

Janel Kragt Bakker

janel@kragtbakker.com

Education

The Catholic University of America: Washington, D.C.
School of Theology and Religious Studies; Religion and Culture Concentration
Master of Arts (2005)
Doctor of Philosophy (2010)

Dordt College: Sioux Center, Iowa
History and English Literature Majors
Bachelor of Arts (2000)

Professional Experience

Professor of Mission and Culture: Memphis Theological Seminary (2023-present)

Associate Professor of Mission and Culture: Memphis Theological Seminary (2018-2023)

- Tenure Awarded May 2020

Assistant Professor of Mission, Evangelism, and Culture: Memphis Theological Seminary (2015-2018)

Part-Time Faculty: University of Memphis (2023)

Adjunct Instructor: Rhodes College Liberal Arts in Prison Certificate Program at the Women's Therapeutic Residential Center, West Tennessee State Penitentiary (2019, 2020, 2022, 2024)

Associate Director: Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research (2013-2015)

Lecturer: Catholic University of America (2012)

Post-Doctoral Fellow in Religious Practices and Practical Theology: Candler School of Theology, Emory University (2010-2011)

Adjunct Instructor: Trinity University (2010)

Teaching Fellow: Catholic University of America (2006-2007)

Adjunct Instructor: Mount Saint Mary's University (2005)

Teaching Assistant: Catholic University of America (2003-2005)

Intern: Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, U.S. Department of Labor (2004-2005)

Upper School Teacher: Washington Christian Academy (2001-2003)

Publications

Book

Sister Churches: American Congregations and their Partners Abroad. New York: Oxford University Press (2014).

- Reviewed in *Sociology of Religion*, *Review of Religious Research*, *Perspectives: A Journal of Reformed Thought*, and *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*

Academic Articles and Book Chapters

“A Theological Case for Reparations: Reviewing the Literature.” In *Reparatory Theologies*, ed. Graham McGeoch. London: SCM Press (forthcoming in 2025).

“White Christian Nationalism, Salvation, and the Kingdom of God.” In *Salvation in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Stefan Paas et al. Leiden: Brill (forthcoming in 2025).

“Love’s Domain or White Christians’ Dominion? A Missiological Response to the American Culture Wars.” *Ex Auditu* 36 (2024): 107-127.

“Bereavement and Religion Online: Stillbirth, Neonatal Loss, and Parental Religiosity.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52, no. 4 (2013): 657-674. Coauthored with Jenell Paris.

“The Sister Church Phenomenon: A Case Study of the Restructuring of American Protestantism Against the Backdrop of Globalization.” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 36, no. 3 (2012): 129-134.

“Southern Saints and Their Northern Siblings: Christians Crossing Boundaries Through Sister Church Relationships.” In *Religions on the Move: New Dynamics of Religious Expansion in a Globalizing World*, ed. Afe Adogame and Shobana Shankar. Boston: Brill, 2012.

“Molding Mission: Collective Action Frames and Sister Church Participation.” *Review of Faith and International Affairs* 9, no. 3 (2011): 11-20.

Book Reviews

King, David P. *God’s Internationalists: World Vision and the Age of Evangelical Humanitarianism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. Reviewed in *Review of Religious Research* 61, no. 4 (December 2019).

Steenland, Brian, and Philip Goff, eds. *The New Evangelical Social Engagement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. Reviewed in *Review of Religious Research* 56, no. 4 (December 2014): 629-631.

Giordan, Giuseppe, and William H. Swatos, Jr., eds. *Testing Pluralism: Globalizing Belief, Localizing Gods*. Boston: Brill Press, 2013. Reviewed in *Sociology of Religion* 75, no. 3 (Autumn 2014): 492-493.

Craddock, Fred, Dale Goldsmith, and Joy Goldsmith. *Speaking of Dying: Recovering the Church’s Voice in the Face of Death*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2012. Reviewed with Jenell Paris in *Prism Magazine* (January/February 2013): 42, 47.

Scheitle, Christopher P. *Beyond the Congregation: The World of Christian Nonprofits*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Reviewed in *Sociology of Religion* 72, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 245-246.

Popular Articles

“Southern Baptist Convention’s Focus on Mission Recalls History of Promoting White Dominance.” *The Conversation* (14 June 2021).

