

A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

June 25, 2020

My dear Friends:

Greetings from the mountains of North Carolina! I don't usually write to you while I'm on vacation, but I need to do so today. Last Thursday, our women's ministry sent out an email with a link to a piece that was inappropriate in two ways.

First, the piece was inappropriate because it served to undercut the consistent message that our session has had over the past several years about racial reconciliation and justice. As we noted in the follow-up email that we sent to the women's ministry list, the session's official position on racial reconciliation and justice is represented in two documents that we adopted: the 2004 PCA Pastoral Letter on the Gospel and Race and the 2018 PCA Paper on Racial and Ethnic Reconciliation. By suggesting in the piece that "all lives matter," when in this cultural moment we need to be saying that especially the lives of our black brothers and sisters matter, are valued, and needed, we unwittingly negate the very people for whom we are called to love and undercut the repentant work we've been trying to do.

Second, the piece was inappropriate because it linked all of this to the death of our friend, Glenn Cofield. As someone who has loved and lost many from the congregations that I have served, I know that it is never appropriate to bring those deaths up publicly after the funeral is over. It only serves to re-traumatize the family—something that we would never wittingly wish to do to the Cofields. We profoundly regret that we have done this by sending a link to this piece through an official IPC mailing list.

For both of these failures, I take personal responsibility as your senior pastor. I failed to ensure that the policies which we already have on the books were followed and enforced. As a result of my failure, many of you were offended or left wondering; in addition, the Cofield family was wounded. For all of this, I ask for your forgiveness. I pledge to work so that this does not happen again as long as my ministry here lasts.

Please know that we will continue to beg God for his grace that we might become new people who pursue a new Memphis—one in which people in all of their particularity are loved as part of the "one new humanity" that Jesus is forming by the blood of his cross (Eph 2:13-18).

In the grip of God's grace,

