



## **LETTER: Iowa Faith Leaders Against Christian Nationalism**

As faith leaders and clergy from different traditions, we join with one voice to name the fear we hold for our nation's future with the rise in Christian nationalism and we call out the harm it is doing to our country, state, and communities. On the 250th anniversary of the signing of our nation's Declaration of Independence, we cling to the promise of religious freedom for all. We are steadfast in our commitment to keep religion and government separate to ensure a healthy democracy and a future for our nation in which all people may flourish.

Christian nationalism is a political ideology that twists the words of Christianity and misuses its influence. It is antithetical to the love of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ who commands his followers to love our neighbors and stand with the marginalized. As Christian nationalism is a perversion of Christian teachings, it frequently uses them as justification for discrimination and violence against other faith traditions.

Our faith traditions are rooted in love for all people. Together we are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Unitarian Universalist, Hindu, Buddhist, and more. Our traditions teach us to care for our neighbors, tend to the sick, feed the hungry, and welcome the stranger.

Hear the words of many faiths that compel us to love one another – not cause harm or promote hate.

- Christianity: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." - Mark 12:30-31, NRSVUE
- Judaism: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah. All the rest is commentary." - Hillel, Talmud, Shabbat 31a
- Islam: "Serve God and join not any partners with Him; and do good – to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess." - The Holy Qur'an, al-Nisaa 4:36
- Sikhism: "I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all." - Guru Granth Sahib, pg. 1299
- Unitarian Universalism: First Principle of UU tradition, "Uphold the inherent worth and dignity of every person." – UUA.org
- Hinduism: "This is the sum of the duty; do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you." - Mahabharata 5:1517
- Buddhism: "Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." - Udanavarga (5:18)

In contrast, Christian nationalism is not Christianity. It is not a faith or religion. Christian nationalism is an ideology whose purpose is to concentrate power to serve and benefit the few rather than the many.

Christian nationalism teaches that the United States is a “Christian nation” and must give favor to Christians. It promotes a false narrative that our nation was founded for Christians on Christian principles. It rejects separation of religion and government and teaches that to be a “true” citizen, one must be a (conservative evangelical) Christian. The ideology advocates for protecting a “traditional” social hierarchy, particularly regarding gender roles, sexuality, and the nuclear family. It emphasizes that Christianity should hold a dominant influence over societal and public institutions to protect the nation from moral decay.

To uphold its teachings, the Christian nationalist agenda promotes policies and actions which:

- Diminish rights for the LGBTQ community, women, people of color, and immigrants.
- Undermine our public schools that serve the needs of all children and shift taxpayer dollars to enhance private, religious institutions.
- Insert one extreme interpretation of Christianity over all other religious traditions into public schools, government, and national life.
- Target religious minority groups causing a rise in hate crimes.
- Promote censoring and banning of books, entertainment, and art based on an extreme interpretation of Christian beliefs.
- Dismantle secular government and the separation of religion and government.
- Whitewash the history of racism and systemic oppression in our nation’s history.

We call upon our elected officials to turn away from those who promote Christian nationalism and its agenda. We urge elected officials to uphold the rights of all people, protect the public institutions that serve all, and safeguard our democracy.

On the 250th anniversary of our nation exerting its independence, we are joining our voices together to name the harms of Christian nationalism to our democracy and its people. We denounce the ideology, its agenda, and its misuse of Christianity. We are committed to dismantling Christian nationalism and building a path forward to benefit all.

*The Iowa Faith Leaders Against Christian Nationalism letter was signed by 110 Iowa faith leaders from Christian, Jewish, Unitarian Universalist, and Hindu traditions. The letter includes the endorsement of four Christian bishops and denominational leaders and faith leaders from 11 different Christian denominations and movements.*