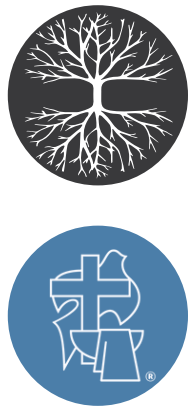


ROOTED

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

THEOLOGIAN IN RESIDENCE MATTHEW PETERSON

JANUARY 2025



May Your Kingdom Come...

The theme for this newsletter is **God's Kingdom**, or to use the translation preferred by biblical scholar R.T. France (whose commentary on Matthew's Gospel is *highly* recommended), "*God's Reign*."

This theme was a core idea in the life of Jesus, who began his public ministry with the phrase "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near*" (Matt. 4:17). Jesus also taught "*My kingdom does not belong to this world*. (John 18:36).

But what is this kingdom? Why did Jesus say that it has come near while also telling us that it was not a part of this world? And how does this concept relate to the current work of our churches?

At last Fall's *Fan into Flame* event we talked about the idea that salvation is bigger than we think it is because it is tied up with this vision of the kingdom. That we can be saved by Jesus' blood is wonderful news, and it is even more wonderful that we are saved to participate in God's Kingdom work.



Resource Spotlight

Gospel of the Kingdom by *The Bible Project*

This short video introduces the theme of God's Kingdom in under five minutes, with related resources for your church to explore the theme in greater detail.

Available at: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/gospel-kingdom>



The theme of God's kingdom is an ancient one, even by Scriptural standards. Glimpses of it can be found all through the Old Testament. It is said that the people of Israel praised God for his everlasting rule over the earth just after they crossed the Red Sea (*Exod. 15:18*). The authors of the Psalms proclaimed God's reign as one marked by righteousness that would endure forever (*Ps. 45:6-7*). And the prophets looked for the day when God would rescue his people and bring his kingdom in its fullness (*Isa. 40:1-11*).

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns. ... The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.'"

Isaiah 52:7-10

But it was in the ministry of Jesus that this theme received its clearest description. Through his works of teaching, healing, exorcism, and social reconciliation, and his death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus brought the kingdom into our world. His ministry was one of spiritual conflict with the domain of Satan, challenging "the kingdoms of this world" and the systems that aligned themselves with darkness (*Luke 4:5-7*), while rescuing people from the effects of sin and bringing them into God's Reign. This on-going conflict is why Jesus taught us to pray *"May your kingdom come; may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* (*Matt. 6:10*).

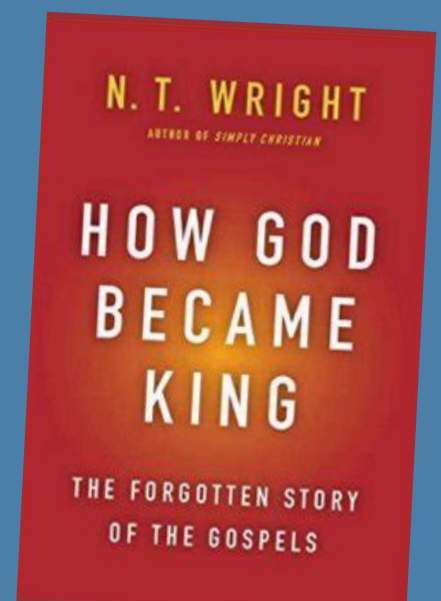
Through his parables Jesus stressed that this kingdom emerged in the smallest of settings: his ministry. Beginning with himself and a small circle of disciples, it would grow to bring the entire universe under God's Reign (*Matt. 13:31-32*).

Recommended Read:

How God Became King:

The Forgotten Story of the Gospels

This resource by theologian *N.T. Wright* explores how the vision of God's Kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven" was revealed throughout the Scriptures, including in the Old Testament, the ministry of Jesus, and the mission of the church. Useful for teaching and preaching about our kingdom identity, this work condenses some of Wright's major works into an approachable format for your bookshelf.





Like the prophets of old, followers of Jesus look forward to a day when we can say “*all the ends of the earth see the salvation of our God.*” But in this new age brought about by the resurrection of Jesus and the presence of his Spirit on the earth, we recognize that “*The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations.*” He has done this not with weapons of war or earthly displays of power, but by triumphing over all earthly and spiritual authorities through his death on the cross and his resurrection in power and authority (Col. 2:9-15).

Our Kingdom Identity

The Scriptures also have much to say about what it means to be a part of God’s kingdom people. As followers of Jesus, we have been purchased with his blood to participate in his kingdom work (Rev. 5:9-10). We belong to the king, and are a part of his kingdom. That we have been purchased means that our first loyalty is to the heavenly kingdom, not to any other. We are called to be citizens, not foremost of America or any other nation, but of God’s heavenly kingdom (Phil. 3:20-22; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:9-12). And so our identities ought not to be rooted in the worldly forces of political tribalism, nationalism, consumerism, and militarism.

