

## **THIS IS ONEIDA BEGINNING WITH WORSHIP**

It has been a long-standing tradition at Oneida that our faculty and staff begin the school year with a day of worship and fellowship. While it is tempting to move right into all of the business and needs of a new school year, we resist that temptation and spend our first day together in this unique way. My last Christian school in Florida was a great school, and did a week and a half of staff meetings before the students arrived. All of those days began with prayer and a brief devotion, but not an actual time of worship.

On August 10 our entire staff gathered at Oneida Baptist Church for an opening worship service. This day is one of my favorites of our year because we are united in God's love and the business, challenges, and burdens of our day-to-day operation are set aside. In this meeting, we heard scripture and had a time of prayer for our students, staff, volunteers, and donors and friends. We worshipped in song and heard powerful testimonies from three staff members, two of which are former students. Our guest speaker for the day was one of our trustees who pastors in Rockcastle County. He brought an excellent word and challenged to our people to serve faithfully by being the 5:00 workers that are mentioned in the parable of the vineyard. I wish I could have bottled up the words, feelings, and unity we experienced this day to utilize all throughout our new year.

After dismissing by joining hands and singing "Blest Be The Tie," we had lunch together in our cafeteria. We then loaded the bus and our cars and headed for Levi Jackson State Park in London. This picnic typically involves miniature golf, swimming, cornhole, board games, cards, music, fellowship, and an evening meal.

For several years running we were having this picnic catered, but this nice treat had become quite expensive since we feed about 175 with our combined staff and their children. So many churches do so many things to bless the Oneida ministry, and Westside Baptist Church in Berea volunteered to provide our evening meal for our picnic. These fine folks went above and beyond to bless our staff and their families. They put on an amazing spread of food and drinks. They provided gospel music entertainment, and they even decorated in a back-to-school theme and allowed our teachers to take home their school-supply-type decorations. These folks simply couldn't do enough for us, and served and encouraged us as we prepared to serve the Lord and our students for another school year.

Please pray for us as we attempt to remain driven, zestful, and worshipful as we seek to meet the needs of many young people this year!



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

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