

## CALLING THE CHURCH TO OPPOSE CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

WHEREAS “Christian nationalism seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America’s constitutional democracy. Christian nationalism demands Christianity be privileged by the State and implies that to be a good American, one must be Christian. It often overlaps with and provides cover for white supremacy and racial subjugation.” ([christiansagainstchristiannationalism.org](http://christiansagainstchristiannationalism.org)); and

WHEREAS Christian Nationalism, while present in varying degrees throughout modern history, has taken on more aggressive and overt form in contemporary United States public life; and

WHEREAS Christian Nationalism promotes, with violent rhetoric and authoritarian approaches to civic life and public policy, an extremist ideology of social hierarchy, including white supremacy, antisemitism (and other forms of religious bigotry), xenophobia, persecution and scapegoating of LGBTQ+ persons, misogyny, and ableism; and

WHEREAS Christian Nationalism appropriates the name of Jesus Christ and the language and imagery of scripture to promote this ideology, in direct contradiction to the gospel Jesus preached, a gospel of love and grace, that The United Methodist Church cherishes (Luke 4:16-21); and

WHEREAS Christian Nationalism in practice denies the imago Dei in every human being (Genesis 1:26-27) as it seeks to diminish, control, subjugate, and even erase persons and points of view that do not concur with or conform to its ideology; and

WHEREAS Christian Nationalism misrepresents our faith to our neighbors, thereby, turning people away from the life-giving love of God, by identifying Christianity with hate, social hierarchy, fear of the “other,” and violence; and

WHEREAS Christian Nationalism runs counter to the very heart of The United Methodist Church identity by promoting division and stratification of the human family to the detriment of the unity and equality that our baptisms beget (Galatians 3:28) and the Lord’s Table celebrates (1 Corinthians 11:17-34); and

WHEREAS Christian Nationalism is currently making significant inroads as an effective political ideology, seizing power in civic life from hyper-local expressions of government to the halls of national policy-making institutions, as evidenced in a dramatic rise in book-banning, LGBTQ+ erasure in public life, revisionist histories and curricula that refuse to reckon with systemic and individual racism, and many other institutionalized forms of bigotry and bullying:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Oklahoma Conference of The United Methodist Church denounces Christian Nationalism in all its forms as a distortion of the Christian faith, and commits to opposing it wherever it appears, for the sake of the gospel and the good of the human family; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Church in all its expressions commit to educating ourselves and our constituencies about the societal and spiritual dangers of Christian Nationalism, how to talk about Christian Nationalism theologically, and how to counter it in both ecclesial and public life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Church in all its expressions will continue to prayerfully discern, confess, and repent of our own complicity with Christian Nationalism; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Church calls on its leaders and members to take every possible opportunity to speak out and act boldly against Christian Nationalism, ensuring that the love of God known to us in Jesus Christ may not be distorted by this ugly and false appropriation of our faith, but proclaimed with generosity and grace to all peoples, from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth.

## **BACKGROUND**

Christian Nationalism is a cultural framework that fuses a radically exclusionary form of Christian identity with the public political and civic participation of a nation's citizens. Christian Nationalism contends that government and public policy at every level of civic life (from national government to state and provincial legislatures to hyper-local boards, such as school boards, library boards, city councils, and the like) should reflect values identified with an extremely restrictive Christian ideology that upholds nativism, white supremacy, xenophobia, and heteropatriarchy. Christian Nationalism asserts that this form of Christianity should be privileged in public life over other belief systems, and that power belongs in the hands of persons who are white, natural-born citizens.

In most cases, individuals and institutions that subscribe to Christian Nationalism do not call themselves "nationalists" (although some public figures have begun defiantly claiming the identity as it gains political traction). The Christian Nationalist ideology is most often asserted in the public square as "patriotism" or "pride in (or love for) my country." But Christian Nationalism is quite distinct from true patriotism.

Patriotism entails love and appreciation for one's homeland and certain features of its existence, including the highest ideals of its founders and the shared possibilities for its good future; and produces humble gratitude for one's citizenship, honesty about the nation's shortcomings, a commitment to work for the common good of fellow citizens, and a spirit of generous sharing of the gifts afforded by one's citizenship.

Christian Nationalism, by contrast, privileges certain citizens over others; imagines one's homeland to be under constant threat of "takeover" by those who do not share the privileged identity; and produces protectionist rhetoric, policy, and even violence in service of establishing social hierarchies and safeguarding privilege.

Patriotism operates from and engenders love for one's nation and neighbors; Christian Nationalism operates out of fear and actively seeks diminishment unto disappearance of the "other."

