

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” Isaiah 43:18-19a NIV

Dear Friends,

God is in the business of doing a *new* thing in the hearts of sinful humanity. This *new* thing is in fact a *very ancient* thing, a thing that was always in the mind and heart of God since before time began. This ‘thing’ is to be *in relationship* with his creation. Of course, it all began well. In fact, God said of this relationship that it is *very good*. But sin entered the world when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God’s one command. Because of that choice, humanity would be forever separated from God.

But God, in his infinite love for his creation, sent his *Son*, the *Lord Jesus Christ*, to **rescue** those caught in the grip of sin. Who are they? They are *all humanity*, but this *rescue*, this *salvation*, comes only to those who by the power of the Holy Spirit see their sinfulness in light of God’s glory, and by **faith**, through **grace**, turn away from sin and accept his free gift of **salvation**. Remember what Paul wrote in Romans 10? “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” As God’s bride, we are called to *preach* and *teach* his gospel to all, and in so doing trust that the Holy Spirit calls men and women, boys and girls to himself. This is **NOT** a new mandate, but it is *at the core* of all we do here at Oreland. We *do* this because of what *God in Christ* has done *in us*. We *do* this because we are *commanded* to do it. We *do* it because we do not want to see friends, family, neighbors, strangers, even enemies spend eternity *separated* from *God* in Hell.

So why am I reminding you of what you already know? Because *God* is doing a **new thing** here at Oreland. We are months away from launching a series of celebrations to mark **75 years** of faithful ministry and months away from hosting the *Presbytery of the East* at their April 2025 gathering. I think you all can agree and be thankful for the rich history of *faithful* preaching and teaching of *God’s* word and faithful giving here at *OEPC* over these years. There have been trials that have deepened our faith in him such as when God called us out of the PCUSA and led us into the **EPC** family! God has been faithful molding and shaping us each step of the way.

So, along those lines, first let me share some **big** news! Most of the Architectural Review Team’s (ART) work has come to a close, and the plans are being passed into the hands of the Capital Campaign Team which has been praying and seeking God’s wisdom to take the wonderful work of the ART team and move it forward. This past summer was just a small beginning as the trustees planned and implemented a much needed ‘face-lift’ to some of our most heavily used spaces. THANK YOU to the Trustees for their tireless work over this past summer!

Now in the excitement and need to consider ‘brick and mortar work’ there is always a potential to become side-tracked from our primary goal. Our drive to make the spaces in Oreland more welcoming (though much needed) can become a distraction to this mandate of taking the gospel and **connecting** with one another, and our neighbors. So this is a *challenge* as

we prepare to embark on these exciting changes. It is also *a daily prayer* that I, your pastor, hope that you are praying for in our fellowship.

In working hard to keep our eyes on the Gospel mandate, the Session has *prayerfully* taken a **huge** step of *faith* in moving toward this goal of *connecting* more with the **unchurched** in our community by re-orienting ourselves toward that purpose. Part of that desire involves the shortening of our name to: *Oreland Church*. “What does that mean?” It means that legally (on paper) we would remain “*Oreland Evangelical Presbyterian Church*”, but in our public outlook we would simply be known as “*Oreland Church*”. ‘WHY????’ you ask? “Pastor, we fought for that name when we came out of the PC USA!” “It’s what makes us *distinctive* from the main line denominations around us!” To that I would say, “Yes, you are right!” The *distinctive denominational* name, and then the descriptor ‘**Evangelical**’ marks us out in the community for those who know what those terms actually mean. Sadly, in our *politicized* and *volatile* world, those words have become **barriers** to the *un-churched, non-Christians* that surround us!! They will not even step *across* the threshold of our doors. We don’t want our name to be an obstacle preventing them to hear the gospel. So, Session has agreed to *add* the name ‘*Oreland Church*’ for what we might already say is ‘*common parlance*.’ On *official* places, such as our website, we will include the phrase, “**an EPC Congregation.**” That *phrase* will help those who are moving into our area and are looking for an EPC Congregation to know this is *who* we are.

And speaking of ‘this is *who* we are...’ That **WILL NOT CHANGE**. That means that the *preaching* and teaching of God’s word will always remain central to our *identity*, and *voice*, both *publically* and *privately*. It means that we will always hold to the **Essentials of Faith** and the ‘**Westminster standards**’ as found on our web page.

What *benefits* will this achieve? As mentioned earlier it is believed that our use of this common parlance will *help* those who are ‘searching for God’ to come *into* Oreland Church, *listen*, be transformed, and *come* to a **saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ**.

Before Session moves forward with this plan we want to provide an opportunity for you, our congregation, to ask questions, and hear of the prayers and thinking that have gone into our deliberations.

On **Sunday, October 20th**, immediately following the worship service, we would like to invite you to a ‘Town Hall’ gathering **in the Fellowship Hall** for this purpose.

God is doing *many amazing things* in our midst for which we are *thankful*, and we look forward to this new chapter in Oreland’s history to be one that remains **centered** in *God’s word*, *committed* to the *Gospel* Mandate, and reaching *unbelievers* for **Christ**.

In the *Service* of the King of Kings,

Pastor Dan and the Session of Oreland Church