

Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania



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Southwest Pennsylvania Theologians Respond to ‘Christian Nationalism’

PITTSBURGH— Today, the Theology and Education Committee of Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania releases [“A Statement of Concern and Counsel on ‘Christian Nationalism.’”](#) The committee—comprised of theologians and pastors from diverse Christian traditions—calls Christians to live as responsible, discerning, and patriotic citizens and to reject racism, violence, and sectarianism.

While noting the important roles of Christians and Christian ideas in America’s founding and subsequent history and encouraging church members to exercise their civic duties both under the guidance of their faith and in conversation with others, the statement rejects ideas contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ which have been broadly associated with “Christian nationalism.” It identifies five key errors:

- The rhetoric of “Holy War” and the characterization of political opponents as demonic or evil;
- The identification of the United States as the “chosen nation” of God;
- The use of violence to resist perceived persecution;
- The confusion of racial, ethnic, or national identity with Christian identity; and,
- The false identification of Jews, Muslims, immigrants, and others as existential threats to American society.

The statement briefly discusses and refutes each of these errors, referring to Holy Scripture. It offers counsel as to how Christians may energetically participate in civic life while avoiding the errors of “Christian nationalism,” listing activities Christians may and should pursue, those they should avoid, and those where caution is advised. A conclusion emphasizes the difference between “Christian nationalism” and patriotism.

While the statement itself is not the official or authoritative teaching of any church body represented in Christian Associates, an appendix refers readers to the teaching documents or other statements of various denominations and organizations on political life and faithful citizenship. In this way, readers are urged to become familiar with their own church body's reflections on the relationship between citizenship and discipleship.

“Our Theology & Education Committee includes members from widely diverse traditions,” said the Rev. Liddy Barlow, Executive Minister. “After three years of dialogue on this topic, we have found common ground to speak a clear and timely message to the Church and to our communities: Christians are and may be patriots, but the highest loyalty of any Christian is not to any nation but to our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The full statement is available at casp.org. A downloadable printable pamphlet is appropriate for sharing in churches. Christian Associates will be distributing the statement broadly to churches across Southwest Pennsylvania; to ecumenical organizations nationwide; and to local, state, and national elected officials. The Theology and Education Committee plans an event in early 2027 for local pastors and lay leaders to discuss the statement.

Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania brings together 29 Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant church bodies in the 10 counties of Southwest Pennsylvania to promote unity among diverse Christians and to work together for the common good. Its Theology and Education Committee is made up of pastors and theologians from Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches in the region who are appointed to serve by their bishops or executives.

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Appendix:

Members, Theology & Education Committee of Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania:

The Very Rev. George Johnson, Chairperson, *Orthodox Church in America*

The Rev. Dr. Radu Bordeianu, *Greek Orthodox Church*

The Rev. Canon Dr. Catherine Brall, *Episcopal Church*

The Rev. Maurice C. Frontz III, *North American Lutheran Church*

The Rev. Dr. John J. Lolla, Jr., *Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

The Rev. Dr. James F. Podlesny, O.S.B., *Catholic Diocese of Greensburg*

The Rev. Michael R. Peck, *Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh*

The Rev. Dr. Daniel P. Smail, *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

The Rev. Dr. Kari Smail, *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

The Rev. Liddy Barlow, Executive Minister, *United Church of Christ*

Previous committee members who also contributed to this statement include:

The Rev. Benjamin E. Barr, *Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh*

The Rev. Robert C. Hawk, *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*