

# Evangelical Leaders Statement Condemning Christian Nationalism's Role in the January 6th Insurrection

As leaders in the broad evangelical community, we recognize and condemn the role Christian Nationalism played in the violent, racist, anti-American insurrection at the United States Capitol on January 6.

We recognize the damage done by radicalized Christian Nationalism in the world, the church, and in the lives of individuals and communities.

We know from experts on radicalization that one of the key elements is a belief that your actions are "blessed by God" and ordained by your faith. This is what allows so many people who hold to a Christian Nationalism view to be radicalized.

While we come from varied backgrounds and political stances, we stand together against the perversion of the Christian faith as we saw on January 6, 2021. We also stand against the theology and the conditions that led to the insurrection.

Over the centuries, there are moments when the Church, the trans-national Body of Christ-followers, has seen distortions of the faith that warranted a response. In ages past, the Church has responded by holding emergency councils in order to unilaterally denounce mutations of the Christian faith, and to affirm the core values at the heart of Christianity. It is in that spirit that we unite our voices to declare that there is a version of American nationalism that is trying to camouflage itself as Christianity – and it is a heretical version of our faith.

Just as many Muslim leaders have felt the need to denounce distorted, violent versions of their faith, we feel the urgent need to denounce this violent mutation of our faith. What we saw manifest itself in the insurrection at the Capitol on January 6, 2021, is a threat to our democracy, but it is also a threat to orthodox Christian faith. The word "Christian" means "Christ-like." As leaders in the Church, we do not agree on everything, but we can agree on this – Christians should live in a way that honors Jesus, and reminds the world of Him.

As Jesus himself said, "They will know that you are my disciples by the way you love" (John 13:35). No Christian can defend the unChristlike behavior of those who committed the violence on January 6. Not only was it anti-democratic, but it was also anti-Christian.

On January 6 we saw the flags claiming Trump's name, calling for violence, and raising the name of Jesus. We saw images of a police officer being beaten with an American flag and another being crushed in a doorway. We know an officer was murdered in the act of insurrection. We witnessed the cross and the gallow being erected. We saw and heard the prayer the insurrectionists prayed from the Senate desk in Jesus' name. Many of us recognized the content, the structure, and the style of that prayer as matching our own churches and faith. But we reject this prayer being used to justify the violent act and attempted overthrow of the Government.

We have witnessed the rise of violent acts by radicalized extremists using the name of Christ for its validity in the past, including the deadly actions in Charlottesville in 2017. We join our voices to condemn it publicly and theologically.

We recognize that evangelicalism, and white evangelicalism in particular, has been susceptible to the heresy of Christian nationalism because of a long history of faith leaders accommodating white supremacy. We choose to speak out now because we do not want to be quiet accomplices in this ongoing sin. But we also want to celebrate the long tradition of prophetic Christian witness in this nation that has challenged white supremacy and violent Christian nationalism. Though the KKK in the South claimed the symbol of a Christian cross, prophetic Black Christians formed and disciplined children in Birmingham, Alabama who led a nonviolent witness in the face of dogs and firehoses. Though an appeal to "biblical values" has been used to demonize immigrants, undocumented Christians in America today have led a movement that insists upon the dignity and full humanity of all undocumented people. There is a powerful Christian witness for the common good in our past and in our present. White evangelicals in America can grow in faithfulness by following this cloud of witnesses, including the many white freedom-fighters who risked their lives standing up for love in the face of violence and hatred.

We urge all pastors, ministers, and priests to boldly make it clear that a commitment to Jesus Christ is incompatible with calls to violence, support of white Christian nationalism, conspiracy theories, and all religious and racial prejudice.

Just as it was tragically inconsistent for Christians in the 20th Century to support the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi ideology, it is unthinkable for Christians to support the Proud Boys, Oathkeepers, QAnon, 3 Percenters, America Firsters, and similar groups.

We urge faith leaders to engage pastorally with those who support or sympathize with these groups, and make it clear that our churches are not neutral about these matters: we are on the side of democracy, equality for all people, anti-racism, and the common good of all people.

Instead of seeing the United States as God's chosen nation we thank God for the church around the world that calls people of all races, tongues and nations to the knowledge and love of God. Instead of seeing any particular political leader or party as divinely appointed, we believe in the prophetic and pastoral ministry of the church to all political leaders and parties. Instead of power through violence, we believe in and seek to imitate the powerful, servant love practiced by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our faith will not allow us to remain silent at such a time as this. We are also aware that our world needs more than a statement right now...we need action.

Every one of the signers of this declaration is committed to taking concrete steps to put flesh on our words. We will combat bad theology with better theology. We will resist fear with love. We will tell the truth about our nation's history.

We will seek to repair and heal the wounds of the past. We will seek racial justice on a personal, ecclesial, and systemic level. We will support organizations led by people of color. We will listen to and amplify the voices of people of faith who have been marginalized by the colonizing force of white supremacy and Christian Nationalism.

We will do our best to be faithful to Jesus, and to those Christ called "the least of these."

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