

SPECIAL SECTION:
Christians take a stand against
Christian nationalism

BJC unveils new look

AMANDA TYLER on new ways
to lead the conversation

HOLLY HOLLMAN on the
Supreme Court's cross decision

BJC Fellows prepare for religious
liberty advocacy

REPORT

FROM THE

CAPITAL

BJC Magazine



BJC Executive Director Amanda Tyler speaks at the BJC Luncheon on June 21, 2019, unveiling our new logo. Learn more on pages 6-9.

Go beyond these pages: **Online resources**

This edition of *Report from the Capital* introduces you to the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty's new logo and branding. It also has a special section dedicated to exploring Christian nationalism and how people across the country are standing against it.

Learn more about BJC's new look on pages 6-9 of this magazine. Check out the all-new [BJCOnline.org](https://bjconline.org) to watch our fresh videos and explore our expanded resources.

If you read the digital edition of this magazine, click on the links on pages 6-9 to activate the videos and podcasts. Visit [BJCOnline.org/report-from-the-capital](https://bjconline.org/report-from-the-capital) for a link to the digital flip-through edition.

This summer, BJC helped launch the Christians Against Christian Nationalism campaign, profiled on pages 10-13. Visit ChristiansAgainstChristianNationalism.org to read and sign the statement calling out the dangers of that political ideology, and share it on social media with the hashtag #ChristianNationalism.

As seen on pages 14-15, the BJC Podcast series on Christian nationalism continues each Wednesday through October 2. You can subscribe to the BJC Podcast on most podcasting platforms by searching for "BJC Podcast." If you use a service that doesn't have the BJC Podcast, let us know at [bjc@BJCOnline.org](mailto:bjc@bjconline.org).

BJC advocacy trainings begin this fall

Want to get the tools and resources you need to make a difference in your community? We are coming to you. This fall, BJC is beginning advocacy trainings and issue briefings in cities across the country.

Each training will brief you on the major issues related to religious liberty as well as Christian nationalism, and it will equip you to effectively share your concerns with lawmakers. The sessions are open to anyone who wants to become a more empowered advocate on church-state issues.

If you would like more information about upcoming advocacy trainings — or if you are interested in hosting one in the future — contact BJC Associate Director of Mobilization Christine Browder at cbrowder@BJCOnline.org.

You can join the BJC Advocacy Team by signing up for our emails at [BJCOnline.org/subscribe](https://bjconline.org/subscribe) and selecting "advocacy efforts" to be notified via email when urgent action is needed to protect religious liberty for all.



Upcoming BJC Advocacy Trainings and Issue Briefings

September 14: Denver, Colorado

October 2-3: Dallas, Texas

November 4: San Antonio, Texas

November 6-7: Houston, Texas

November 13-14: Fort Worth, Texas

November 17-18: Little Rock, Arkansas

November 21: Round Rock, Texas

November 22: Waco, Texas

*Interested in hosting a future
BJC Advocacy Training? Contact
Christine Browder at
cbrowder@BJCOnline.org.*

Leading in new ways

By Amanda Tyler, BJC Executive Director

Can you tell that I'm excited about BJC's new look and brand? The cover photo of this issue of the magazine is from June 21, a day of celebration for the entire BJC community as we unveiled our new logo and launched our revamped website at BJCOnline.org. I hope you'll enjoy exploring the numerous tools — such as the videos, animations and podcasts we have available — that will help you lead conversations in your communities about protecting faith freedom for all. Let me know what you think and how we can provide you the resources you need as you advocate for religious freedom.

We are grateful for generous friends of BJC over many decades who have supported our work, allowing us to make these critical investments so we can ensure that our messaging meets the times. Our mission-focused programs have not changed dramatically since our last branding refresh or website design, but the world in which we work has. Telling the story of why we support faith freedom for all in a visually engaging and digitally fluent way is crucial to achieving our goals.

We have wasted no time in putting our new brand and tools to use. This summer, we created and coordinated the introduction of a new platform for individual and collective action. Christians Against Christian Nationalism provides a place for anyone who self-identifies as a Christian to take a public stand by signing a statement at ChristiansAgainstChristianNationalism.org. (You can read more about the genesis of this idea, the full statement of unifying principles and words of some of our endorsers on pages 10-13 of this magazine.) We are pushing back against an insidious ideology, which tends to conflate political authority with religious authority and implies that to be a true American, you must be a Christian.

