

March 21, 2018
First Presbyterian Church of Harbor Springs
7940 Cemetery Road
Harbor Springs, Michigan 49740

Presbytery Stated Clerk
Elder Kay Morrill
2206 Mitchell Park - Suite 15
Petoskey, MI 49770

Dear Kay,

It is with interest and concern that we read the February 12, 2018 news release announcing the "Kingdom Building for the 21st Century" Bible Studies for the commissioners at the upcoming General Assembly. We fully agree that "Presbyterians are people of the Word, who embrace the Scriptures" and that it is important to "help commissioners think biblically about issues facing the assembly." However, we are concerned that the approach to biblical interpretation modeled will hamper rather than help commissioners to think biblically. We recognize that our concerns are based on a short news article rather than the actual study being presented and that the presenters are preeminent biblical scholars; we hope that the actual study will be more nuanced than what is suggested in the article. Nevertheless, the article suggests an approach which goes against a fundamental, Reformed principle of interpretation, namely that we use Scripture to interpret Scripture (Book of Confessions, 6.009).

Here are some of the issues with which we have concern:

1. The assumption that Kingdom can be replaced with kin-dom.

The Kingdom of God is a central theme throughout Scripture and there can be no "horizontal kin-dom" without Christ as King. The horizontal nature of our kinship with one another, which the presenters rightly want to highlight, is grounded in our adoption as Sons and Daughters of God through Christ. The foundation of the horizontal relationship is what Paul refers to in Galatians 3: 28 (NRSV), "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" and Colossians 3:11 (NRSV) "In that renewal; there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

2. Kingdom of God as a top-down monarchy vs. a reimagined horizontal kin-dom.

Within Scripture, the Kingdom of God refers to the rule of an eternal, sovereign God over all the universe. It is God who created all things and is therefore over all things. The creation (which includes humans) is subject to the rule of God as is all of creation. Psalm 103:19 (NRSV) states that "the Lord has established his throne in the heavens and His kingdom rules over all." God's heavenly kingdom penetrates the earthly powers because all authority is established by God. In Romans 13:1 (NRSV) it is noted that "let every person be subject to governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by

God.” (Also, see Ps. 24: 93:1-5.)

Hence, The Kingdom of God is a top-down monarchy with God, the creator and ruler at the top and the creation as subject to His rule and authority.

3. Exclusivity vs. inclusivity

On a spiritual level, the Kingdom of God is both exclusive and inclusive. Spiritually, we willingly submit ourselves to the authority of God and thereby are included within His kingdom. For example, Jesus noted that He was not of this world (John 18:36) and that we should “repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matthew 4:17 NRSV). Throughout Scripture, Jesus’ call for repentance was for all as Peter, Paul and others emphasized. Acts 10:34,35 NRSV) states “Then Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.’”

Thus the call to accept the authority of Jesus and become part of the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5 ESV; see also Rev. 1:5-8, Daniel 7:13,14) is radically inclusive, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or other factors.

However, the Kingdom of God is exclusive in that only those who accept God’s authority, repent and follow Jesus will be accepted into the Kingdom of God. That IS Jesus’ message. To support, I Corinthians 6:9 (NRSV) states “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God?” And Jesus stated in John 3:5-7 (NRSV) “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’” Also, Lev. 18:4,5, calls for obedience to God and, by doing so, you live. In Ephesians 5:5 (NRSV) it states “Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.”

The message in the scriptures is that the Kingdom of God is open to all who confess He is Lord and accept His son Jesus as their savior. The concept of kingdom may well have been misused throughout history. Scripture, in discussing the Kingdom of God, portrays God alone as sovereign and we as “kin” because we are his adopted children.

Sincerely,

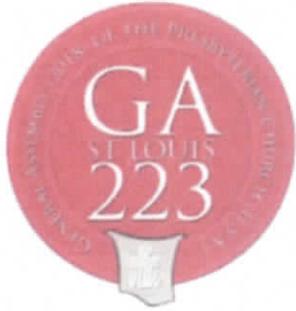
First Presbyterian Church of Harbor Springs Session

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Bible study at GA223 will explore "kin-dom" versus "kingdom"

Seminary professor duo to lead reflections in plenary, not committees

February 12, 2018



Office of the General
Assembly Communications

EVA STIMSON

Correspondent

LOUISVILLE

"Kindom Building for the 21st Century" is the theme of Bible studies planned for commissioners to the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), meeting June 16–23 in St. Louis.

The Bible studies will be led by Deborah Krause, academic dean and professor of New Testament at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, and Raj Nadella, assistant professor of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia.



