

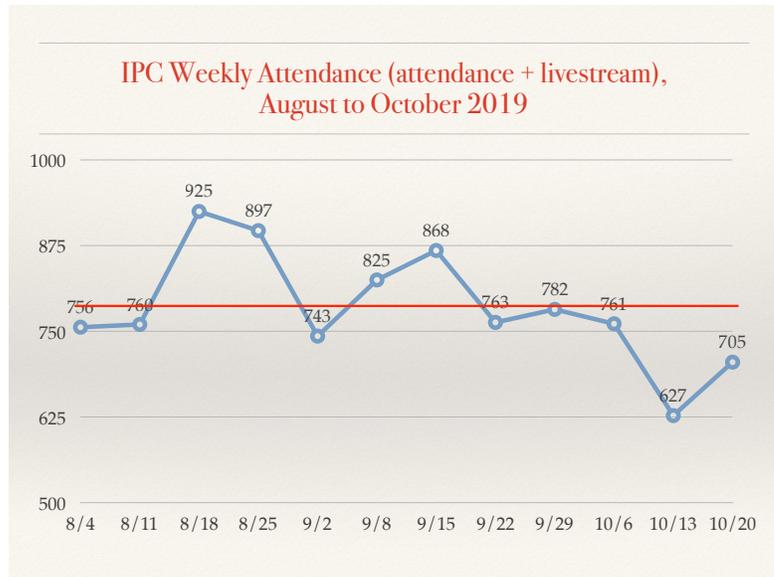
# A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

October 25, 2019

My dear Friends:

Something has been on my heart and mind that I wanted to share with you. And it has everything to do with this chart that is embedded in my letter today.

You may not be able to read it well, so let me describe it. The chart provides for you the weekly attendance—physical attendance plus our first 24-hour livestream attendance—since the beginning of August. You will notice a couple of things. First, the red line across the chart—that represents the weekly average thus far this fall: 784. Second, you'll notice that for eight of the twelve weeks, our attendance is actually below the weekly average. Two Sundays especially—August 18 (officer election) and August 25 (officer installation)—have thrown the average a bit. Third, something not represented on the slide, you need to know our average livestream attendance is between 80-120. So, take away around 100 each week to get the real number of who is actually in the sanctuary—on average about 680 or so.



Now, listen: I've done ministry and ministry in the South long enough to know there are three seasons—football season, hunting season, and beach season. And I know there are providential reasons why we are unable to attend worship services (although I wonder if we help providence along by scheduling ourselves out of town on a regular basis!). So, I get all of that.

But I want to express concern about our attendance pattern—and raise three issues connected to it. First, a lack of attendance on the ordinary means of grace in corporate worship actually puts you in spiritual danger. It was striking the other Sunday when we recited the Shorter Catechism to hear us confess: “To escape the wrath and curse of God, due to us for sin, God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption” (Q85). In other words, if you want to escape God's wrath and curse, if you want to strengthen your faith and

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grow in your repentance, that actually happens as you use the means of grace—the ministry of the Word, sacraments, and prayer. And that happens on Sunday in corporate worship. That means if you aren't here, then you aren't using those means; you aren't strengthened in faith and repentance; and potentially you are in a place of spiritual danger.

Second, and along this line, your pastors worry about you when you aren't here. As we've been looking at Christian assurance in 1 John, we've seen over and over again the danger that this world-system represents to us. We are embedded in it five or six days a week. How do we keep our bearings in a system that prizes the lust of the eyes and the flesh along with the pride of life? We remember Jesus, we remember his way, we remember we are different, we remember we have the Spirit. And how are we reminded of these things? Again, through corporate worship. When you aren't here, we worry about your spiritual condition.

But third, think of it this way. Imagine your mom or your grandma was a hard-working cook. Every Sunday, she prepared a feast as best she could for you—the very best meal she could offer you: the best meat, the best bread, the best drink. And every Sunday, she decorated the table and tried to make everything comfortable. And imagine that you woke up on Sunday and texted her, “Hey, Mom, sorry—I'm really tired. Not going to be able to come home for Sunday dinner; I'll grab some Taco Bell.” Or “Hey, Grandma, sorry—I'm at the football weekend or beach or hunting or whatever it is. I know you've worked really hard on this meal—why don't you put it in the fridge and I'll pick it up when I can.” Every week, our staff works really hard to prepare a feast—the very best spiritual meal that we can provide with the very best setting. We would love for more of you to take advantage of this meal that will strengthen your soul.

So, let me exhort you to re-engage with the life of the church over the coming weeks. As we head into the end of the year, it is always a great time to come back home, to hear God's Word, to participate in the various offerings that IPC has. But even more, what you find here is spiritual food for your journey that will strengthen your faith, hope, and love in Jesus Christ.

In the grip of God's grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.