In talking with reporters and others interested in the statement, one of the questions we've been repeatedly asked is what we hope it accomplishes.

I hope Christians like me can find a place to go “on record” about their concerns with the threats Christian nationalism poses — not only to our country, but also to our faith. Jemar Tisby, whom I spoke with as part of the BJC Podcast's special series on Christian nationalism, told me that he, as a historian, knows how important it is that we create records for the future — showing there were people willing to take a public stand when they saw something that wasn't right.

I hope this project provides a more accurate picture of how people of faith approach this topic. Some people may assume that all — or at least, most — Christians want to see their faith propped up by the government. But, a review of the thousands of names on the list (as I write, more than 15,000 Christians from dozens of denominations are listed on the website) shows that the unifying principles in the statement are bringing together a diverse cross-section of Christians who are standing up to Christian nationalism.

I hope we help start conversations. Some of the immediate and helpful feedback we got from advocates who shared the campaign with their social media networks showed me how many gaps in understanding we have within the Christian community about Christian nationalism. We don't claim to have all the answers, but if we can help raise some helpful and humble questions and provide opportunities for civil dialogue, we might be able to make some headway against some deeply entrenched myths about the founding of the country and the role of civil religion, which has often been assumed to be largely harmless but in reality might be adding to our divisions.

I look forward to hearing your stories about how Christian nationalism shows up in your communities as I travel this fall for a series of advocacy trainings. We will discuss strategies on how best to communicate with our elected officials and with our neighbors about religious freedom for all. I am grateful for your partnership, particularly at this pivotal time.



Lessons from the Bladensburg cross case decision

By Holly Hollman, BJC General Counsel



A substantial majority of Americans identify as Christian, so why shouldn't our government promote religion by displaying a Latin cross on public land? In short, because doing so undermines religious liberty and ultimately harms religion.

In *The American Legion v. American Humanist Association*, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a cross on government land, relying heavily on the unique 89-year history and use of this particular cross as a World War I memorial. The Court made an important distinction: "Retaining established, religiously expressive monuments, symbols, and practices is quite different from erecting or adopting new ones."

The dispute began when local residents of Bladensburg, Maryland, and the American Humanist Association challenged a long-standing and physically imposing 40-foot cross that sits on government land at a major intersection. The case worked its way through the courts and was eventually resolved by the Supreme Court in June. The BJC filed a brief in support of those who challenged the government-sponsored cross as a violation of the First Amendment. We did so to defend the specific meaning of the cross and its importance to Christians, as well as to maintain the government's promise of neutrality toward religion.

The case demonstrates how government subverts religion when it tries to use religion for its purposes, and the case answers the false claims that government neutrality toward religion amounts to hostility. The government sought to maintain the monument, known as the Bladensburg Peace Cross, by distorting its Christian message. The local government entity that owns the property on which the cross stands argued the cross is "objectively secular." The Trump administration questioned whether this cross would even be viewed "as a religious display in the first place." Many who sided with the

government urged the Court to alter its standards in ways that would make it easier for government to advance religion. Fortunately, the Court rejected these arguments. While the 7-2 decision upholds the constitutionality of this memorial, it did not clear the way for more government-sponsored religion.

The majority held that this particular cross falls in a category of long-standing monuments, symbols and practices that may be presumed constitutional. On balance, a majority of the Court believed its removal would be inconsistent with the purposes of the First Amendment, one of which is to avoid religious divisiveness.

Lessons from the Court's decision

The decision is narrower than the result. The fact that the Bladensburg Peace Cross was challenged as unconstitutional and remains on public land is not the main point for religious liberty. Government efforts to sponsor religious monuments, symbols or practices should continue to be scrutinized. The 7-2 decision was splintered, meaning seven justices agreed with the result but for different reasons. Justice Samuel Alito wrote the majority opinion. While Justices Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan were in the majority, they both also wrote separately, and Kagan did not sign on to all of Alito's opinion. Justices Neil Gorsuch and Clarence Thomas did not join the opinion, concurring only in the judgment and each writing a separate concurrence. Gorsuch wrote to explain why he would deny plaintiffs the opportunity to challenge government-sponsored religious displays. Thomas reiterated his unique view that the Constitution allows state establishments of religion. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, joined by Justice Sonia Sotomayor, dissented. The dissent rejected the notion that the meaning of the cross would change over time and that its display in this

way is consistent with the government's promise of neutrality toward religion.

