



OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
— Office of the President —

May 11, 2004

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Churches of Christ:

Thank you for waiting patiently for our response to your concerns and comments voiced at the February 13th Lectureship follow-up forum. The correspondence received and the comments made at the forum reflect a broad diversity of opinion on these matters. There have been multiple voices at all points along the spectrum of thought. We appreciate the Christ-like spirit of most of those who have expressed their views. As you can imagine, there are numerous people to consult to ensure this response adequately reflects the convictions of the governing authorities and management of the University.

Since her 1950 beginning in Bartlesville, Oklahoma Christian University has sought close ties with the churches of Christ. Though we are not the church, we seek to operate in a manner worthy of our calling as a Christian institution, consistent with scripture, and supportive of the churches of Christ and Christian families. We diligently seek to prepare our youth and serve our churches in ways that are true to the Word of God. Congregations of God's people around the world have been blessed by Oklahoma Christian alumni as well as by workshops, lectureships, youth programs, written materials and other services the University has provided. Today we cherish the relationship with the churches of Christ as much as ever and pray for continued strengthening of these ties. This relationship is vital to our identity and our mission, and we will diligently and prayerfully nurture it.

The 2004 Lectureship had an abundance of excellent teaching and preaching, warm fellowship, and the largest attendance in several years. However, some have raised questions about whether our recent lectureship program indicated a change of direction for the University. We want to assure everyone that we did not intend to leave that impression. We regret that we have offended or raised concerns among some of our brethren by our actions. We have no agenda for promoting change other than to encourage one another to be faithful and respond to the scriptures with changed lives.

We are deeply concerned that what is taught on this campus at Lectureship or at other venues is consistent with scripture, particularly when the teaching is directly related to salvation. Occasionally a teaching may be so clearly contrary to scripture that it becomes necessary to refute it publicly or to be sure another viewpoint is heard. All matters of faith are important, but there are some issues which are matters of individual judgment, and some issues on which honest hearts and minds may disagree. We will seek wisdom and good judgment in dealing with such matters. In all things, we will be loving and gentle. In all cases, speakers and topics will be selected with care and with prayer, but not likely with perfection, nor to the complete satisfaction of all of our constituents.

Our brother Shon Smith and an *ad hoc* advisory committee is currently reviewing a proposed slate of potential speakers with a view to helping the 2005 Lectureship to be uplifting, affirming, challenging, focused on scriptural truth, and inspiring. Current thinking suggests a topic something like "Life on the Road: Strangers in an Alien Land," to refocus our attention on

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where our true allegiance lies and help us grapple with how Christians should relate to the present world. It is shaping up to be a tremendous program, and I hope all of you will plan to come.

In my address to the Open Forum on January 28, 2004, I set forth in greater detail the University's positions and teaching on matters of faith, as well as much of our thinking about how a Christian university should operate. If you did not receive a copy of the January 28 address, titled "The Spiritual Mission of Oklahoma Christian University," and would like to have one, please let my office know, and we will send you a copy, or you may access it on our website at http://www.oc.edu/president/documents/Spiritual_Mission.pdf. This letter should be read together with that address to understand the totality of the University's response to the February 13 meeting and the correspondence received.

For sake of clarity and confirmation, let me share just a few of the basic positions set forth in greater detail in the January 28 address. Oklahoma Christian University unreservedly affirms our belief in the inspiration, authority, supremacy, and sufficiency of scripture. Our faith is in the risen Christ, the son of the only true God, the source of salvation, and the model for life and godliness. We confirm our commitment to the fellowship of the churches of Christ from the restoration heritage and its teachings on weekly communion, believer's baptism for the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, communication with the Father through prayer, male spiritual leadership, congregational autonomy, priesthood of believers, the importance of unity, and *a cappella* music. These are not optional among our faculty and staff or in our teaching.

Another document which may help you understand the depth of the University's commitment to scripture and faithful Christian living is the Oklahoma Christian University Covenant adopted in February 2004 after considerable internal discussion about how to call our students, faculty, staff, and trustees to a higher standard of purpose and behavior. It is not a creed and is not intended to be used as a creed, but it is a constant reminder to inspire the entire Oklahoma Christian community to reach its spiritual potential. A copy of the Covenant is reproduced on the back of this letter. An introduction to and explanation of the purposes of the Covenant may be found at http://www.oc.edu/president/documents/covenant_talk.pdf, or call and we will be happy to send you a copy.

Because we are an educational institution, there will be diversity of thought on campus. We do not believe it is necessary to agree with someone on every detail of scriptural interpretation to welcome him or her on our campus. Thus, we will have relationships with brothers and sisters with whom some others may not be fully comfortable. Above all, however, we will always strive to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the fundamental truths of scripture. We hope you will be pleased with our overall effectiveness and judge our work primarily by the spiritual transformation of and accomplishments in the lives of our students even if you do not agree with every specific decision we make.

We believe that the churches of Christ have identified truths essential to our faith and salvation. Isn't it encouraging and a reason for rejoicing that much of the most respected biblical scholarship and many people in the broader Christian world are now searching the scriptures and discovering many of the truths we have been teaching for decades? What an opportunity for

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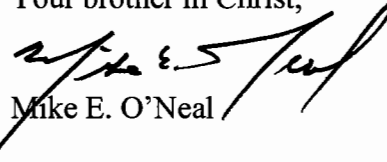
evangelism! Though we can teach with confidence, we must keep studying with honest and open minds and hearts and thus be learning new insights and deepening our understanding of the scriptures.

