

Whosoever Wills May Come...

1. Back in 2020, we had two soft launch Sundays, the 22nd and 29th of November. On December 6th, we had our official launch. It would be good to see what God has done in just a year.
2. You saw from the videos shown already that we have reached a young woman in Paraguay who is now helping us reach countries that were closed to us due to language barriers.
3. You saw a retired missionary who was searching for a church and found one here. You saw my friend, Ben, who serves a church in Louisiana tell of the impact OSHC has made on his life. And you saw Kim as she serves the poor in Northeast Ohio.
4. You saw Mark Beros, a minister in a tiny town in Ohio, who takes the time to text me almost every week; just a few words of encouragement and appreciation for what we are doing.
5. More than two dozen ministers whose name you will not hear today have reached out over the last year and thanked OSHC for saying the things they cannot say, or for helping them say what needed to be said. And more than a few have reached out and said they have walked away from the old ties that bound them and are now experiencing freedom in Christ.
6. You heard from Adam whose family has special vulnerabilities to the virus and who wanted to worship, but they also wanted to be safe. They wanted to be understood. They found that here.
7. We are not alone on this journey. And we were not the first ones on this road. The last words of Jesus in the NT are found in Revelation 22:16-17. Whosoever will may come. The barriers have been broken down and the welcome mat is now out for everyone. Everyone.
8. Look at the Gospels again. Really LOOK at them and see what consistent themes run through them. Love over law. Jesus breaking every single barrier down: class, gender, religion, level of sinfulness. Again and again and again, he accepted who the religious world would not. He sought the ones everyone else worked hard to avoid.

9. From “let the little children come to me”, to healing a man in the middle of a service, to telling a sex worker that she was forgiven, to walking through a desert to find the Samaritan woman and give her hope, Jesus broke barriers and tore down walls.
10. No wonder “the common people heard him gladly.” (Mark 12:37) Before we began OSHC, my dear friend, Devin Pickard, founded Hope Church in Centerville, TN. It is a church for those who were not welcome or comfortable in other churches, a church for those who just wanted to get closer to Jesus. Devin has been an enthusiastic supporter of our work here and continues to be one of our favorite people. Regardless of the pain he has suffered and the attacks on him and his family, the thing I think of when I think of Devin is his smile. You can tell he has been with Jesus. **(Devin Pickard greeting)**
11. There were others who searched for a church but couldn’t find one that just stayed away from all the detritus out there but, rather, talked about Jesus and how to love each other. A young couple in Cape Girardeau, Missouri found us and we have blessed each other since then. **(Summerlot video)**
12. We started in a dark time. Some of the people in this room rushed to Kami and me and held up our arms through the first months of this battle. When we were summarily and suddenly fired, we walked around stunned and our brains weren’t functioning very well. One thing I knew, I had to reach out to churches that had invited me to speak and tell them what had happened and offer to withdraw from the event so they would not be slandered or made to feel uncomfortable.
13. Not a one of them canceled. Not one. The first to say that they loved us and would never turn their backs on us were our friends, the Brackneys, who work with the church in Arlington, a neighborhood in Knoxville, TN. Mark has since become a vital part of our work and he stands ready to preach for me or do anything else he can for Jesus and us. And when distant teenagers asked to be baptized, he opened his church’s building for us. **(Mark Brackney video)**

14. Barriers of time and space have evaporated. During lunch today, you will see videos from our friends all over the place. How did this happen? God did it. Early on, I got a lot of emails asking me what barriers I would put in place. Would there be elders? Would there be insistence on this or that doctrine? Would the LGBTQ+ community be allowed to be members? What would we say about the national division between Democrats and Republicans? How would we line up and who would we exclude.
15. I answered every single email. Some didn't like the answer. I referred to the parable of the dragnet in Matthew 13. Fish weren't asked to form committees. So we wouldn't. All we would do is be the heart, pumping Jesus out wherever our message went. We would NOT be the brain: what you do with Jesus is between you and him.
16. Some wanted us to build a building but we said no. We are not opposed to buildings and if one was given to us, we would probably accept it. However, as our brother Tommy Holland posted recently, "I grew up thinking a church needed a building to be effective. Then I read my Bible."
17. **SLIDE – where did the church meet.**
18. Stepping away from the idea of the church as a building and, instead, deciding that this church would be the heart just pumping Jesus out and nothing else resonated with man. One last video until we watch them all during lunch. This one from a young minister in Oak Ridge, TN who has been a kind, supportive voice for our work since the beginning. What he likes is that we do not preach the news; we preach Jesus. **(Levi Dodd video)**
19. Gathered here in this room are many who held up our arms as the battle raged...and who are still there doing so today behind the curtains. Some of them have appeared on this stage but most of them asked to stay behind the curtains so they could just serve.
20. In Acts 9:25, some people saved Paul early in his ministry by lowering him over the wall in Damascus in a basket. We will never know their names but, without them, nearly half of our NT would be missing. You cannot imagine the numbers of those out there who

quietly and often anonymously hold the ropes and guide us forward.
May God bless them as He has blessed OSHC.

21. All we really want is to change the focus from whatever else is out there to Jesus. Thank you for helping us do that.