There's an important distinction between the religiosity of individual Americans and the promise of government neutrality toward religion. Individuals and faith communities are responsible for expressing religious messages and defining religious practices. While there is ample room to reflect religious influences in public life, the government should avoid advancing or denigrating religion in ways that undercut the principle that we are equal citizens under the law without regard to religion. Justice Alito's opinion answers those who exaggerate the effects of enforcing a standard of government neutrality toward religion. There are many cases where religion is properly reflected on government land that do not send a message of government endorsement, such as where religious imagery is part of a larger artistic or historical display. Importantly, he noted the obvious distinction between religious expression

that reflects an individual's religion on a gravestone — like those seen in Arlington National Cemetery — and a memorial honoring a diverse group of veterans or the military in general. Thousands of war monuments mark the service and sacrifice of the military without using religious imagery. Those memorials demonstrate that honoring veterans does not require altering our country's commitment to religious liberty.

The Bladensburg Peace Cross has a distinct history that weighed in favor of maintaining it. Under the circumstances of this monument, the Court found that removing the cross would not appear neutral toward religion, but instead would appear to evince hostility and threaten divisiveness that the religion clauses are meant to avoid, especially in the local community. The Court recounted the 89 years the monument stood in tribute to 49 area soldiers who gave their lives in World War I; the lack of evidence that the monument was intended to promote a Christian message;

its identification as a community landmark; and the danger that removing the memorial would be more divisive than retaining it.

The Court's ruling does not require the state to maintain the cross on public land. As Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote in his concurrence, "the Court is not the only guardian of individual rights in America." The governmental entity that maintains the property would be within its power to find another resolution for this dispute, such as moving the memorial or selling it to a private owner. Justice Ginsburg's dissent provides a strong incentive to find such an alternative. She emphasized the massive nature and undisputed prominence of the cross in a busy intersection which belies the notion that this particular memorial had only some incidental religious significance. She aptly described the threat that the majority's decision would erode the Court's commitment to neutrality, at least with regard to long-standing monuments, symbols and practices that now appear to enjoy a presumption of constitutionality. Citing history and precedence, she explains the essential role of government neutrality in protecting individual religious liberty without watering down religious messages.

The Court's ruling demonstrates why Christians and others should speak up and prevent the government from misusing sacred symbols or denying religious liberty to minority religions. It is up to us to ensure that sacred symbols and practices are not demeaned in the service of the government's political interests.

Citizens must use their voices to hold government accountable and promote religious liberty for all and live up to that "bedrock constitutional principle" that Justice Kavanaugh cited: "[A]ll citizens are equally American, no matter what religion they are, or if they have no religion at all."



BJC brief in *The American Legion v. American Humanist Association*

BJC filed an important friend-of-the-court brief with University of Virginia Law Professor Doug Laycock, defending the Christian message of the cross and arguing against government promotion of religion. The American Jewish Committee, Central Conference of American Rabbis, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, General Synod of the United Church of Christ, and the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) joined the brief.

Cited multiple times in Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's dissent, the BJC brief clearly states, "The cross is not a secular symbol, and neither the Commission nor the Court can make it so."

To read the BJC brief and access podcasts and additional articles from BJC on the Supreme Court decision, visit our website at BJCOnline.org/CrossCase.

BJC's Brand New Look. Here's The Story Behind It.

By the BJC Team

We've all stopped at one point in our lives and thought, "It's time." Last year, at BJC, we looked in the mirror and had that moment. As an organization, we were leaping into the thick of the news cycle as religious liberty issues made more headlines. Yet that energy and urgency was missing from our messaging. We realized that our public image – our brand, our website, our name – did not provide the kind of accessible and inclusive welcome that we wanted to give, inviting others to join us in leading the conversation.