Events Calendar:

Centering Our Kingdom Identity in Times of Political Change

Thursday January 23rd – 7:00pm EST / 6:00pm CST (Zoom)

Friday January 24th – 2:00pm EST / 1:00pm CST (Zoom)

Join us for this *Fan into Flame* discussion about how we can promote kingdom identity within our churches, and to learn about related initiatives emerging from the Great Lakes Conference in 2025.

More Info available from the Great Lakes Conference office.

God’s Kingdom & the Church: A Discussion

Tuesday March 25th - 7:30pm EST / 6:30pm CST (Zoom)

In this discussion session hosted by *The Exchange* we will discuss fundamentalism, Bible interpretation, and the relationship between God’s Kingdom and the church.

More Info at: TheSeed.online (or contact Matthew at mpeterson490@protonmail.com)



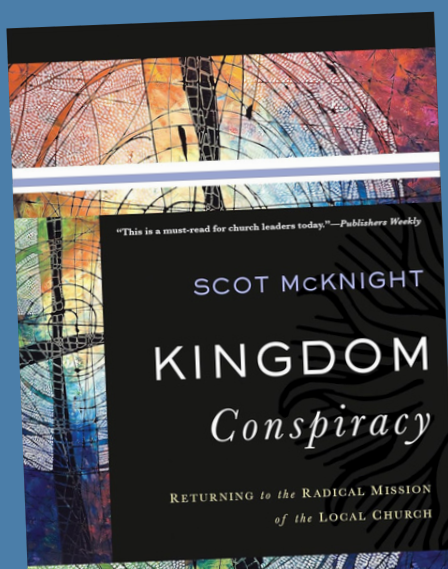
God calls us to become more and more parts of his kingdom, and to one day participate in his reign. But the kingdom is not simply “the church.” Our local churches, the wider Brethren in Christ, and the global church are manifestations of the kingdom that spreads wherever people have submitted to Christ’s lordship. As churches we testify to the reality of God’s will coming *“on earth as it is in heaven”* through practicing gifts of preaching, teaching, evangelism, mercy, and community life together. In so doing we enact our call a *“a kingdom and priests”* to our God.

This higher identity is why we in the Brethren in Christ have had historical postures of non-conformity and non-resistance. From its earliest beginnings, our spiritual family recognized that the temptations of this world reside in matters of identity: the false ideas that “who we are” should be determined by what we own or in which nation we were born, identities reinforced through exploitation and hatred of others. The call to be God’s people is a call to a greater center of identity, and with it a rejection of the world’s values when they conflict with the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is a call to constant transformation and non-conformity to the ungodly forces of any age (*Rom. 12:2*).

With this identity comes a call to action. To be a people who proclaim the good news of God’s Kingdom, his *reign* established in Christ Jesus and manifested where his name is revered, his teaching obeyed, and his people follow his example. *“For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we may walk in them”* (*Eph. 2:10*).

–Matthew Peterson

Theologian in Residence
BIC U.S. Great Lakes Conference



Recommended Read:

**Kingdom Conspiracy:
Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church**

This book by *Scot McKnight* is a helpful resource for grounding your church’s work and witness within the theme of God’s Kingdom.

Also recommended: ***The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited***



Ministry Credentialing

In its broadest sense, the term “minister” applies to all Christians. Each and every follower of Jesus is called to use his or her gifts in service to the Kingdom of God. In its more restrictive sense, “minister” refers to men and women who have been recognized by the Church as having a more specific call from God and have the appropriate character and gifts to fulfil that call. ***Encompassing licensing and ordination, our credentialing process is designed to equip ministers for ongoing, transformative ministry with the BIC U.S.***

Why Credentialing?

A licensed or ordained minister is a person who has been recognized by the Church as having met the requirements for serving as an assigned minister in a ministry position within BIC U.S. or serving as an assigned minister in a ministry position recognized by BIC U.S. This credentialing includes the following steps:

License Types

1

Provisional License

Non-renewable 3-year license issued to persons who have completed application/screening and serve in an assigned ministry position.

2

Ministry License

Renewable 6-year license issued to persons who have completed at least two *Core Courses* and the *Doctrinal Questionnaire* while actively serving in an assigned ministry position.

3

Ordination

Renewable 6-year license issued to persons who have completed the *Core Courses* and *Minimum Education Requirements* while serving in an assigned ministry position.

Doctrinal Questionnaire: A written questionnaire designed to assess doctrinal and ministry compatibility with the BIC U.S. It is intended to be completed within one year of receiving a Provisional License & is followed by an Oral Interview.

