

A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

May 31, 2018

My dear Friends:

What a great week at Camp Palmer! Aside from the rain—generated by a sub-tropical storm (!)—which left us all a bit soggy, the 50th iteration of this unique partnership between IPC and Palmer Home for Children was tremendous. And it is unique—in my knowledge of our denomination, there are very few churches that do church camps any more. And then, when you add in our partnership with Palmer Home and the gift it is both to the children and to the house parents who have a week off from care, it is a distinctive ministry that we have.

Saturday night and Sunday morning were especially sweet. On Saturday night, we watched a video that had pictures from fifty years of camp. While some of the pictures went back to the early 1970s, many of the pictures extended across the range of years. We are trying to figure out how to make this video available for you to view—I think you would enjoy it. We also recognized founding leaders like Ruth Francis and John and Kaki Crews and camp directors through the years like Robert Farris, Scott Walker, Grace Thompson, and others. We thanked Phil and Marsha Hurt, the owners of Camp DeSoto and former staff at IPC, for their partnership through the years. And there was a very special recognition (and surprise) for Lisa Turner, who has been the key leader of this ministry over the years.

Sunday morning's worship was really tremendous. God's Spirit seemed to be present in a tangible way as he used his Word in our praying and singing, reading, preaching, and hearing. When the students stretched their hands at the end of the service to receive the Lord's blessing, it was all I could do not to start crying (actually, I started to crack a little bit...).

Two observations that I want to share with you. One was how much our people invest in this ministry. While we have ministry staff heavily involved, there are also so many volunteers who give their Memorial Day weekend to love students in Jesus's name. And these volunteers are not only those who have children attending, but also those whose students are long graduated. Yet these folks were present, engaged, giving and serving so that these young people might hear the Gospel and know the love of Jesus. It was a wonderful example of what Jesus would have us do—"I came not to be served, but to serve."

The other observation was the generational nature of Camp Palmer. I was so proud of Kelly Turner and Mary Henley Green, who were the main "face" for the camp leadership; here are covenant kids who are now gifted and passionate adults who were giving of themselves to the next generation of students. Rankin and Elizabeth Fowlkes were offering leadership, but so was their son Tom, who was in a cabin with students. And more names that I could mention. But it strikes me that this is at the heart of what we talk about when we say that we are a "covenant community." It means that there is a generational reality in the life of our church that is beautiful—and I saw it this week at camp.

It was a tremendous week. Thank you for praying for Camp Palmer. Pray that the Lord will bless this ministry for many years to come. Who knows? Maybe many of us will be around to celebrate the 75th anniversary of this unique partnership that God has allowed us to have!

In the grip of God's grace,



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