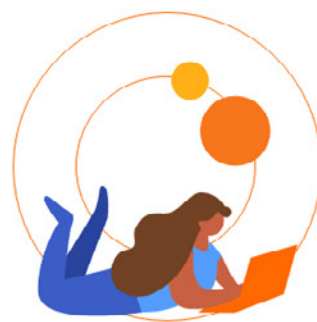
So our staff and board worked as a team to think through how we could best communicate our Baptist heritage and perspective and the ideals we aspire to. We looked at how we are unique among groups concerned with religious freedom. And, together, we explored new imagery and language that would better capture the excitement of our work and appeal to the next generation of freedom fighters to take us into the future.

"At BJC, we're ready to be agents of change in this digital world. Check out our new front door at BJCOnline.org. We've revamped it to be more action-oriented, more conversational and accessible."

—Executive Director Amanda Tyler



Join the BJC Advocacy Team



Get Social

Our new calls to action are visual, inviting and clear.

Check out the new
BJConline.org



Faith.
Freedom.
For All

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

TAKE ACTION

GIVE



Lead the Conversation

LEARN MORE

Happening Now



Judge orders graduation prayers to stop in South Carolina



Statement against Christian nationalism garners 10,000 Christian signatories (and counting)



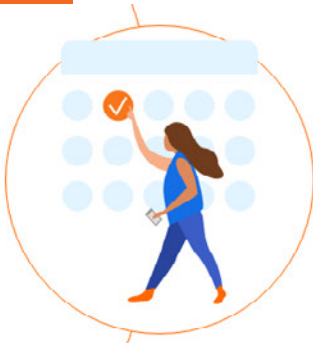
Ep. 03: Were we founded as a Christian nation?

Our Work

As the only national faith-based group solely focused on protecting religious freedom for all, we file briefs in pivotal Supreme Court cases, advocate for and against legislation, testify in Congress and unite with others across faiths to ensure that every American has — and always will have — the right to follow his or her spiritual beliefs.



Donate



Come to an Event



With Congress



In the Courts



Learn with Us



Make a Difference

ANNUAL LUNCHEON THE UNVEILING

On June 21, Executive Director Amanda Tyler debuted BJC's new look at the annual luncheon in Birmingham, Alabama. Hundreds of religious liberty supporters from across the country gathered under banners with the revamped BJC logo, surrounded by clusters of balloons in our new blue and orange colors. Tyler spoke about the growing threats to religious freedom and why this new makeover has readied BJC for the challenge. Then, speaking to that point, Jonathan Merritt — bestselling author of *Learning to Speak God from Scratch* — urged the audience that it was their Christian obligation to speak out. “The world needs you to lead the conversation, especially in this moment,” he said. “I think it can make a difference. I think it *needs* to make a difference.” Please visit our website at BJCOnline.org/luncheon to watch the video online.



Faith . Freedom . **For All.**

So we can get more quickly to the heart of our work, we now go by “BJC” with a tagline that succinctly states our mission and is also hashtag friendly: Faith. Freedom. **For All.** #FaithFreedomForAll

Plus, we've added orange to the tried-and-true legal blue. Orange is optimistic, energetic and ready to go. BJC is not all talk; we take action.



Listen to Buzz Thomas discuss the rebrand with Amanda Tyler



Jonathan Merritt at the BJC Luncheon

“To lead these complicated conversations, we know we have to be more clear than ever before. That’s why today — here and now — we are introducing a new look for BJC.”

—Executive Director Amanda Tyler

Bold. News. BJC In Action.



LOGO REVEAL ANIMATION

WATCH ONLINE



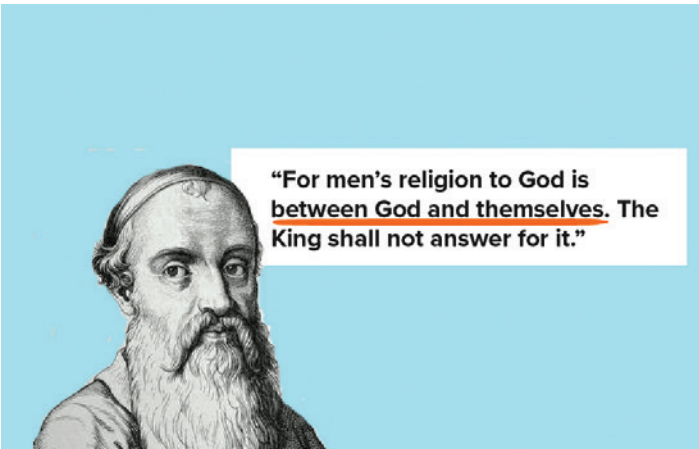
We also animated our logo. It clicks, claps, taps and marches — you almost want to join in, which is our way of saying, “Come on! Let’s get moving!”