<https://theconversation.com/southern-baptist-conventions-focus-on-mission-recalls-history-of-promoting-white-dominance-162457>

“Josh Hawley, Betsy DeVos, and Abraham Kuyper: A Reckoning.” *Patheos* (14 January 2021).

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2021/01/josh-hawley-betsy-devos-and-abraham-kuyper-a-reckoning/>

“Recalibrating Culture Wars in Age of Trump.” *Commercial Appeal* (13 April 2018).

<https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2018/04/13/opinion-recalibrating-culture-wars-age-trump/507862002/>

“Mothering in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.” *Perspectives: A Journal of Reformed Faith* (September/October 2015). Web Edition. Coauthored with Jenell Paris.

<http://perspectivesjournal.org/blog/2015/09/01/mothering-valley-shadow-death/>

“Brokenhearted Online: Religious Dimensions of a Digital Community.” *Bearings for the Life of Faith* (Autumn 2014): 18-20. Coauthored with Jenell Paris.

“Sister Church Relationships and the Friendship Principle.” *Faith and Leadership* (June 2014).

<https://www.faithandleadership.com/janel-kragt-bakker-sister-church-relationships-and-friendship-principle>

“Not an End but a Graduation: An Interview with Glen E. Miller.” *Bearings for the Life of Faith* (Spring 2014): 4-8.

“Connection or Conflict? Global Christianity Reconsidered.” *Bearings for the Life of Faith* (Autumn 2013): 4-6.

“Every Migrant a Missionary: Immigrant Christians in America.” *Bearings for the Life of Faith* (Autumn 2013): 16-18.

“The Last Stop: An Interview with Gladys Ganiel and Gerardo Marti.” *Bearings for the Life of Faith* (Autumn 2013): 9-14.

“Both Reasonable and Religious: An Interview with Robert Wuthnow.” *Bearings for the Life of Faith* (Spring 2013): 4-8.

“A New Take on the New Atheism.” *Bearings for the Life of Faith* (Spring 2013): 10-12.

“Birthing a Dying Child.” *Catapult Magazine* 8, no. 25 (2009).

“Death by Ice or Fire.” *Catapult Magazine* 3, no. 1 (2004).

Interviews

“The History of Mission.” *Sunday School: After Hours*. Podcast of the Young Adult Ministry Council of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. 1 May 2021.

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1714861/8440237>

“Author Interview Webinar: Janel Kragt Bakker.” *Missio Nexus*. 14 May 2015.

“Author Interview: Janel Kragt Bakker.” *Louisville Institute Connects*. 6 January 2015.

<http://www.louisville-institute.org/News/AuthorInterviews/janel-bakker.aspx>

“Janel Kragt Bakker/Sister Churches.” Interview by Jonathan Armstrong. *God Talks*. Aqueduct Project. 2 July 2014. <http://aqueductproject.org/janel-kragt-bakker-sister-churches/>

“Christianity: Sister Churches Increasing Bonds Between Congregations in the West and Global South.” Interview by Richard Cimino. *Relioscope*. 17 December 2013.

http://religion.info/english/interviews/article_634.shtml#.Vd9qEflViko

Publications in Progress

The Kingdom of God is Among You: Rejecting Christian Dominion and Receiving God’s Dream (under exclusive right of review with Westminster John Knox Press).

Presentations and Public Lectures

- American Academy of Religion, Annual Meeting: November 2024
 - “‘We Are Otherworldly or We Are Secularists:’ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Josh Hawley, and the Politics of the Kingdom of God”
- Calvary Episcopal Church (Memphis), Adult Formation Forum: November 2024
 - Panel Discussion: “Faith, Hope, and Elections”
- Calvary Episcopal Church (Memphis), Adult Formation Forum: October 2024
 - “Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Political Theology for an Election Year”
- Idlewild Presbyterian Church (Memphis), Adult Formation: September 2024
 - “Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer in an Election Year”
- Calvary Episcopal Church (Memphis), Adult Formation Form: May 2024
 - “Christian Nationalism” in “Fear Not: Facing Difficult Topics as Faithful People” Series
- Calvary Episcopal Church (Memphis), Adult Formation Forum: November, 2023
 - “Understanding the Conflict in Israel and Palestine”
- Rhetoric and Religious Traditions, An Interdisciplinary Conference Sponsored by the University of Memphis: October 2023
 - “The Kingdom of God in American Christianity: Rhetoric of Empire and Rhetoric of Resistance”
- American Academy of Religion, Annual Meeting: November 2022
 - “Advancing the Kingdom of God: Evangelical Political Theology and Secularization”
- Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Annual Meeting: November 2022
 - “Repairing Harm: Cross-Case Analysis of Efforts Among Dutch and American Christians to Reckon with Sullied Legacies”

