
Grace & Peace

Indian River Presbyterian Church

June 25, 2006

A letter from your pastor, Mike Malone...

Dear Friends:

It has been several weeks since I wrote you last and I wanted to take a minute to say thank you for your prayers for us as we have continued to prepare for our move to Vero Beach. I am especially grateful to be able to tell you that we have closed on a home in Vero Beach and our house in Orlando is actively on the market now. If all goes according to plan (still preliminary, at this point) we would hope to move to Vero the second week in August and get settled by September 1st. Again, Barb, the girls and I want to thank you for your prayers and for your patience as we make our way through this transition. I mentioned to one of our members that, more and more, my heart is in Vero Beach. His response was "Yes, but your feet are still in Orlando!"

I want to add my hearty welcome to Marcy, John and Janet, and Brad and Renee. It was a privilege and a joy to be with you as you were received into the membership of IRPC. You are in my prayers and I look forward to many years of fruitful service alongside you, in the Kingdom, and for the King. Please know that my encouragement to you is sincere. As your pastor my heart's desire is to do all that I can to shepherd you. Christ loves you more than you know and because of His love he has given you to us, the elders of this church, so that you might be cared for. But please remember my other admonition: pray for us. I am weak and so are the elders. We need the same grace that you need in order to care for you well. So, be faithful in your prayers for us, as we seek to be faithful in shepherding you.

I want to thank Dr. Don Kistler for his faithful ministry these last months. He has served you well during this interim time. You know this and have expressed your appreciation to him. I want to acknowledge his service, as well. And I hope that Don and Beverley will be with us frequently. You have a home here, Kistlers. And we trust you will visit often.

Over the last year and a half I have come to know the congregation of Indian River Presbyterian Church more personally. Often, as people get to know each other, we become more aware of one another's faults and failings, but this has not been my experience with you. Instead I have seen many of your Christ like qualities which only increases my excitement to work together with you in his kingdom. I see among you a genuine love for one another and a strong desire to care for each other. I can't begin to tell you how attractive that is. Our world is increasingly impersonal, fragmented and transient. People live lonely lives. They are desperate for a place that is safe; for a 'home'. IRPC is that kind of place and, as a newcomer, I want you to know that about yourselves. I want to encourage this among us. How we live together is as important as what we believe. Francis Schaeffer, one of the important people in my life, used to speak of two orthodoxies: the orthodoxy of doctrine (truth), **and** the orthodoxy of community (life together). Both speak. Both must be present if the gospel is to be meaningful in our day, and they must be kept together as partners in the work of ministry. There will be many people who, in God's providence, will come our way and who will need to 'belong' in order to 'believe'. They will first find us to be a community of compassion and love and, because of that experience, will be led to the One who is the author of that community. There will be others whose leading edge will be the need to believe, to have questions answered and truth explained. They will 'believe' in order to 'belong'. It will work both ways and to receive both kinds of people we will want to be a church with deep convictions about truth and depth of compassion as a community. I know your commitment to truth. But, again, it has been a very attractive thing to see such tender compassion exhibited among you.

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I also want you to know that I am attracted to what I would call your faithful, prayerful perseverance. For many of you, the desire to see a strong, thriving church in the county is more than twenty years old. You have prayed. You have persevered. Over the last year, and more, you have remained faithful to this vision. Your desire to see this church thrive is very exciting to me, but I want you to know that I am more drawn to your character than to your vision. 'Vision' is a word that is hollow apart from character...spiritual character. Time has refined you, shaped you, tested you, and produced this character in you. I am anxious to be among you so that some of what you are will rub off on me.

It was so very encouraging to be with you for the congregational meeting. The support you demonstrated for our building proposal challenges my faith. I do believe this is the right thing for us to be pursuing and I want to ask you to continue to pray that we will be able to meet this challenge. But what I am most encouraged by is your thoughtful, willing support of your leadership. That means so much. Judges 5 is a song celebrating the victory of Deborah and Barak over Sisera. The first verse of that song says, in effect, that when leaders lead and the people offer themselves in service, God is praised. We are seeking to lead, not in a heavy handed, dictatorial manner, but humbly and boldly, as those whom God has called to this task. You are seeking to follow, not mindlessly or carelessly, but thoughtfully and prayerfully, as those whom God has prepared to serve in His kingdom. When leaders lead and the people offer themselves, God is praised!! I trust that we will see much evidence of God's blessing as we move forward together.

One last thing: I want to give you a bit of a feel for the preaching schedule between now and September 1. This is tentative, given the lack of certainty I have regarding our move. I will be preaching July 2, 9, 30 and August 6. As my schedule becomes clearer I will let you know about the rest of the summer.

Again, I want to thank you for your prayers. Since I last wrote you, I have been to Africa, moved my daughter from Nashville to Atlanta, lifted more boxes than I can count, painted a garage, etc., etc.!!!! So your prayers are much appreciated. Know that you are in our prayers and we look forward to many, many years of work together in the Lord's kingdom.

Blessings,

For the King and Kingdom,

Mike