RELIGIOUS LIBERTY FOR ALL

Our new “About BJC” video is conversational, authentic and focused on what we’re doing today.

WATCH ONLINE



BAPTIST FREEDOM FIGHTERS

We love our Baptist legacy and want to share it with generations of new freedom fighters who are ready to join the cause. So we’ve brought figures like Thomas Helwys, Roger Williams, Gardner Taylor and Prathia Hall to life with a short animation.

WATCH ONLINE



See these resources and more at the all-new [BJCOnline.org](https://www.bjconline.org)

Christians take a stand against Christian nationalism

Christians across the country are calling out Christian nationalism, a dangerous political ideology that merges Christian and American identities.

The threat of Christian nationalism is not new. But this movement, which promotes the idea that to be a real American you must be Christian, is dangerously intensifying. It's not only behind the push for bills that advance a revisionist historical view of the United States and promote government-sponsored religious exercise; it also has inspired religious hate crimes, arson and deadly attacks on houses of worship.

BJC joined with other Christian groups to create a statement of unifying principles to call out this ideology as a threat to our faith and our country. Read the statement on the next page of this magazine or online (ChristiansAgainstChristianNationalism.org), and consider signing your name.

We first approached this project with the idea of interfaith partnership, but we quickly learned that our partners from other faith traditions did not feel as comfortable calling out Christian nationalism as a distortion of Christianity. As Christians, we know this is our work to do first. Religious liberty should ensure that religion speaks for itself and isn't distorted by government. Each religious tradition is responsible for protecting, promoting and sharing its own message.

This is a grassroots movement, which is spreading through word of mouth and social media. It's not in response to any one event, but this is a way

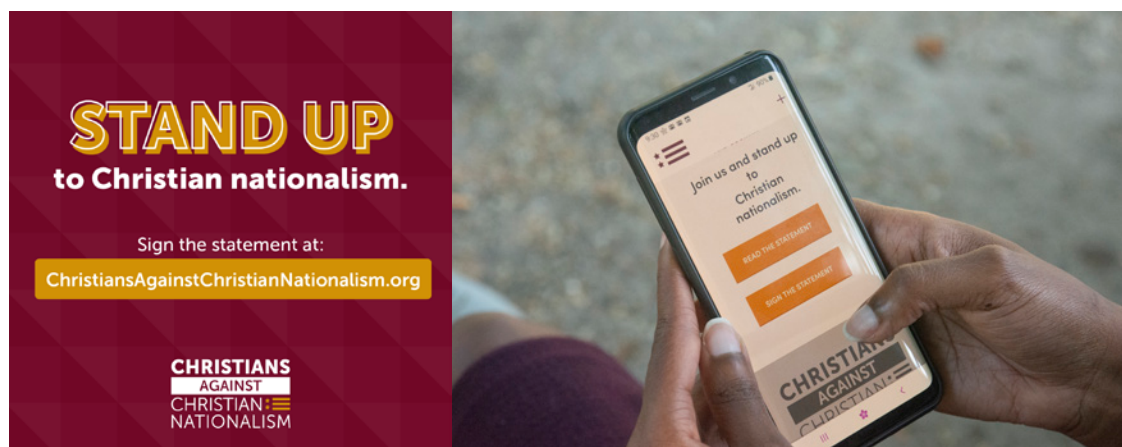
to stand together against the persistent threat of Christian nationalism.

