



ONEIDA MOUNTAINEER

16 Student Baptisms Celebrated in January

On January 31, 2024, students, faculty and staff, and guests gathered at Oneida Baptist Church to witness and celebrate the baptism of 16 young people—nine high schoolers and seven elementary students—who have made decisions to follow Christ.

At the start of 2024, OBI Campus Minister, Dr. David Price, invited students to sign up for this special day. Many students have made professions of faith but have yet to be baptized. He noted, "Some kids don't have a home church, and we didn't want them to miss the opportunity to take their stand."

Dr. Price met with each student to discuss his or her decision. "They gave me a clear declaration of knowing Jesus," he explained during the service. He added, "Baptism is an important step in a believer's life. They are telling two stories: One, that they believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, and two, that Jesus has washed their sins away."

This was a unique chapel service, but Dr. Price pointed out, "Every year we baptize kids." These students have been mostly dorm kids, and the services take place on a Sunday evening. Because of the increased enrollment of our local day students the last couple of years, Dr. Price observed, "We have a different dynamic on our campus. I thought it would be really cool to have them all participate in this."

Four of the middle schoolers are members of the boys' basketball team. The day before the service, Dr. Price asked their coach, Larry Gritton, Jr., if he would like to baptize the boys. "He's ministered to those boys, and I felt like it was a good idea," Price said.

Since the baptism service, many students have expressed interest in their own baptism. After our planned spring revival in March, Dr. Price plans to open up another baptism opportunity. A class for new believers which would meet during the school day is also in the works.



Emma, a 7th grader, was baptized by OBI Campus Minister Dr. David Price at Oneida Baptist Church during the student chapel service.

Students shared about their decision to be baptized

Eighth grade day student **Skyler** accepted Christ a couple of years ago but had not been baptized. He explained, "When I was younger, I was kind of shy. I was scared to go up there. This year, I had the chance and I knew I was ready." He added that it was his "good connection" with Dr. Price and Mr. Gritton that made him sign up for the OBI service. He was happy that his family could attend service. "Everyone came!" he smiled.

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K-5 students during the worship time at the baptism service on January 31st.

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Eighth grader Mason, was one of four middle school boys baptized by their basketball coach, Larry Gritton, Jr.

Ashlyn first wanted to be baptized when she was five years old, though she did not accept Christ until she was 10. Now a sixth grader, she comment-

ed, "The Bible says that if you want to be closer to God to get baptized. I didn't know where I could get baptized until Dr. Price invited us. I thought it was pretty nice." Was she nervous to do this in front of the school? "I was giving my life to the Lord; why would I be scared?" Ashlyn replied.

Emma, a 7th grader, got saved about two years ago but did not attend a church at the time. When the OBI service was announced, she explained, "I just really felt like it was time to get baptized. I wanted to show people that I gave my life to God. I feel like God wants you to get baptized for Him, and He doesn't want the devil to talk you out of it."

John is a first grader and the grandson of Dr. Price. He prayed to accept Jesus and was ready to take the next step. He stated, "I just really wanted to get baptized!"

Continuing to Build



Our next big project is renovating the upper floor of Baker Hall. It has been over 20 years since the former dormitory was converted to classrooms. In 2019, the new high school building, Huang Hall, was completed and the Baker Hall classrooms vacated. Looking at our current enrollment, we project that these rooms will be needed in the next couple of years.

After the normal wear and tear of thousands of students attending classes, it was time for a face lift. An upgrade of lighting fixtures, technology and furniture will bring the space up to the standard of our newer buildings.

Thanks to a grant from the Juanita Koon Foundation, we were able to get started on this project using contract labor. We thank God for providing for OBI's next campus improvement.



Nine middle and high school students made public their decision to follow Christ by being baptized during a special service in January.

Continuing our celebration of OBI's 125th year, enjoy this letter from a student who attended a century ago.

Muhlenberg Hospital
Plainsfield, N.J.
Jan. 3, 1926

Dear Mrs. Russell:

Enclosed under same cover is fifteen dollars - \$15.00 for tuition for my sister Bertha. I hope Bertha likes the dormitory as well as I did and that she will grasp all the opportunities that comes along her way. I would that it were possible for the boys and girls of her age to realize the wonderful opportunity that dear old O.B.I. holds or is giving out to them. It's through coming to Oneida that I met the wonderful friends that gave me the opportunity of coming to Jersey and being what I am today.