Deborah Krause —Eden Theological Seminary

Krause, a Presbyterian minister and member of the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy, has been active in an ongoing movement of religious and community leaders protesting injustices in St. Louis. The movement arose

following the fatal shooting of African American teenager Michael Brown by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014. Protests intensified last fall after the acquittal of another police officer in the fatal shooting of twenty-four-year-old Anthony Lamar Smith in 2011.

Nadella, originally from India, is director of Columbia Seminary's MA(TS) degree program. He serves on the National Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission and on the PC(USA) General Assembly Committee on Representation. Nadella is the author of a book on the Gospel of Luke and is currently working on a book on the theme of "empire" in the Synoptic Gospels and co-authoring a textbook on postcolonial biblical studies.

Thomas D. Hay, director of Assembly Operations in the PC(USA)'s Office of the General Assembly, says Assembly Stated Clerk J. Herbert Nelson, II, envisions the studies as a "platform for some of the best Bible scholars in the church to help commissioners think biblically about issues facing the assembly."

This year's Bible studies will take place in plenary sessions before commissioners disperse to their committees—a change from previous assemblies when Bible study took place in committees.

Krause and Nadella plan to focus on texts from the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) that describe the "kingdom of God." But their approach, Krause explains, will "critique the idea of kingdom as a top-down monarchy" and "reimagine it as kin-dom, a more horizontal structure of power in which everyone is a beloved child of God."

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Raj Nadella —Columbia Theological Seminary

"Kingdom tends to be very exclusive," says Nadella. For example, people may be excluded because of their race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or other factors. "The metaphor of kin-dom allows us to envision an inclusive community, built on common humanity and shared values."

Another way in which kingdom and kin-dom differ, he adds, is that "kingdom sees relationships as a zero-sum game, operating on the assumption that if one community gains something, another community ends up losing. Such a worldview can breed mutual suspicion between different communities and engender violence."

In contrast, the kin-dom of God¹ is built "not through competition but in mutual cooperation and solidarity," Nadella says. "People who are part of kin-dom use their resources and privilege to advocate for others who are less privileged."

Nadella and Krause note that the idea of "kin-dom" is supported by Jesus' life and teachings. For example, Jesus

criticized the power structures of his day and broadened the definition of family to extend beyond blood relationships.

Unpacking these contrasts will help Presbyterians “think differently about how to be church in the world,” Krause says. She believes it is important to understand how the idea of “kingdom” has left a legacy of colonialism, imperialism, sexism, and racism, all of which “demean and destroy God’s people and God’s creation.”

“Presbyterians have a lot of clout in the economy of the United States,” Nadella adds. “We have been complicit in kingdom building. Now we need to leverage our privilege to make room at the table for excluded and marginalized groups—immigrants from the Global South; non-Christians, especially Muslims; and people of color, especially African Americans.”

Both leaders say their backgrounds will influence their approach to the theme of “kin-dom building.”

“As a person of color—an immigrant from South India—I often find myself at the margins,” Nadella says. “That background informs my approach to Scripture.”

Krause says she and other clergy are learning from the courage and inclusiveness of protestors in St. Louis “what it means to be the church in the 21st century.”

The two hope to offer commissioners exegetical and interpretive tools that they can use in their own contexts to “participate in building God’s kin-dom from the ground up.”

“Presbyterians are people of the Word, who embrace the Scriptures,” Nadella says. “We are being called to interpret them more faithfully within the current political context.”

[1] “Familia de Dios” is the translation of the English language “kin-dom of God” used by the theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz in her book *In La Lucha / In the struggle: elaboration of a Mujerista theology*.

[한국어] [Español]

Tags: bible study, deborah krause, ga223, general assembly, kingdom, raj nadella

Departments: General Assembly

Agency: Office of the General Assembly

I'm confused. Why would Christ's church EVER want to de-emphasize our God-given mission of bringing people into real Dominion of the King (aka Kingdom) in favor of a metaphorical “kin-dom”?

by Eric Buitenhuis

March 12, 2018

Sounds great. When and how might we who are not attending GA obtain the curriculum?

by Rachel S.

February 27, 2018

<https://eewc.com/kingdom-kindom-beyond/> It all started with a simple question among members on the

EEWC-CFT group email list. Alena wanted to know who first coined the term “kin-dom” to replace the male-oriented, imperialistic word “kingdom” that we find in the Lord’s Prayer and elsewhere in the New Testament. It grew into an extended online conversation about use of language—even though, during the discussion, we never did settle on a definitive answer to the question about the origin of “kin-dom” — a term many Christian feminists have been using for several decades. (Further research indicates that the term was introduced into public discourse by Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz who said she learned it from her friend Georgene Wilson, O.S.F).

by Tony Aja

February 14, 2018

I hope they will credit Ada María Isasi-Díaz with this concept...

by Tony Aja

February 14, 2018

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