- Idlewild Presbyterian Church (Memphis), Adult Formation Two-Week Series: September, 2022
 - “Mission as Repair: A Comparative Perspective on Efforts among Christians in Europe and the U.S. to Reckon with Colonial Legacies of Slavery and Migration”
- Centre for Church and Mission in the West (Kampen, the Netherlands), “Salvation in the Twenty-First Century” Conference: June 2022
 - “White Christian Nationalism, Salvation, and the Kingdom of God”
- Idlewild Presbyterian Church (Memphis), Adult Formation Class: October, 2021
 - “Christians’ Empire or Love’s Domain? Exploring Jesus Vision of the Kingdom of God”
- Calvary Episcopal Church (Memphis), Adult Formation Forum: October, 2021
 - “Relationships are Never Zero-Sum: Mutuality and Care in Jesus’ Vision of God’s Domain”
- Association of Theological Schools, Committee on Race and Ethnicity Conference: Ministry in a Multiracial Context: October, 2021
 - Co-presenter: “Effectively Assessing the Intercultural Competence of Faculty, Staff, and Students”
- North Park Theological Seminary, Annual Symposium on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture—The Bible and Politics: September, 2021
 - “Love’s Domain or White Christians’ Dominion? A Missiological Response to the American Culture Wars”
- First Unitarian Church (Memphis), Adult Education Forum: February, 2021
 - “‘Unity’ and American Pluralism: Promise and Peril in the Contemporary Moment”
- Memphis Theological Seminary, Sunday Morning Seminary Program: October 2020
 - “For Thine is the Kingdom: Christianity and Empire, Past and Present”
- First Unitarian Church (Memphis), Adult Education Forum: October, 2020
 - “On the Cusp of an Election, A Culture at War”
- Memphis Theological Seminary, Chapel Sermon: October 2020
 - “The Community of the Suffering Christ”
- Memphis Theological Seminary, “We the People” Constitution Day Panelist: September 2020
- Idlewild Presbyterian Church (Memphis), Adult Formation Class: February 2020
 - “World Christianity and Christian Mission”
- Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Annual Meeting: October 2019
 - “Probing the Cultures Wars in the Trump Era”
 - Author Meets Critic Respondent for *God’s Internationalists: World Vision and the Age of Evangelical Humanitarianism* by David King
- Church of the Holy Apostles (Collierville), Rector’s Forum: September 2019
 - “Turning From Retribution, Turning Toward Reconciliation”
- Memphis Theological Seminary Scholars’ Week, Evangelism/Mission Panelist: March 2019
- Germantown United Methodist Church, Adult Education Plenary: February 2019
 - “The Good News of God’s Commonwealth”
- St. Mary’s Episcopal Cathedral (Memphis), Adult Forum Three-Week Series: October-November 2018
 - “Twentieth Century Saints: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Dorothy Day, and Oscar Romero”
- Bowen Public Lecture Series, Memphis Theological Seminary: April 2018 (given every three years by a selected member of the faculty)
 - “Not Your Parents’ Culture Wars: A Society Increasingly at Odds”
 - “Beyond the Culture Wars: Toward an Alternative Path for Christian Engagement”

