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Message: House Party – A New Chapter

Speaker: Mark Connelly

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Well, this is officially our last week worshipping in this facility. Next week, Lord willing, we'll be in our new campus. It's an incredibly exciting time that's been years in the making. I believe God has brought us to this point because he wants to use this church to make Jesus famous in Gilbert and the surrounding area. I believe he wants to use the generosity of this church to rescue thousands more girls from sex trafficking and feed and bless thousands more aids orphans in Africa. I believe God wants to use us to bring thousands more to saving faith. I believe He wants to use this amazingly mercy filled place to bring healing to thousands more hurting people and families. And I believe that's just the start, but there's so much more God has planned for us that we don't even know yet. These are very exciting times for us. Fatigue has turned to joy filled anticipation. As always...

Following Jesus is an exciting ride, full of change.

If you follow the life of the church, it's always been this really exciting ride of following Jesus, through enormous change. **Acts 1:13-14**, the church starts with this handful of believers. It's made up of 11 guys, Judas Iscariot is no longer part of the team, for obvious reasons. With the 11 were a handful of women, and Mary, Jesus' mother. That's a small church, probably no more than 20 people. Everyone knew each other. The bonds were tight. They met in a small room, nothing was complicated about it. There was no program, no rooms to reserve, no microphones needed, just a small group in an upper room.

But God had bigger plans. First, he filled them with his Holy Spirit, and they left the upper room and started preaching in the streets. That day Peter gave the first sermon of the church in open air crowds, **Acts 2:14, 22-24, 36-41**. In one day, the church changed radically. It grew by 3,000 people! What an amazingly exciting time for the church. Yesterday they're hunkered down in an upper room, 20 strong. Today, they've got 3,000 people repenting and coming to faith in Jesus. Following Jesus was an exciting ride, full of change.

Notice, what the next verse doesn't say. It doesn't say, *'then some of the 12 got discouraged because the church got too big, and they liked it when it was small and they all knew each other.'* It doesn't say, *'the apostles were saddened at all the change and longed for the days they could return to the simplicity of the upper room.'* No, here's what it says, **v. 42-47**. As they grew in size they got even more serious about their time of worship and their time in the word, and their commitment to each other. And look what happened, the church got even bigger, **v.47b**. It was an exciting time for the church, full of rapid growth and radical change.

Note this, becoming a big church doesn't mean you have to become some shiny, programmatic show with watered down messages. Can I just voice the concern I know some of you have... you're thinking, I came to this place and stayed because I like what we're about. I don't want us to become some pulse pounding, light show, beautiful people Jesus disco with watered down messages and a glitzy performance.

Good, neither do I. I want you to know, we're intentionally moving in the opposite direction. The songs CJ chooses have theological depth. He often takes the time in service to have us practice a spiritual discipline. When I preach I rarely put verses on the screen, because I want you in your bible. Here's our theology on this... We believe, to the person God is drawing, deep worship and deep teaching from the word will be attractional. If the Word and worship repels a person it's because God wasn't drawing them to begin with. And we have no interest in building a church full of people God isn't even drawing. So please know, we're never going to be about the show. In fact, it's one of the big reasons we chose to open our facility the way we have planned. We wanted to get this right, right out of the gate. Because you end of having to keep people with how you got them there. So instead of bringing in the sports star for our grand opening, we chose to donate 5 years of clean drinking water to someone in need, for every person who comes to our grand opening. Our first week we plan on talking about the cross of Christ on palm Sunday and the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday. We believe that will be attractional to those God is drawing to himself.

The early church grew by thousands in one day, and their worship just got deeper, **vv.41,42**. They didn't back off of worship and the teaching of the word and commitment to each other, they stepped it up as they grew. Then God sped up the ride, and they grew even more, **47b**. Wow God, it's hard enough to assimilate 3,000 into the body of Christ, now you're adding to the growth! Those were crazy, exciting times for the church.

And it continued, chapter 6, rapid growth caused change and internal problems, **6:1**. The Gentile Christians felt like they were being treated unfairly by the Hebrew Christians. All of a sudden the growing church had clicks and complaints. There really is nothing new under the sun.

I bet there were people in the church saying, *'hey we need to slow this thing down and focus on us. We're growing too fast, we're getting too big, look at our problems.'* But God had different plans, he sped the ride up, and caused even more growth, **vv.2-7**. You see, it's never been about our personal comfort or preference, God's been growing his church for thousands of years, through all kinds of change, because it means more people hearing about Jesus, more people experiencing his grace and healing power in their lives, and the kingdom of God expanding...that's a good thing...and it sure makes for an exciting ride.

