

THIS IS ONEIDA THE ONEIDA FAMILY

Many of our choir trips this year have been to places where there are many Oneida connections, but when our choir recently traveled to First Baptist Church of Lawrenceburg in Anderson County, it was like a Gritton family and OBI reunion. The church has two Sunday morning services. I spoke in both services, and the choir joined me for the later service. I traveled to Lawrenceburg on Saturday so I could visit my sister, brother-in-law, and nephew, and the little one-year-old boy who is the most recent addition to our family. My Saturday visit had already been great, but what was to come on Sunday was great, too.

After arriving at the church, I saw one of my aunts and two cousins. I hadn't seen one of those cousins since my grandmother's funeral in 1997. As it came closer to service time, another aunt and uncle and other cousins and their spouses appeared. Some were members of the church, but others had come over for the early service before heading to their own church.

After the service ended, I attended Sunday school with my uncle, who had two sons who graduated from Oneida. During that Sunday school class, a 2001 graduate I had as a student at Oneida poked her head in the door and said hello. After Sunday school, I met her husband and two children, which kind of made me feel old. Before the second worship service, I got to chat with another cousin who served as a teacher at Oneida during the 1980's. I also got to see another aunt and more cousins before the service started.

While preaching, I asked for show of hands from folks who had been on our campus at Oneida. Over half of the people present raised their hands. I consider all of our OBI friends across this state to be family as well. Also in attendance was a couple whose son recently graduated from Oneida. They follow the OBI choir around the state on many of the trips we make. After the service ended, I met many new OBI friends and was pleasantly surprised to see another OBI alumnus who had driven over from Lexington for the service.

After swinging through Lexington to let Angie spend a little money, we returned home. On the drive home, I thought of how great our visit had been in Lawrenceburg. I never cease to be amazed at how many folks have been impacted by God's work at this little place. Once home, I attended our Sunday night worship service with our students. In that service, our senior class thanked our faculty and staff for what they had done for them and for being their family. Oneida is blessed with so many great friends who have past ties to us, and the OBI bond is different than most any I know of.

As I watch our senior class wind down their OBI experience, I wonder when and where I might one day encounter them in the future. Perhaps in one of our state churches, or perhaps I will read about what the Lord is using them to do in some other part of the world. The Oneida family extends across the globe as our students leave us and return to places from afar to hopefully share about the Christ they have met at Oneida.



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