The greatest gift that could be given to anyone was given to me when I came to Oneida. I was given the opportunity to know there was a Christ that died to save Martha Barger. If Oneida had given me nothing more that was enough to earn my undying gratitude. It has not been easy for me to leave home and loved ones and come to a place where not one face was familiar, but some how with the Master's hand to lead us we go on undaunted in the darkest days.

Duty calls me so must end this rather abruptly. I could not start the new year without wishing health, happiness, and success to the school and all connected with it. There are many miles of rivers, mountains and etc. between us but not a day passes without my kneeling at the throne of mercy and thanking our Heavenly Father for putting into the heart of one of our mountain people that unknown gift of prayer. Only those who have known Mr. Burns can appreciate his great work.

May this year be the best ever for our School - Sincerely, Martha Barger



OBI's Annual Culture Fair Makes Come Back



After a three year hiatus, the time was right to once again celebrate OBI's diverse student community with Culture Fair, a festive and tasty annual event started at OBI in 2010. This year, over 30 students participated in preparing cuisine from nine different countries and cultures: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Taiwan, Cambodia, Thailand, Korea, China and Appalachia.

Culture Fair on February 3rd was well attended by dorm students, staff, days students and their families. Event organizer Whitney Stratton stated, "I love this event because it brings a small part of their home to OBI. Our students take great pride in where they are from, and it's nice for them to be able to be share their culture with their school community."



OBI Hosts KHSAA 49th District Basketball Tournaments



OBI hosted the girls' and boys' 49th district basketball tournaments February 24-March 1.

OBI Athletic Director Jamie Middleton commented, "It's always a special time when your school gets to host the tournament. You don't have to travel, and you get the home court advantage. It's also a great outreach for our school when people come to campus, interact with our people and get to know us."

The OBI Girls played hard in the first round but were defeated by district champs North Laurel. The OBI Boys advanced to the semi-finals with an opening round win over Red Bird and then lost the next round against Clay County.



An additional 142 parking spots in two new lots on campus greatly improved the event for our guests. We provided a shuttle bus for those who parked in the lot by the new track.

Left: Tip-off OBI Boys v. Red Bird 2.24.24
Right: OBI Girls v. North Laurel 2.26.24

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Alumni Spotlight

Savannah Fallis, Class of 2014, is the Choral Director and Fine Arts Department Chair at McCracken County High School, where she has taught for six years. She serves as the Kentucky Music Educators Association District 1 Choral Chair and was named the district's 2021 High School Music Teacher of the Year. She achieved another career milestone when her Advanced Treble Choir performed at the 2024 KMEA Professional Development Conference in February.



A native of Corbin, Kentucky, Fallis attended OBI as a boarding student starting in the 8th grade. She reflected, "OBI changed my life for the better. It gave me the space to excel academically ... and find my passions." She participated in choir, pep band, piano, art and drama. She sang with the 2014 KMEA All State Choir. "My confidence is so much greater because of the opportunities at Oneida. ... I'm endlessly grateful for my time at OBI and the teachers along the way who impacted my life," she said.

In choosing her career path, Fallis explained, "I was inspired by my high school choir director, Mr. Tim Cochran. He pushed us to be the best singers we could be ... while providing genuine connection. I came to realize that I love people, and I love music—why not combine the two?"

In 2018, she graduated summa cum laude from the University of Kentucky with a Bachelors of Choral Music Education and a minor in Piano Performance. She has made four international trips with choirs. She commented, "My boarding school experience ... helped me appreciate other cultures and build the confidence to travel and to move across the state for my dream job!"

She shared advice for current OBI students: "Take every opportunity to grow while you're at OBI. Build relationships; they really will last a lifetime."



Athletic Hall of Fame Nominations

The purpose of the OBI Athletic Hall of Fame is to recognize and honor our outstanding coaches and athletes. The inductees will be chosen by the OBI Athletic Hall of Fame Committee.

Nominees must have have been outstanding in their sport(s) and left OBI in good standing. Coaches must have been a varsity coach at least three years. *For full eligibility rules, email Jamie Middleton, OBI Athletic Director.*

Please submit nominations via email to: jamie.middleton@oneidaschool.org

All nominations must include:

- The nominator's full name, address and phone number.
- Name of nominee and decade he or she was at OBI.
- Sport he/she played or coached.
- List of nominee's sports awards, records set, etc.