In the first hours of the campaign, we had signers from all 50 states and more than three dozen different denominations. Signers come from rural, urban and suburban areas. There are Baptists from across the theological spectrum, from the Southern Baptist Convention to the Progressive National Baptist Convention to the Alliance of Baptists. Lutherans from the Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are on the list. So are Catholics and Mennonites, as well as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Our goal is not just to gather signatures, but to start conversations about what Christian nationalism is and how it shows up in our society today. Some, perhaps many, of these conversations will be challenging. But if we are going to make headway in dispelling this deeply entrenched ideology, we need to start somewhere.

On the following pages, read the statement and hear from Christian leaders on why this matters to them. You can also read excerpts from our BJC Podcast series on Christian nationalism.

There's no time to waste. We need a strong response from the Christian community. We must loudly denounce Christian nationalism as a distortion of our faith and as a divisive force in our country — one that poses a threat to religious freedom for all.



CHRISTIANS AGAINST CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

As Christians, our faith teaches us everyone is created in God's image and commands us to love one another.

As Americans, we value our system of government and the good that can be accomplished in our constitutional democracy.

Today, we are concerned about a persistent threat to both our religious communities and our democracy — Christian nationalism.

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. We reject this damaging political ideology and invite our Christian brothers and sisters to join us in opposing this threat to our faith and to our nation.

As Christians, we are bound to Christ, not by citizenship, but by faith. We believe that:

- People of all faiths and none have the right and responsibility to engage constructively in the public square.
- Patriotism does not require us to minimize our religious convictions.
- One's religious affiliation, or lack thereof, should be irrelevant to one's standing in the civic community.
- Government should not prefer one religion over another or religion over nonreligion.
- Religious instruction is best left to our houses of worship, other religious institutions and families.
- America's historic commitment to religious pluralism enables faith communities to live in civic harmony with one another without sacrificing our theological convictions.
- Conflating religious authority with political authority is idolatrous and often leads to oppression of minority and other marginalized groups as well as the spiritual impoverishment of religion.
- We must stand up to and speak out against Christian nationalism, especially when it inspires acts of violence and intimidation — including vandalism, bomb threats, arson, hate crimes, and attacks on houses of worship — against religious communities at home and abroad.

Whether we worship at a church, mosque, synagogue, or temple, America has no second-class faiths. All are equal under the U.S. Constitution. As Christians, we must speak in one voice condemning Christian nationalism as a distortion of the gospel of Jesus and a threat to American democracy.

To add your name and see a list of signers and endorsers,
visit ChristiansAgainstChristianNationalism.org.

Endorsers

A few Christian leaders share why they signed the statement.

Hear from others at ChristiansAgainstChristianNationalism.org/endorsers



"Christian nationalism rejects Christ's teachings and manipulates our faith to deny the inherent dignity of every person. Additionally, in our pluralistic society where we meet is the constitutional vision: 'We the People.' Christian nationalism is unpatriotic and unchristian."

Sister Simone Campbell
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice



"As followers of Jesus, his command to love our neighbors means neighbors of every type, of every faith, not just our own. Through our baptism and in our democracy, we are called to a way of love that creates a community in which the dignity of every human being is recognized and respected, and where all can have an equal say in the governing of our civic life."

Bishop Michael Curry
The Episcopal Church



"Our Christian faith is too expansive to be defined by any national identity, even a nation as beloved as America; and our embrace of American values of equality and inclusion are too profound to privilege any religion, even one as beloved as Christianity."

Bishop W. Darin Moore
The AME Zion Church



"*Christians Against Christian Nationalism* reminds us of the importance of teaching and practicing both sound patriotism and sound theology. When we place our nation and our faith over against others, we have distorted the Gospel of Jesus Christ and laid the basis for war, violence, racism and extremism."

Jim Winkler
National Council of the Churches of Christ



"Christian nationalism perverts and distorts the foundational tenets of the Gospel. When Christianity combines with political ideologies, the Gospel will always take a back seat to the political pragmatism of power and wealth. When Jesus walked the earth, he challenged his disciples to love the marginalized, oppressed, and disenfranchised."

R. Mitch Randall
EthicsDaily.com



"'Christian nationalism' is an oxymoron and a dangerous movement rooted in supremacy and hate. The Alliance of Baptists decries the ways many so-called Christian nationalists have warped and exploited the words of Jesus to demean and degrade those of other faiths, nationalities, and backgrounds."

