



June, 2020

Dear Students, Faculty, Staff, and the greater Olivet community,

As I compose this letter to you, I am well aware that we are in a time of unrest – nationally, locally, and personally. The murder of George Floyd has awakened us to the injustice and prejudice in our communities, our businesses, and even our own homes. This moment is changing our nation, and my prayer is that it will change us, too. Change can bring understanding. Understanding can bring wisdom. Wisdom can bring healing.

I know that words alone cannot immediately solve the challenges of our community or country, or necessarily comfort those who are experiencing the compounded grief of this moment, but neither can silence. In moments of distress and/or times when I seek wisdom, I turn not to “words” but to “the Word.” Genesis 1:27 says, “God created mankind in His own image,” and Romans 12:5 reminds us, “...so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” We must view one another as God views His children.

It is unacceptable that our African American students live in a world of fear. I also understand that Olivet is not exempt from the challenges facing the rest of our country. As president of Olivet Nazarene University, I will continue to seek to foster a community of higher learning, a community of faith, and a community of grace and reconciliation – a place of belonging.

This fall, in cooperation with our Diversity Task Force, we will continue to work to ensure a safe place for all students to learn and grow. I will personally be leading a series of “Listening Sessions” to allow students, faculty, and staff to speak into the culture of Olivet Nazarene University and share openly and honestly about issues of racism.

I will also continue our efforts to develop a strong, diverse faculty, and encourage leaders across campus to be fully engaged in our University-wide efforts for candid communication and healing. As president, I have joined the conversation now underway among leaders within Christian higher education to develop future leaders who will be agents of change, promoting biblical justice and racial equity.

The young men and women of Olivet Nazarene University, our faculty, staff, and alumni are too gifted, too discerning, and too compassionate to allow hatred to stand in the way of our great mission. Although we cannot be together in one place right now, I do call on the entire community to join in this prayer:

*Our Great God,*

*We know that racism is a sin against You.*

*Help us to live in community with our brothers and sisters—all people, acknowledging that we are your children, your special creation, and created in Your image.*

*We cannot and will not tolerate any form of racism in our work and/or our communities. We will speak out against it, as we do all forms of sin and injustice. We will listen to those who have been oppressed and speak for those who feel they have no voice. We will walk side-by-side with those who feel they are alone in their struggle. Lord, we seek to honor You in all we do. Help us forgive those who have committed wrongs against us. We ask forgiveness for our own sin, and confess our need of You.*

*Heal our hearts. Lord, heal our land.*

*Amen.*

I am confident that as we work together, Olivet Nazarene University will be a place of grace and reconciliation.

Sincerely,  
John C. Bowling  
President