

## **Mark Henderson's Announcement on 1/28/07**

Sometimes, when you have the family together, you need to take advantage of that opportunity to deal with some family business, and our elders would like to do that this morning. If you are a guest here, we are so glad that you were with us today, and we don't feel a need to kick you out, but we want you to feel very free to leave and go about your day while we stay for a few more minutes.

Communication is a wonderful thing—when it happens. But clear communication is difficult. We know that from living in our marriages and families, and communication becomes even more difficult when in this one-way setting between 800 of you and me. You have what I said and what I thought I was saying or meant to say. You have what you heard and what you thought you heard and what you didn't hear because what you thought you heard made you quit listening for a minute. Then, you have all the noise and distractions that can affect communication. Maybe it's a miracle that we ever do it well.

This morning, I want to go back to the end of the Tearing Down Walls sermon on January 7 because, for some at least, there was clearly some miscommunication. The last fill-in-the-blank item on that outline was "Embrace Discomfort for the Sake of the Mission." Under that heading, I said the following:

I am asking you to embrace discomfort, to say, "I am willing and eager to be uncomfortable" if that is what it takes to tear down some walls that are keeping people from God.

In Andy Stanley's lesson that I mentioned earlier, he talked about their struggle through the years to deal with comfort zone issues at Northpoint, and he said something that challenged me and convicted me.

He said, "We made a fundamental decision early on that we would be more committed to reaching people than to keeping people. And when we come to these decision points, it isn't about keeping anyone; it's about reaching someone."

I have been in Churches of Christ for more than 20 years now, and I have been in good churches. I have been very, very blessed. I have been with people who want to love God. If your experience is different from mine, then you can just let this slide.

In my experience, the church has talked a lot about reaching people, but when push comes to shove, at crucial decision points, we have always been about keeping people. And when we do that, the mission of God takes a back seat to the comfort of our members.

I'm asking you to break that cycle. I'm asking you to embrace discomfort for the sake of the mission. If the leadership here follows through on this commitment to remove barriers, let me tell you what to expect in 2007:

This is not going to be a comfortable year, but it is going to be an exciting year. It is going to be the beginning of a great adventure because when a local church gets serious about being on mission, God shows up, and he does what only God can do.

Now, some people heard me saying, "There are going to be some changes here, and if you don't like them, you can leave." That is unfortunate because that is the opposite of what I was trying to say. I was trying to say, "If you don't like something, stay. Work through your issues. Embrace your discomfort, and let's work together for the sake of the mission." In almost 16 years of preaching, I have never said, "If you don't like it, leave." That is not my intent, and after seven plus years with me here, I hope you know that is not my heart. If you ever hear me saying that, you can be sure that we have not communicated well, and my email and my phone line and my door are always open to give us a chance to take another run at it in the hopes that we can communicate well. I don't want anyone to leave. On the contrary, I'm trying to think about developing strategies and creating environments that not only will help us reach some people we are currently missing but will also provide more opportunities for more of our people to stay.

I'm going to go off line here for a moment. I'm talking about an orientation and what drives the agenda for the church because if you let "keeping people happy" and "keep them here" set the agenda, not only do you not reach people that you would like to reach, but you are unsuccessful in what you are trying to do. We are so diverse. We have so many differences. What ends up happening is you only keep people who are comfortable and satisfied because institutional maintenance is not a compelling vision for the church. If you decide that you are going to be about the business of reaching people, not only will you reach some people that you are missing, but you can keep every body who wants to be part of the mission of God as well. Now let me get back on message. That was kind of on message. It just wasn't in the notes.

When you take offense at something I say, I hope you will give me the opportunity to try to work through it with you, but I have to tell you that is not the normal way people tend to function in churches. My memory may be faulty, but in almost 16 years of preaching, I can only remember one time when one of my church members called and made an appointment to see me, and they basically said, “We were upset by what you said, and we wanted to make sure that we had understood you before we let it go any further.” We had a wonderful, healthy, productive conversation. We improved our understanding of what I had said, and our relationship grew because they took the risk to come talk to me, rather than talking to someone else about me. Maybe there will be opportunities for more of those conversations as we move forward.

I want to say just one more thing before I turn things over to Lynn Brooks. In my opinion, one of the easiest things to do in church leadership is to be an elder in a congregation that is just trying to rock along in the status quo. It doesn't require a whole lot of energy, and it doesn't require any imagination or courage. One of the most difficult tasks of church leadership is to serve as an elder when you believe God is calling you to make some changes for the sake of his mission. These men aren't perfect any more than you or I are perfect, but they are choosing the road less traveled because they are trying to listen to God. As you communicate your wants and needs and likes and dislikes to them, I want to urge you to do so with gentleness and respect. They aren't just a bunch of guys with the title “elder” tacked on their names. They are your brothers in the Lord and your fellow travelers in the way of Jesus Christ. It is utterly impossible for them to carry out their tasks in a way that will satisfy everyone, so I would urge you to release them from that expectation and pray that God will give them the wisdom and courage to lead us in his ways, for his glory, and for the sake of his kingdom.