- Memphis Theological Seminary, Chapel Sermon: April 2016
 - “Making All Things New”
- Germantown Presbyterian Church, Plenary Presentation: October 2015
 - “International Congregational Partnerships”
- Mano a Mano International Panel: May 2015
 - “Reframing Community Development: A Conversation Among People of Faith”
- Texas Mission Conference, Keynote Presentation: March 2015
 - “Promises and Perils of the Sister Church Model of Mission”
- Graduate and Faculty Division--Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, St. Cloud State University
 - Facilitator: “Engaging With Uncommon Decency” Series, Fall 2014
- Moody Bible Institute, Global Theology Course, Panelist on Mission, November 2014
- Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Meeting: October 2014
 - “Between and Rock and a Hard Place: Navigating Economic Disparity in Mission-Based International Partnerships”
- American Society of Missiology, Annual Meeting: June 2014
 - “Promise and Peril: Evaluating the Sister Church Model of Mission”
- Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Annual Meeting: November 2013
 - “Digital Church for the Brokenhearted: Baby Loss and Religion Online” (with Jenell Paris)
- Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research: September 2013
 - “Dark Night of the Soul: Tragedy and Suffering in the Life of Faith” (with Jenell Paris)
- International Conference on Perinatal and Infant Death: April 2013
 - Poster Presentation: “Religion Online and Bereavement: Stillbirth, Neonatal Loss, and Parent Religiosity” (with Jenell Paris)
- Saint John’s University School of Theology·Seminary/Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research: April 2013
 - Respondent to Lecture by Sally McGill: “Dual Belonging: Why Can’t I Be Both Catholic and Presbyterian?”
- Washington Community Fellowship (Washington, DC): December 2012
 - “God’s Gonna Trouble the Water”
- Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Annual Meeting: November 2012
 - “Blogging Baby Loss: Bereaved Parents, Religion, and Community” (with Jenell Paris)
- Messiah College Fall Lecture Series: October 2012
 - “Dark Night of the Soul: Tragedy and Suffering in the Life of Faith” (with Jenell Paris)
- Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, “Saving the World? The Changing Terrain of American Protestant Missions” Conference: March 2011
 - “The Sister Church Phenomenon: A Case Study of the Restructuring of American Protestantism Against the Backdrop of Globalization”
- Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Annual Meeting: October 2010
 - “Molding Mission: Collective Action Frames and Sister Parish Participation
- Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals Missions Project Regional Symposium: September 2010
 - “Relationships Between Protestant Churches in the Global South and North America”

- Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Annual Meeting: October 2009
 - “‘Sibling’ Encounters: Christians Crossing Hemispheres through Sister Church Relationships”
- Association for the Sociology of Religion, Annual Meeting: August 2009
 - “The Sister Church Phenomenon: A Case Study of the Institutional Restructuring of North American Religion”
- Association for the Study of Religion, Economics and Culture, Annual Meeting: November 2007
 - “Rational Choice and its Discontents: A Latin American Case Study”
- Church Twinning International Twenty-Sixth Anniversary Celebration: September 2007
 - Panelist: “Metro Atlanta’s Cross-Cultural Twinning Relationships”
- American Academy of Religion, Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting: March 2007
 - “Revisiting Latin American Religious Ferment: A Multi-Pronged Approach.”
- University of Maryland History Graduate Students' Association Annual Conference: February 2007
 - Panel Chair and Commentator: “American Protestantism: Redefining Religious Identity”

Institutional Service

- Steering Committee, Association of Theological Schools Reaccreditation Self-Study, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2023-present
- Doctor of Ministry Project Advisor, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2020-present
- Curricular Mapping and Course Scheduling Committee, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2017-present
- Curriculum Committee, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2015-present
- Research Ethics Committee Chair, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2016-2020, 2023-present
- Faculty Advisor, Memphis Theological Seminary Advocates for Gun Safety, 2015-present
- Memphis Interfaith Coalition for Action and Hope (MICAHA), member representative, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2019-present
- Doctor of Ministry Advisory Committee, 2023-present
- Doctor of Ministry Degree Review Committee, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2022-2023
- Search Committee, Director of Formation and Supervised Ministry Position, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2021
- Faculty Chair/President’s Cabinet, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2019-2021
- Master of Arts in Christian Ministry Degree Review Committee, 2019-2020
- Faculty Mentor, Louisville Institute Post-Doctoral Fellows, 2018-2020
- Cultivating Educational Capacity, Memphis Theological Seminary Initiative Chair, Committee on Race and Ethnicity, Association of Theological Schools, 2018-2021
- Faculty Mentor, Student Senate Room in the Inn Initiative, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2019
- Planning and Evaluation Committee, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2018-2019
- Advisory Committee, Thriving in Ministry Grant, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2017-2019
- Faculty Secretary, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2017-2018
- Community Engagement/Public Lecture Committee, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2017-2018

- Search Committee, Director for the Center for Faith and Imagination Position, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2017-2018
- Curricular Review Subcommittee, Association of Theological Schools Reaccreditation Self-Study, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2016-2017
- Judicial/Academic Grievance Committee Chair, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2016-2017
- Search Committee, Wesleyan Studies Faculty Position, Memphis Theological Seminary, 2015-2016
- Alumni Representative, Wabash Center Graduate Programs Teaching Initiative Symposium, The Catholic University of America, 2012
- Women Graduate Students' Event Coordinator, Catholic University School of Theology and Religious Studies, 2006-2007
- Student Association (STRSSA) Representative, Catholic University School of Theology and Religious Studies, 2005-2006

