

March 10, 2017

Dear Members of the Seminary Community,

I am aware that many in our community are deeply concerned by the invitation of the Kuyper Center at our seminary to have the Reverend Tim Keller come to campus next month. He will speak on the work of the theologian Lesslie Newbigin, and receive their annual prize as one who embodies their aspirations for extending the mission of the church in society. The focus of the concerns that have come to me is that Rev. Keller is a leader of the Presbyterian Church in America, which prevents women and LGBTQ+ persons from full participation in the ordained ministry to Word and Sacrament.

Our seminary embraces full inclusion for ordained leadership of the church. We clearly stand in prophetic opposition to the PCA and many other Christian denominations that do not extend the full exercise of Spirit filled gifts for women or those of various sexual orientations. We know that many have been hurt by being excluded from ministry, and we have worked hard to be an affirming place of preparation for service to the church.

The seminary has many student organizations and several theological centers that bring speakers to campus. While my office issues the official invitations to campus, I don't practice censorship over the choices of these organizations, even when I or the seminary disagree with some of the convictions of these speakers. It is also a core conviction of our seminary to be a serious academic institution that will sometimes bring controversial speakers to campus because we refuse to exclude voices within the church. Diversity of theological thought and practice has long been a hallmark of our school. And so we have had a wide variety of featured speakers on campus including others who come from traditions that do not ordain women or LGBTQ+ individuals, such as many wings of the Protestant church, and bishops of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic communions.

So my hope is that we will receive Rev. Keller in a spirit of grace and academic freedom, realizing we can listen to someone with whom many, including me, strongly disagree about this critical issue of justice.

Sincerely,

Craig Barnes

M. Craig Barnes
President
Princeton Theological Seminary
P.O. Box 821
Princeton, NJ 08542-0803
(609) 497-7800
president@ptsem.edu