The practices and beliefs of churches of Christ today are more diverse than at anytime during our lifetimes. We are sad that there is so much strife in the Lord's church today, and we pray constantly for healing, unity, for better understanding of God's truth, and for the courage to live consistently with that truth. That strife and diversity, coupled with the sinful nature of mankind, are all part of the milieu in which we find ourselves operating a church of Christ-related university, and, as you can understand, that situation makes our job more difficult. We do not desire to be identified with any extreme positions, but desire rather to be peacemakers and to serve all of God's people without compromising basic truths about salvation and doctrine. We deeply desire to be a place of love, fellowship, and learning and an instrument of peace and unity to the extent consistent with the fundamental beliefs we all share.

We appreciate your interest in Oklahoma Christian and in the kind of Christian university we strive to be. We want our constituents to share with us their perceptions of what we are doing well and where we need to do better. We promise to listen to you and give due consideration to the thoughts you share with us. We truly believe that the mission of the University in serving God is one which takes constant renewal and return to the word of God, and we seek to do that with the support and partnership of members of the churches of Christ. We hope you will want to assist us in every way you can as we seek to fulfill this noble mission.

Most of all we hope you will pray for the University, its trustees, its faculty and staff, and its students, that we will seek to do His will and to bring honor and glory to the Father and the Son. We ask that you forgive us when we falter and encourage us in the great good being done among these young people.

Your brother in Christ,



Mike E. O'Neal

Encl: OC Covenant

cc: Board of Trustees
Faculty
Staff
Alumni



OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
— Since 1950 —

OUR COVENANT

Oklahoma Christian University is a higher learning community which transforms lives for Christian faith, leadership, and service.

The values and behavior of this Christian community are derived from the Bible, rather than the prevailing culture. Because we are a higher learning community dedicated to a distinctively Christian mission, we join together in a community covenant. This covenant is not a creed demanding strict belief in its veracity and inerrancy, and it is not merely an ideal to which we aspire; rather, it is a personal commitment that while we are members of this community, we will abide by the principles and ideals set forth in the covenant. The purpose of our covenant is to unite all of us at Oklahoma Christian University—students, staff, faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees—in a Christian community which is based on biblical principles and which transforms lives for Christian faith, leadership, and service.

We recognize that the University is not the church; however, we are a Christian community which seeks to be guided by the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in scripture. We welcome all students, regardless of their church affiliation, who agree to abide by this covenant. Because the University was founded by members of the churches of Christ and because we seek to serve our church constituents effectively, we expect all full-time faculty and staff to be faithful, active members of the churches of Christ who fully embrace the principles of this covenant.

OUR FOUNDATION

God interacts with this world as both Creator and Savior (*Genesis 1; Hebrews 1:1-3*).

The Bible is God's inspired word, which shows us the nature of God, the risen Son, and the Holy Spirit (*2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21*).

We seek to honor God by imitating the nature of God and his son, our Lord Jesus Christ, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit (*John 13:13-17; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Peter 2:21*).

As members of this Christian higher learning community, we are guided by specific principles set forth in the Bible (*Psalms 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17*).

OUR CALL

God calls us to do our best in everything we do (*Colossians 3:17; Colossians 3:23*).

God calls us to submit our will to his (*John 15:14; James 4:7; 1 John 2:17*).

God calls us to submit to one another in love (*1 Corinthians 10:23-24; Galatians 5:13-14; Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:3-4*) and to show his love through the justice, mercy, and faithfulness of our lives (*Matthew 5; Matthew 23*).

God calls us to live lives of holiness (*Ephesians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16*).

OUR COMMUNITY LIFE

We strive to honor the Lord and be Christ-like in all of our conduct (*Colossians 3:12-14; Titus 2:11-14*).

We strive to demonstrate love and respect for everyone, even those who have views that differ from ours, and avoid conduct or language that is demeaning to others (*Galatians 3:28; Philippians 2:3-4; James 2:1-13*).

We strive to exercise our Christian freedom responsibly within the framework of God's Word, humbly submitting to others (*1 Corinthians 10:23-24; 31-33*).

We strive to use wise stewardship of our mind, body, time, abilities and resources and make thoughtful, biblically guided choices in matters of behavior, entertainment, and interpersonal relationships (*Philippians 4:8*).

We strive to practice honesty and integrity in everything we say and do (*Colossians 3:9-10; Revelation 21:8*).

We strive to treat our bodies with the honor due the temple of the Holy Spirit—honoring God's plan that sexual relations be a part of a marriage between a man and a woman, dressing modestly, and avoiding any self-destructive practices (*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*).

For the sake of our personal influence and our life together in Christian community, we also agree to certain community standards of conduct which are not specifically set forth in the Bible, but which enable the community to operate peaceably and in harmony with these principles and with one another. These community standards are set forth in the Student Handbook, the Staff Handbook, and the Faculty Handbook.

By choosing to be a part of the Oklahoma Christian University community, every member of the student body, staff, faculty, and Board of Trustees affirms his or her understanding of, respect for, and commitment to abide by the principles, and standards of conduct set forth in this covenant.