Core Courses

BIC History & Values



- *History of the Brethren in Christ*
- *Theological Influences*
- *Core Values*
- **August 11-13, 2025 (Mechanicsburg)**

Leadership & Structure



- *Brethren in Christ Polity*
- *Local Church Ministry*
- *Pastoral Leadership Development*
- **June 16-18, 2025 (Orrstown)**

Theology of the Church



- *The Kingdom of God*
- *The Church & Its Mission*
- *Peacemaking & Discipleship*
- **July 21-25, 2025 (Zoom)**

Theology of Salvation



- *The Nature of Sin*
- *Salvation & the Work of Jesus*
- *Sanctification & Christian Living*
- **June 2-4, 2025 (Lancaster)**



Directed Study Program

The Directed Study Program (DSP) is a sequence of email/web delivered courses designed to meet the Minimum Educational Requirement for Ordination in the Brethren in Christ. Courses are taught at a post-high school level and are a suitable education alternative for ministers who lack a completed Bible College, Ministry, or Seminary degree. Directed Study courses also satisfy lifelong learning requirements for Licensed and Ordained ministers.

Note: Individuals enrolled in the DSP are still required to take the Core Courses as part of their Ministry Credentialing process. The DSP is meant as an alternative for those lacking a college/seminary degree.

Directed Study Sequence

The full DSP sequence involves the completion of eleven Required courses and one Elective course. DSP courses are offered during 14-week terms (Fall, Spring, and Summer) and require approximately 5-8 hours of reading/writing work per week. They are delivered via an online/email format and do not require classroom attendance or travel to meet the course requirements.

Required Courses

- [B101r] Bible Survey
- [B103r] Biblical Interpretation
- [B201r] Pentateuch*
- [B203r] Synoptic Gospels*
- [H101r] History of Christianity
- [M100r] A Study of Brethren in Christ Core Values
- [M102r] Evangelism
- [M103r] Intentional Discipleship
- [M106r] World Christian Movement
- [M202r] Pastoral Care & Counseling
- [T101r] Basic Christian Doctrines

Electives

- [B203] Paul & His Letters*
- [H302] Life & Thought of John Wesley
- [M105] Discerning God's Call, My Identity
- [M306] Spiritual Formation
- [T102] Life in the Holy Spirit

Prerequisite: Courses marked with an asterisk (*) cannot be taken prior to [B101r] Bible Survey. It is advised that you take that course early in the DSP sequence to meet this requirement.

Upcoming Terms:

Spring 2025 (January 13 – April 11)

- B101r Bible Survey
- B103r Biblical Interpretation
- H101r History of Christianity
- M100r A Study of Brethren in Christ Core Values
- M103r Intentional Discipleship
- M106r The World Christian Movement
- M202r Pastoral Care and Counseling
- M105 Discerning God's Call, My Identity
- M306 Spiritual Formation

Summer 2025 (May 5 – August 8)

- B101r Bible Survey
- B103r Biblical Interpretation
- B201r Pentateuch*
- B202r Synoptic Gospels*
- H101r History of Christianity
- M103r Intentional Discipleship
- B203 Paul and His Letters*
- H302 Life and Thought of John Wesley
- M105 Discerning God's Call, My Identity
- T102 Life in the Holy Spirit

Directed Study Program Cost: Each course carries a registration fee of \$150 (USD). Courses are limited to 15 participants each and scholarships are available based on need and available funding.

More Information:



<https://bicus.org/training/directed-study-program>



Brethren in Christ U.S.
GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE

THEOLOGIAN IN RESIDENCE

Providing biblical/theological resourcing to those in various stages of credentialing, to pastors, and to the Great Lakes Conference at large.

TheSeed.online/deeper-theology

HERE TO HELP

Are you curious about Brethren in Christ theology? Looking for a good Bible resource or Small Group Study to share with your church? Need help completing those Core Courses or Doctrinal Questionnaire for your Ministry License? If you said 'yes' to any of these questions, then Great Lakes Conference Theologian in Residence Matthew Peterson is here to help!

As your Theologian in Residence, Matthew is tasked with equipping pastors, church leaders, and members in the Great Lakes Conference with tools for theological renewal and ministry development.

With years of experience in theological research, the biblical languages, teaching, and small group leadership, Matthew can help you find the tools you need to enrich your ministry.

Matthew's work and his support is available to all Great Lakes Conference members as well as the wider BIC U.S. family free of charge.

SERVICES

1. Theological Resourcing

Topical resources on theology, history, and ecclesiology from a Brethren in Christ perspective. Curated resource lists and Bible commentary recommendations.

2. Credentialing Help

Guidance for meeting Brethren in Christ U.S. Ministerial Credentialing criteria. Core Course, Doctrinal Questionnaire, and Directed Study Program assistance.

3. Research Assistance

Help with locating resources for Sermon Preparation and Small Groups, as well as training with Bible Software (Logos) and Brethren in Christ archives.



AVAILABLE RESOURCES

DEEPER

- Three Streams (*Theological Traditions*)
- Think Theologically (*Politics, COVID*)
- Women in Ministry

PRESENTATIONS

- Ministry Credentialing Q&A
- BIC Core Values
- Individual Salvation to Collective Shalom
- Reaffirming Our BIC Identity
- A Shared Life of Fellowship



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Find more resources at TheSeed.com