### **The Shepherds' Statement on 1/28/07**

It is a great privilege and blessing for us to serve as your shepherds. The past couple of years have been especially fulfilling as we completed a Free to Dream campaign and kept riding that momentum with the development of new ministries and expansion of existing ministries. We have many reasons to celebrate, far too many to enumerate at this time. We have also enjoyed a sustained period of peace. It is tempting to make peace our primary focus or to make change our primary focus, neither of which is the mission of God.

As your shepherds, we believe that God never calls His people to focus on their own comfort. When He gives us times of peace and rest, we believe He wants us to enjoy them, but He also wants us to use those times to be refreshed and energized for whatever may lie ahead as we follow His leadership. You are aware from recent sermons that we are considering some changes so that this congregation can do a better job of carrying out God's will for us.

In the past couple of weeks, we have received many comments, either on the forms we passed out or through email. We want sincerely to thank each of you who have written to us. Your words were read and are being carefully considered. It has become apparent from the forms and emails the elders have received that we have done a very poor job of communicating with you in the past few months. With that said, as elders, we want to repent and ask your forgiveness for that lack of communication. It is very difficult in the process of looking at potential changes to determine what to say and what not to say, when no decision has been made. We have been meeting for several months and praying earnestly for the Lord's guidance as we look to the future. We are in the process of examining ourselves and the family of God here at Quail as we consider what is next. We want to make it clear that we believe the concept of tearing down walls and removing barriers is one that is Spirit-led and comes from both elders and staff after much study, prayer, fasting and discussion.

Based on some of the information we have been receiving, we have determined that there is much false information being discussed within some of the membership. We want to try to dispel some of the rumors that are currently making the rounds. As your elders, we love each of you and we do not want to see anyone leave over any changes or potential changes that may be made in coming weeks. You have heard Mark's explanation of words from his recent sermon that were taken in ways neither he nor we ever intended. Every member is important to God and to this eldership.

There are rumors that we intend to change the name and drop “Church of Christ” from our name. While we have received some input requesting that we change the name, at this moment we have no burning desire to consider such a change. We started using a new logo some time back, and showed renderings of its use on our sign out front. Some have wondered what happened to the sign change. As we looked at changing the sign we found that our sign was too large and was not in compliance with city ordinances. Thus, any changes would require a variance costing time and potentially expensive legal fees. You have probably seen the new sign next door at Quail Springs Baptist. It is our understanding that it took 33 months and some significant attorney’s fees to get their variance.

We are still pursuing a sign change---not a name change---and hope we can use the fact that our neighbors have a variance to shorten the time required to get one for our sign.

There are rumors that we are planning significant changes to our Sunday morning worship. Indeed we have been meeting for some months to discuss a proposal to ADD an instrumental worship service at Quail. BUT---let me be very clear --- we have no plans to do away with our a cappella worship on Sunday mornings. In our deliberations, if we determine that God is leading us to do something different, it would be done as an ADDITIONAL service, not a replacement of our existing Sunday morning service.

We have been accused of having a hidden agenda, when nothing could be further from the truth. Although we have not done a good job recently, we sincerely believe that direct communication and transparency promote good congregational health. Discussions are in progress on multiple fronts but no decisions have been made and so there’s very little that we can communicate at this time. The elders are not driven by any hidden agenda. Our only agenda is simply to follow where God leads.

We sincerely believe that God is UP TO SOMETHING in this church. We know when that is on the horizon, the enemy heightens his efforts among us, using rumors, gossip, accusations and falsehoods to bring about a sense of fear and to create confusion and discord within our ranks. We ask you to be patient with each other. Those of you who hunger for a particular change, please be patient with your brothers and sisters who have a different view. Those of you who question the wisdom of this or that change, please be patient with your brothers and sisters who long for just such a change. We stand before you feeling an awesome weight on

our shoulders to align this congregation with God's plans. We plead for your patience and prayers, both for us and for each other.

We are not indifferent to your concerns, fears, and pain. We too are struggling with our own concerns, fears, and pain. We want you to come to any of us with any comments or questions you may have. Hear me clearly ---- WE DO NOT WANT ANYONE TO LEAVE THIS CHURCH. We want brotherly love. We want a tolerance for each others' differences. We want a heart for those who don't know the Lord. We want Quail to become a missional church that reaches out to the community around us and to the larger world community. When we look out across this large audience, the words of a song that I have not heard in many years come to mind and express our heart for you:

We love you with the love of the Lord,  
 we love you with the love of the Lord,  
 We see in you the glory of our King,  
 and we love you with the love of the Lord.

Please pray for us as your shepherds as we continue our deliberations. While we do not want to hurt or offend anyone, please realize that our ultimate accountability is to God. We call on each one of you to join us in this journey. We continue to welcome your letters, emails, visits, and so on. As we follow God's lead and make changes, we hope you will be pleased to be a part of an exciting congregation bent on doing nothing but what will bring God's pleasure.

Let me close with God's Word to each of us this morning. Please listen carefully to God's admonition to me and to each of you.

Philippians 2 starting in verse 1:

*If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose; do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others.*