Professional Development

- Association of Theological Schools, Mid-Career Faculty Intensive with *The Conversation*, 2021
- “The Holocaust and the Christian Tradition,” Seminar on Ethics, Religion and the Holocaust, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2021
- “Harm, Healing, and Human Dignity,” Training Seminar on Restorative Justice, Catholic Mobilizing Network, 2020
- Fundamentals of Online Teaching Certificate (3 CEUs), University of Wisconsin–Madison, Division of Continuing Studies, 2019
- Educational Models and Practices in Theological Education Project: Faculty Development Participant, Association of Theological Schools, 2017-2018
- “Religion and Globalization,” Calvin College Seminars in Christian Scholarship, 2010 (Miroslav Volf, Director)
- “Congregations and Religious Diversity in Contemporary America,” Calvin College Seminars in Christian Scholarship, 2008 (R. Stephen Warner, Director)

Collaborations and Service to the Guild

- Steering Group and Co-chair of Legacies of Slavery Stream, DARE Forum 2025 (Harare), Council for World Mission (London), 2023-present
- Steering Group on a Theology of Reparations, Council for World Mission (London), 2023-present
- Academic Senate, Institute for Christian Studies (Toronto, Ontario), 2021-present
- Ph.D. Dissertation External Reader-Examiner, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2021
- Convener for Memphis Working Group of Scholars Studying Religion and the Social Sciences, 2019-2020
- Instructor at Christian Brothers University (Professor Exchange Program), Spring 2020
- Mentor, Missional Leadership Clergy Cohort, Luther Seminary, 2018-2020
- Peer Reviewer for *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion*, 2015, 2017, 2021, 2023
- Peer Reviewer for *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*, 2017, 2019, 2020
- Peer Reviewer for *Journal of World Christianity*, 2011

- Peer Reviewer for *New Theology Review*, 2015
- Peer Reviewer for *Religions*, 2014, 2017
- Peer Reviewer for *Review of Religious Research*, 2014, 2015

Awards and Fellowships

- Protestant Theological University, Groningen, the Netherlands, Research Fellowship, 2022
- Jack Shand Research Award, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 2011
- “Saving the World? The Changing Terrain of American Protestant Missions” Research Grant, Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, 2009-2010
- Dissertation Defended *With Distinction*, 2009
- Louisville Institute Dissertation Fellowship, 2008-2009
- Hubbard Dissertation Fellowship: Catholic University of America, School of Theology and Religious Studies, 2008
- John Quasten Doctoral Scholarship: Catholic University of America, School of Theology and Religious Studies, 2003-2006

Teaching Competencies

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| • American Religious History | • Religion and American Culture |
| • Community Engagement and Development | • Theologies of Religion |
| • Comparative Religion/World Religions | • Transformative/Restorative Justice |
| • History and Practice of Christian Mission | • Social Justice |
| • Missiology | • Sociology of Religion |
| • Mission in the Context of Globalization | • World Christianities |

Professional Society Memberships

American Academy of Religion
 American Society of Church History
 American Society of Missiology

Association for the Sociology of Religion
 Society for the Scientific Study of Religion

Community Service

- Parent Network Volunteer: Midtown Montessori School, Campus Elementary School, University Middle School, University High School, 2015-present
- Memphis First United Methodist Church, Youth Confirmation and Formation Leader, 2022-present
- Organizer, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, 2015-present
- Shelby County Health Department, Covid-19 Vaccine Site Volunteer, 2021
- Memphis Interfaith Coalition for Action and Hope (MICAHA) core team, St. Mary’s Episcopal Cathedral, 2019-2021
- Youth Formation Volunteer, St. Mary’s Episcopal Cathedral, 2017-2020
- Board of Directors, Thistle and Bee Enterprises, 2016-2017

- International Cesarean Awareness Network Speaker, Montgomery Chapter, 2012
- Volunteer, Lancaster Farm Fresh Cooperative CSA Program, 2011
- Board of Elders (2009), Member Care Team (2011-2012), and Youth Faith Formation Volunteer (2012), Washington Community Fellowship
- Board of Directors, Urban Family Development, 2004-2008
- Tutor (2001-2002) and Tutoring Program Director (2006), Urban Family Development