

**THIS IS ONEIDA
FORMER STUDENT BRINGS ENCOURAGEMENT TO OUR CAMPUS**

From time to time, I receive phone calls from former students who ask about coming to speak in chapel and share some of their experiences with our students. I can't say I am always inclined to grant those requests, because I want to be careful about who and what we place in front of our kids.

I did, however, recently receive a call from a former student who asked about doing what I just described. This former student was an Oneida classmate of mine and we played basketball together. We hadn't talked in well over 20 years, but once we began talking it was as if we had been talking every day since graduation.

My friend is now a pastor in Detroit, Michigan. He shared that he had been praying that the Lord would reveal a people and place to him that could use his love and care. He believed OBI and the community of Oneida was that place. As he shared this with me, I also shared with him how the Lord has burdened me for our local community. We began to talk about dates for him to come and minister here. I originally mentioned a fall revival next school year, but my friend felt compelled to get here sooner. We scheduled a date in January and began to pray that the Lord would bless in this effort.

Once the date in January rolled around, a brutal winter storm had hit eastern Kentucky. I called my friend just a few hours before he was scheduled to leave Detroit and head our way. I encouraged him to wait a day before travelling. My friend got here a day later than originally planned, but ultimately led in four worship services. We were greatly blessed by both our speaker and his mother, who traveled with him. His mother is a pastor's wife of 45 years. They did ministering on and off of our campus, and brought great encouragement to both our staff and students.

In one of the services, my friend shared that one of our tutors had been such a great influence in his life and ultimately helped him to graduate on time. This tutor, unbeknownst to my friend, is still serving here as a tutor. When her name was mentioned, she stood in chapel and was thanked by our speaker for the impact she had on his life. When the service ended, my friend put a big, bear hug on this unsung hero who still tutors our kids one at a time.

So many people love and bless Oneida in so many different ways. Your support blessed and enabled my friend to be here many years ago. He is now in the business of blessing so many others, and that is something that should bring you great pride.



**Larry A. Gritton, Jr.
OBI President**

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