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New MVPC Senior Pastor Has Saint Mary's Ties

By Michael Sakoda



Rob Perkins Photo provided

Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church held the installation service Sept. 15 for Reverend Dr. Rob Perkins, the church's first new senior pastor in 31 years. But this bucolic town is not new to Perkins.

His wife, Mitali - a star in her own right and the author of multiple young-adult books - has been a lecturer at Saint Mary's College for two years. "She came from a Hindu family, became a Christian in college, and she writes about crossing cultures, and she speaks at schools and libraries ... is quite in demand ... definitely my better half," said Perkins. And his sons, Tim and Jim, attend Saint Mary's College.

Perkins met his wife during his senior year at Stanford. "I was teaching a bible study in the dorm where she was the RA," he said. "We were friends for about a year, and we dated for about a year, then we were engaged for about a year, and then we were married."

Perkins attended Stanford University as an undergraduate with a plan to enter the medical field, but always with a greater purpose in mind. "By the time I finished high school, my goals were more about being a missionary than a pastor," he said. "I saw myself overseas working as a missionary doctor. I was pre-med, but by the time I finished school, I thought, 'I don't want to be in school for another seven years,'" and luckily, for the congregation at MVPC, he didn't.

Born and raised in Southern California, from the beginning the church was part of Perkins' life.

"I had a very devout mother. From my earliest memory she was praying with me and talking about the bible," said Perkins. "I grew up nurtured in that faith, and I thought, when I was in middle school that I would be a

pastor someday."

Outside of the scripture, however, Perkins was drawn at a young age to a more fundamental understanding of God. "I had a really great church leader growing up... and I saw real authentic faith in him, not just religion, but an actual relationship with God, and I wanted that," he said.

Though new, Perkins is already ecstatic about the work his congregation is doing in the community. "This church is unique," he said. "It has about a thousand members, but it has a much bigger impact than you would think. Both high schools use our church for things, ... we have a nursery school with about 150 members, ... a lot of people who don't come to church on Sundays consider this place their church."

Beyond Lamorinda, the efforts MVPC makes around the world remind Perkins of his missionary passion. "Serving others and being involved in missions beyond our doors is a big priority here. We have missionaries in Richmond and Oakland, missionaries in Serbia and the Dominican Republic, and every year we have over 200 high school students go to Mexico with our church and build homes there," he said.

Perkins' hope for the established and potential parishioners at MVPC lies in an almost holistic understanding of God. "Pascal the philosopher said that every person has a God-shaped vacuum inside them, and they try to fill it with money, with sex, with power, with advancement, with family, but ultimately, those things will let us down; there's a lot of emptiness in their lives if they don't know God," he said. "I believe we can offer the one thing that can meet that need ... not that I want to force it on anybody ... but I feel we can offer people a way to find who they're supposed to be."

On Fridays, Perkins' off day, he likes to spend time with his wife, hiking and enjoying the outdoors. "We lived in the Boston area for about 12 and a half years, and we love being in California again ... getting to be outside without bitter cold winters," said Perkins.

He loves to play golf and he's a sports fan, calling himself "a recovering Red Sox fan trying to get back into sports in the Bay Area."

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