Pastor Thom asked me to “Just tell them why we built the church.” All I could think was: Because I once was lost, but now am found.

* I didn’t grow up in the church, and 20 years ago I was the mission that somebody else went out into the darkness to find.
* it was the love that was palpable in the family of God that drew me first, before I ever really encountered Christ himself
* it was wild, like nothing I’d ever felt before
* took me a few years before I realized there was also nothing quite like the pain of division and disunity, the breaking apart of brothers and sisters in Christ, either
* there is power in the family of God
* there is power in the unity of the saints / just as there is power in the blood

And that’s what every inch of this (simple, rough around the edges, cracks in the floor but we still think it’s all pretty cool) building is all about.

Because everybody **in** this place, and everybody **around** this place, and everybody **who drives by** this place has a story. Has a story that they are right in the middle of, and the God of the Universe is pouring himself out, over and over again, in every attempt imaginable to grab hold of their hearts, and draw them – full body, soul and spirit – into the Kingdom of his Wonderful Son. (Col. 1:13)

So we built a box,

* so we could have a place to meet, and worship, and train, and launch from
* so we could stop putting obstacles in people’s way, as they tried to find and follow after God
  + (it was getting nuts, how difficult our rental facilities were becoming, for facilitating ministry)
* so the community would know that there is still a place where they can go and look for **answers**, and **light**, and **help**, to know that the people of God are still here in the world, and that the Father himself is still in the business of miracles. Of redemption. And hope.

And we asked for God to give it *just enough* character, and features, and fun oomph that the people outside of the faith, would notice, and be intrigued, and drawn in, and comfortable, hanging out here.

* and God indeed is the only one who could have provided:
  + McDonald’s Playland
  + Indoor/Outdoor Fireplace
  + Stucco Swoop Design
  + A wall of glass looking out onto a beautiful parkland
  + Metal art fancy pancy coffee bar
  + Theatre lighting from the Shaw Festival

None of that was in our plan. We were building the cheapest, plainest box imaginable – we just needed a base, to send ministry out of. But as unexpected gift after gift, after donation, after donation kept coming in, all we could say was WOW, thank you God. And to trust that **he** had a reason for putting it here.

Now, lest you think it’s all been a perfectly smooth happy journey, I am pleased to let you know that the warfare around this building and our church as a whole has been – continues to be – thick and intense.

The cost – both financial and mental – of becoming homeowners has been a tricky leap for us to make.

And that whole crazy campaign that our church pledged to (that ended up 3 times what the experts predicted) is certainly not over by any means. There’s still a whole lot of faith-walking that has to be done, if we’re going to actually **keep** this building. (some of you are probably sizing it up for drapes already, I can tell… stay tuned, your chance may come sooner than you think ☺)

But everything **we** **have** seen and experienced in this crazy adventure so far, gives us great hope and faith and trust in all that we still *cannot* see (such as how to pay the bills, or keep staffing our teams). And so we choose to hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for we know he who promised is faithful. (Heb. 10:23)

So… we’ve decided we’re just going to keep getting on with the mission.

Because… somewhere *just outside* these walls right now:

* a family is shattering into pieces
* a marriage is being decimated by adultery
* there’s a teenager wrapping a rope round his neck, getting ready to end it all
* a young girl is getting hooked on heroin
* a child is being beaten and abused
* a baby is being murdered in the womb
* a 12-year-old is being sold into the sex trade
* some religious person is out there calling themselves a Christian, and telling people if they just try hard enough, and work long enough, and “be” good enough they can make themselves “right” with God and the world.

We know that, because **those are the stories** of us inside the walls too.

The thief comes only to steal, to kill and to destroy. And it feels like he is working overtime these days. BUT… **Jesus** said “**I have come** that they might have LIFE, and have it to the full.” The Father has a plan to rescue and redeem every last ounce of brokenness and pain. A plan to utterly BLIND the darkness with his LIGHT.

The pathway is Jesus. But the plan is you. And me. And New Hope. And your church. And your neighbour, who’s meant to be a part of your church.

So… if I recall correctly… that’s why we built this building ☺ And God-willing, that’s what’s going to happen here.

So tonight we want like to dedicate it, and everything that goes on inside and everything that’s going to flow out from it, to the Father.

Mandy Kasper