

# A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

June 4, 2020

My dear Friends:

I recently saw someone say on social media, “Each day feels like a week; each week feels like a year.” And it does, doesn’t it? Since our missions conference (just a little over three months ago), we have endured ten weeks apart because of a global pandemic and deep national and even global unrest as a result of the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd. Like many of you, I’ve been horrified by the deaths, outraged at the justice delayed, sympathetic to the protests and grateful that the protests in Memphis have been generally peaceful, frightened by the looting in other cities by those who infiltrated the protests, worried about how this will further the spread of the coronavirus, and exhausted by it all.

And everything feels strange. We are wearing masks and trying to maintain physical distance, even as we resume relatively normal activities. Almost 400 of us came to IPC this past Sunday, but we realized how many we were still longing to see and hear in God’s house. We sang this past Sunday—with our masks on (and wow, that was a little awkward). We had a wonderful parade for our children’s ministry last night—but y’all stayed in your cars as we greeted you.

I think a big part of life in this world involves naming reality—and the reality is that a) none of us saw any of this coming and b) it is hard for us to see how any of this is good. But I do think there is some good: it is good that people are wrestling with the way our African American brothers and sisters experience our legal and policing system differently that many of us do; it is good that we are engaged in a larger conversation about justice and peace, because those are Bible words and Christians have something to say about them; it is good to realize how much we miss worship in-person as a corporate body gathered around Word and sacrament; and it is good to sing and see and talk and laugh.

Some of these goods are larger things and some smaller. And yet these are all gifts, simple gifts, good gifts, that ultimately come from our good God. There’s an old Shaker song that has found a place in the American songbook; it tells us just this:

*’Tis the gift to be simple, ’tis the gift to be free  
’Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be  
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,  
’Twill be in the valley of love and delight.*

The valley of love and delight—that’s the place for which our hearts long. This world won’t be that place until Jesus returns: he’s the one that has made it possible to make our way back to Eden, which now is a holy city and which will come from heaven to earth in the last day. Until then, we live in the midst of these strange days, asking God to continue to give us good gifts in the midst of so much that seems wrong. He can do this because he is almighty God; he delights to do so because he is our loving Father.

In the grip of God’s grace,

