher interior walls for Pier 4:19 – helping accommodate all the activity inside – without having to add more structure. The result is stronger walls at a lower cost.

When it comes to maintaining Pier 4:19, Lake Pointe's Executive Pastor of Operations, John Wardell, reports that the work is light. "We do regular carpet cleaning, but we sealed most of the surfaces prior to install, so there's minimal cleaning. And we just mop the concrete floor," he says.

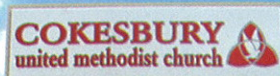
As part of Pier 4:19's security measures, Wardell installed cameras to help monitor the building. "We also have lock and unlock schedules to prevent access to unauthorized areas," he says. Adequate exterior lighting and locating the game spaces in wide

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