

Book Study of “In God We Trust: The Origins of Christian Nationalism”

by Jimmy Hawkins

Old Pine Presbyterian Church & St Peter Episcopal Church & Gloria Dei

Led by Rev Dr Rob Erickson

This is a five-week book study that will explore the origins of Christian Nationalism (CN), the basic tenants of Christian Nationalism and the impact it has on the church and nation. We will explore the implications and issues with Christian Nationalism and the role of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Episcopal Church in speaking out to clarify and reclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We will be using Jimmy Hawkins 300-page book, but we will be reading 15-20 page excerpts for each class. Class members are welcome to read the rest of the book as they are interested. The class will run from 6:30 to 8 pm alternating between the three host churches with the host church providing a light meal.

Session 1 Introduction (p. 1-6); What is Christian Nationalism? (p. 9-17)

Host: Old Pine Presbyterian Church (412 Pine Street)

In this Session we will explore Hawkin’s claim “Christian Nationalism (CN) is an ideology the upholds national identity as coequal with one’s Christian faith”. We will explore the passage from Luke 20:20-26 where Jesus is confronted by Pharisees about whether to pay taxes to Caesar or not and Jesus responds: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

Session 2 The Relationship between Religion and Government (p. 17-36)

Host: Gloria Dei (Old Swedes) Episcopal Church 916 S Swanson St)

In this session we will look at the difference between Civil Religion and Christian Nationalism. We will explore how Manifest Destiny and American Exceptionalism are a part of our history and play into Christian Nationalism. Lastly, we will examine the relationship between the Bible and the Constitution. We will be looking at Daniel 3: 1-18 where King Nebuchadnezzar puts Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the fiery furnace for failing to worship him.

Session 3 Who are Christian Nationalists (p. 121-141)

Host: St Peter's Episcopal Church (313 Pine Street)

We will explore the Acts 2: 42-47 description of the first century church as we explore the impact of Christian Nationalism on the Evangelical and Progressive Churches. We will explore the Presbyterian Church (USA) and Episcopal Church role in the evolution of Christian Nationalism and the recent responses to Christian Nationalism in both denominations.

Section 4 What Are Christian Nationalist Issues? Choose your own adventure

Host: St Peter's Episcopal Church (313 Pine Street)

Participants are invited to choose one topic and to read the chapter on that topic in the Hawkins book "In God We Trust". The topics are Abortion (Ch. 14); LGBTQIA+ rights (Ch 15); Gender Justice (Ch. 16), White Supremacy (Ch.17); Religious Freedom (Ch. 18); The War on Christians (Ch. 19); Islamophobia (Ch. 20); Christian Zionism (Ch. 21); Capitalism (Ch. 22); Militarism (Ch. 23); The Media (Ch. 24). The organizing scripture verse will be Mark 12: 28-34 where Jesus reveals the greatest commandments "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength." And the second is like it, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Section 5 Conclusion: Christian Response to Christian Nationalism (p. 293-303)

Host: Old Pine Presbyterian Church (412 Pine Street)

The organizing scripture is 1 Timothy 1: 3-7 where Paul urges Timothy to instruct the church at Ephesus in correct doctrine "The aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith." (1 Tim. 1:5) Jimmy Hawkins invites us to own our own complicity in the history and growth of Christian Nationalism but then to explore what we can do to respond to it. He suggests that we be informed, speak prophetically, discuss these issues in our congregations, resist labeling, form small groups, vote, hold ecumenical conversations, speak out with one voice within our denominations, reclaim the Christian message of love, grace and redemption that Jesus taught and lived in his life.