As Christian Nationalism has gained a foothold in the governments, policies, and political discourse at every level of public life in the United States, and its influence is growing in Canada, many organizations have formed or have expanded their work to combat its toxic influence in public life and its ugly distortion of Christian faith, identity, and theology. Organizations that are leading this work include:

- Faithful America, an ecumenical association “organizing the faithful to challenge Christian nationalism and white supremacy and to renew the church’s prophetic role in building a more free and just society.” <https://www.faithfulamerica.org>
- Christians Against Christian Nationalism, a project of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty. <https://www.christiansagainstchristiannationalism.org>
- Public Religion Research Institute, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to conducting independent research at the intersection of religion, culture, and public policy, which has made Christian Nationalism a focus of recent reporting. <https://www.prii.org>
- Word and Way, a publication dedicated to consideration of Christian witness in U.S. American civic life, with Disciples pastor Beau Underwood as a contributing editor and Disciples pastor Robert Cornwall as a regular book reviewer. <https://wordandway.org>
- Christian Nationalism has been the topic of any number of books by theologians, sociologists, journalists, political theorists, and historians with the aim of disclosing and opposing its toxic influence on both public civic life and Christian public witness. Among the most recent and helpful books are these:
  - Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry (sociologists of religion), *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*, 2022.
  - Pamela Cooper-White (professor of pastoral care), *The Psychology of Christian Nationalism: Why People are Drawn In and How to Talk Across the Divide*, 2022.
  - Angela Denker (Lutheran pastor and journalist), *Red State Christians: A Journey into White Christian Nationalism and the Wreckage it Leaves Behind*, 2022.
  - Philip Gorski and Samuel Perry (sociologists of religion), *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy*, 2022.
  - Paul Miller (Christian scholar and political theorist), *The Religion of American Greatness: What’s Wrong with Christian Nationalism*, 2022. (Especially helpful on the difference between nationalism and patriotism.)
  - Anthea Butler (historian of U.S. American and African-American Christianity), *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 2021.

Christian Nationalism is the topic of any number of articles, reports, discussion guides, and podcasts, such as these:

- “What Is Christian Nationalism?” Paul D. Miller, February 3, 2021  
<https://www.umc.org/en/content/what-is-christian-nationalism>
- “Methodists and Christian Nationalism” by David F. Watson, October 4, 2022  
<https://wesleyancovenant.org/2022/10/03/methodists-and-christian-nationalism/>
- White Christian Nationalism, Hate and Extremism: An Interview with Dr. Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon  
<https://www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/white-christian-nationalism-hate-and-extremism-a-n-interview-with-dr-joseph-wiinikka-lydon-1801>
- “Methodism & Christian Nationalism” by Mark Tooley  
<https://firebrandmag.com/articles/methodism-amp-christian-nationalism>
- “What is Christian nationalism?” Rev. Ryan Dunn  
<https://www.umc.org/en/content/what-is-christian-nationalism>
- “A Christian’s Thoughts on the Problem of Christian Nationalism” by Bill McKibben, April 18, 2023  
<https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/a-christians-thoughts-on-the-problem-of-christian-nationalism>
- UM Insight <https://um-insight.net/topics/christian-nationalism/>
- The Un-Wokeness Of Christian Nationalism By Paul R. Graves June 12, 2023  
<https://um-insight.net/perspectives/the-un-wokeness-of-christian-nationalism/>
- Andrew Whitehead’s articles from Time:  
<https://time.com/6214724/christian-nationalism-threats-united-states/?fbclid=IwAR13yxpHFqxlf2dMqZziT30DIN5PGJWPOZu0uRmdAgD0gBYcfH8q2cWNYuE>
- <https://time.com/6052051/anti-democratic-threat-christian-nationalism/>
- Diana Butler Bass’ 3-part series, articles with discussion questions for small groups:  
[https://dianabutlerbass.substack.com/p/understanding-christian-nationalism?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_campaign=post\\_embed&utm\\_medium=email](https://dianabutlerbass.substack.com/p/understanding-christian-nationalism?utm_source=substack&utm_campaign=post_embed&utm_medium=email)
- Word and Way podcast episode featuring Lutheran pastor & journalist Angela Denker:  
<https://wordandway.org/2022/09/14/angela-denker-on-white-christian-nationalism/>
- “Christian Nationalism 101” from Word & Way:  
<https://wordandway.org/2022/09/15/christian-nationalism-101/>
- “White Nation Under God,” five podcast/video episodes from pastor and public historian Jemar Tisby: <https://jemartisby.substack.com/p/wnug-ep-5-how-i-escaped-the-web-of>
- “Canadian Christian nationalism not Christian, it’s not Canadian, or patriotic either,” by Michael Coren  
<https://www.thestar.com/amp/opinion/contributors/2022/08/17/canadian-christian-nationalism-not-christian-its-not-canadian-or-patriotic-either.html>

These resources (and so many more) are essential to unmask the principles of Christian Nationalism as profoundly not Christian and profoundly dangerous to the health, well-being, and common good of the human family in the United States.