



415 Pennsylvania Avenue ♦ Oakmont, PA 15139
(412) 828-5770 ♦ (412) 828-0907 Fax

January 20, 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

A long time ago two Christians I knew were very angry with one another. I was concerned that their animosity could affect others in the church, so I asked them to meet with me. To my surprise their conflict quickly re-erupted in my office as each person made heated accusations against the other. After several minutes one of the two stood up and walked away enraged.

I learned that day what most of us eventually discover: *you can't rush reconciliation*. Feelings have power and try as we may to minimize or dismiss our feelings they have a nasty way of hanging around. When examined, emotions can help us understand ourselves more fully. Unexamined emotions may hijack our lives. However, we are not just passive recipients of our feelings; we likely know that *a person can feed their anger* so that coming together and working for progress is unthinkable.

Lest our emotions alone determine our actions what is the Christian ethic to guide us in this time of national conflict?

- Love your neighbor as yourself? (Matthew 22:39)
- Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you? (Matthew 5:44)
- Do unto to others as you would have them do unto you? (Matthew 7:12)
- Speak the truth in love? (Ephesians 4:15)

Anger, fear and distrust remain intense among our fellow citizens and division reigns: one person's justice is another person's injustice. I think the unrest has revealed some critical elements of our society that are broken and need to be repaired. The urgency for us is that "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand." (Matthew 12:25) While reconciliation cannot be rushed, we dare not ignore what is broken or fail to attempt repair.

I have known individuals who have been reconciled, but it was a considered process. First, they stopped their fighting. Then, over time, their path to reconciliation emerged:

- emotional intensity was reduced so that they could think clearly,
- they both spoke honestly and sincerely,
- both persons sought to truly understand the other, and
- both were committed to healthy change.

Healing happened as mutual understanding grew and trust was reestablished over time by each one being trustworthy.

I invite you to pray for God's guidance through this time of crisis. While I don't believe God will act unilaterally to solve our problems, I do believe that God may well give us the humility, courage and insight we need to begin the journey and the persistence required to make progress. The hope of reconciliation, even on a national scale, is that we may be healthier and stronger for the labor.

Grace to you, and

Peace,
Steve

(over for more information)

OPC Information

The Sunday morning Adult Education (9:30 a.m.) continues via Zoom. To be added to the zoom invitation list, send Steve an email (swilson@oakmontpresby.org). Here is the schedule:

- January 24, 31 – Dr. L. Roger Owens of Pittsburgh Seminary on Spiritual Practices
- February 7 – Interview with Jeanne Hackworth on *Raising A Child with Special Needs*
- February 14 – Interview with Psychologist Dr. Lin Ewing
- February 21 – Exploration of Adam Hamilton’s Final Words from the Cross, Chapter 1
- February 28 - Exploration of Adam Hamilton’s Final Words from the Cross, Chapter 2
- March 7 - Exploration of Adam Hamilton’s Final Words from the Cross, Chapter 3
- March 14 - Exploration of Adam Hamilton’s Final Words from the Cross, Chapter 4
- March 21 - Exploration of Adam Hamilton’s Final Words from the Cross, Chapter 5
- March 28 - Exploration of Adam Hamilton’s Final Words from the Cross, Chapter 6

Don Ewing is leading a zoom Bible study on the Lord’s Prayer. Email Don at dewing@oakmontpresby.org to receive more information or a zoom invitation.

Given the high number of coronavirus cases in Western Pennsylvania the Administrative Team recommended to Session to continue the suspension of in-person worship and group meetings at the church. Session concurred. Early in February the Administrative Team will review the status of the pandemic and recommend to Session whether to resume in-person worship and group meetings or to continue the suspension. Members of the Administrative Team include: Session Committee Chairpersons Barbara Bolls, Sherry Geis, Robin Gourley, Frank Hancock, Jeff Kline, Ralph McIntyre, and Nancy Sloan and Dr. Amy Burkert, Dr. Iain Campbell and Dr. Susan Kabazie.

The Lenten mid-week dinners and worship services are not possible this year. So, **our observance of Lent** this year will include the Sundays in Lent. Watch for more details in upcoming letters.

Our Annual Congregational Meeting, normally held in February, will be scheduled once we resume in-person worship.

I recently asked for people to share devotionals that they have used and enjoyed. Here is what I heard from OPC members:

- *Guideposts* and *Our Daily Bread* have been standard and popular daily devotionals
- d365.org - a devotional for youth, but good for adults too.
- <https://pray-as-you-go.org/> - a guided meditation with speakers and songs
- <https://www.sacredspace.ie/daily-prayer> - a guided meditation by the Irish Jesuits
- Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence – by Sarah Young. “I have enjoyed them because they are written as if Jesus is talking to you.”
- Quiet Moments with God for Women - published by Honor Books. Numerous authors in this daily devotional
- Mornings with Jesus – Daily Encouragement for your Spirit – A Guideposts publication – mailed to you 6x per year
- When God Calls Me Blessed – Devotional Thoughts for Women from the Beatitudes – by Anita Corrine Donahue
- No Wrinkles on the Soul – A Book of Readings for Older Adults – by Richard L Morgan, Upper Room Books
- Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness – by Nan C. Merrill – Continuum Books