These are exciting times for us at Mission as we're experiencing rapid growth and seeing hundreds come to Christ every year.

Mission...it's been an exciting ride, full of change

(this weekend is a little different. We're going to take from some time to look back and remember some of what God has done in this church in the last 15 years, as we close this chapter and open a new one next week).

1995, year one, was a great year = it started with 30 people in Tim and Denise Miles' living room, a close knit group of people who all knew each other. But God had bigger plans. In that first year, 1995, that small group of 30 grew to 140 people meeting in Highland High School meeting under the name Superstition Springs Community Church (annual report...3 kids in the nursery. Hours of set up and tear down). In that first year, 36 people came to saving faith in Jesus. What an amazingly blessed start to this ministry! And as the years passed God continued to take this church on an exciting ride.

By the year 2000, after its first 5 years of existence, Superstition Springs Community Church grew to 485 people. A lot had changed, not everyone in the room knew each other anymore. But it was good change. During those first 5 years nearly 150 people came to saving faith in Christ. It was an exciting time in the history of this church (*trophy = poop patrol for the Gilbert parade. A shining moment in our church history. Small groups were called Tender Loving Care groups...still, amazingly men participated*). But more change was around the corner. That group of 485 started planning to build a campus, the campus we've been worshipping in for the past five years. It was hard work, and it took 5 years of planning and sacrifice to make it happen. God blessed SSCC, and even during those next five years, before the campus was built, God was building this church.

From 2000 – 2005, the church went from 485 people to 677, and nearly another 150 came to Christ. That's 300 lives eternally changed in the first ten years of this church. It's not 3,000 in one day, but it's a lot. Those were exciting days. But the biggest change was just ahead.

In 2005, after a decade in Highland High school, this campus was opened. And with the opening of this campus everything changed. The set up and tear down crew were out of a job. Rent was replaced with ownership. And it became quite a ride. Since this campus opened, over 600 more have come to saving faith in Jesus, more than double the first ten years combined!

In the first ten years this church grew by a total of about 500 people. Since this campus opened we've grown by nearly 500 people, every year. Think about that, a decade's worth of growth every year for the five years of this campus! I've been here for the past five years and I can tell you it's been one exciting ride...full of change.

The entire campus has morphed...

The café started as a café, then it became offices, then it became children's check in, then it became offices again. In a month it will be the café again. The office building became the treehouse, which was just gutted this week to become a nursery. I've personally officed in every building on this campus at one time or another (once behind the screen). There's been a lot of change! But that's the nature of following Jesus, it's an exciting ride, full of change.

I want to show you a little video of some of the people who have been around since the start (**video**). For those who have been around this church for a while, you know, it's been an exciting ride. But the truth is, it's just about to get really interesting. Just like the opening of our first campus radically accelerated the reach and scope of this church, our new campus gives us the capacity to triple that impact. And that next chapter in our exciting ride of following Jesus, begins next weekend. Even though I stand here today amazed at what I've already seen God do in this ministry, with all my heart I believe...

The best is yet to come

When that early church grew to 3,000 in one day, and then grew more in the days ahead, there had to be many thinking they were in their hay day. But the truth is they were just beginning, and the best was yet to come. In the years that followed, the church would expand far beyond Jerusalem. Missionaries would be sent out, and churches planted globally. That's why we have these books of the bible...Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians...they were letters to churches planted around the world. In fact turn to **Colossians 1:6** (read). The early days of the church were exciting, thousands had come to faith in Christ. But they had just begun. The best was yet to come. In the years ahead, God would use the church to make the gospel known to the ends of the earth, and you and I are here as a result.

Mission, as we look back on all God has done on this campus, we can see He's been good. But with all my heart I believe the best is yet to come. I can see a day when we see 7,000 people on this campus learning about Jesus and 700 people a year coming to saving faith in him. I can see a day when the thousands of kids and students from this church go forth into the world and radically impact their generation for Jesus. I can see a day when not only do we complete our village to rescue girls from sex trafficking, but that village becomes the launches pad for villages all throughout the South Pacific, and thousands upon thousands of girls are rescued. I can see a day when every widow and aids orphan in Chikudzlire is well fed and cared for by the people of this church. But whatever I can see, I know God has much bigger plans for us. Much has been done in the kingdom through this place, but I believe the best is yet to come for Mission Community Church.

In closing out our last service in this facility, will you please pray with me thanking God for all he's already done through this church, and praying for his favor in the years ahead.