Paula Dempsey
Alliance of Baptists

God's love is not the privileged possession of any nation or race

By Paul Baxley
Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

As a Baptist Christian, I am deeply concerned about the growing influence of Christian nationalism. Advocates of Christian nationalism often use religious liberty in order to protect a certain kind of Christian faith. But, as a Baptist, I know that religious liberty is not for the privileged protection of one faith tradition over and above other faith traditions — instead, it's the pledge that all people must be free to worship according to the dictates of their conscience and conviction.

In our earliest years, we Baptists were persecuted and ridiculed because we dissented from state-sanctioned religious practices. Now we must protect the right of others to dissent and make space for all to worship freely, especially when their worship and their faith confession is different from our own. We dare not become more like those who in times past used the power of the state to silence religious freedom or promote a state-sanctioned religious tradition. Having been the targets of such efforts, we Baptists must never become practitioners of them. The Gospels offer no evidence that Jesus used either coercion or state power to invite anyone to follow him.

Christian nationalism flows from a conviction that the power of the government is superior to any other power, and so the church must serve the interests of the state to thrive or must be protected by the state in order to survive. As a Christian, I reject the proposition that my faith must be protected by the government or that any church should exist to promote the agenda of any political party.

The church of Jesus Christ exists by the power that parted the Red Sea and raised Jesus from the dead, and that power and authority is still at work within us and among us even as empires rise and fall. To suggest that the church needs the protection of the state in order to flourish and thrive is idolatrous.

Christian nationalism often makes the claim that God's love is reserved for people in a specific nation or race.



This kind of nationalism cannot be described as Christian. Ever since the very beginning, the church of Jesus Christ has been present in nations all over the world and among all races, so no single nation can claim any privileged place or unique claim to the love or power of God.

In the first part of the 21st century, the Christian faith is growing most dramatically in the Global South and in the Far East. The fastest-growing Baptist communities are in Africa. Christian faith is growing among migrant communities all over the world; our Cooperative Baptist Fellowship field personnel encounter powerful faith in Jesus in contexts of migration and poverty all over the world.

All around us, there is abundant evidence that God's love is not the privileged possession of any nation or race. As a Baptist Christian, I know that all people of all races are made in the image of God, loved unconditionally by God and worthy of respect, so I reject any claim of racial superiority and am instead called toward the dignity, justice and healing of all God's children.

History teaches us that some of the Christian faith's most tragic hours have come when we have allowed nationalism or partisanship to be more definitive for us than our faith in Jesus Christ. At our core, our Baptist Christian confession of faith is that Jesus is Lord and not the emperor or anyone else.

So, I add my voice to others who call for resistance to Christian nationalism in favor of an unapologetic commitment to the lordship of Jesus, with a strong opposition to any form of religious persecution or religiously motivated violence and an embrace of a generous religious liberty that allows all to worship in freedom and peace.

The Rev. Dr. Paul Baxley serves as the executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. He is one of the endorsers of Christians Against Christian Nationalism.

BJC podcast series explores Christian nationalism

From July 29 until October 2, the BJC Podcast is exploring the topic of Christian nationalism. For 10 weeks, BJC Executive Director Amanda Tyler is speaking with historians, journalists, organizers, authors, Christian leaders, theologians and others about Christian nationalism, how it shows up in our world today, its impact on our culture and what people are doing about it.

Episodes are released each Wednesday, and they are available on our website at BJCOnline.org/ChristianNationalism.

In addition to the guests quoted here, the podcast series features interviews with Eboo Patel, the founder of Interfaith Youth Core; Dr. Andrew Whitehead, a sociologist at Clemson University who researches Christian nationalism; Minnesota state Sen. John Marty; Frederick Clarkson, author and journalist who broke the story of the Project Blitz playbook; Steven Green, the author of *Inventing a Christian America: The Myth of the Religious Founding*; and many more.



Subscribe to the BJC Podcast on your favorite platform:



Episode 1: Christian leaders on Christian nationalism

“At first Pentecost, the disciples were able to speak in the language of all the different communities and nationalities gathered in Jerusalem at the time, but you notice that they were speaking in these various languages — that people were not forced back into one language. And also I would say that the vision of heaven in Revelation Chapter 7 talks about people of all nations, tribes and tongues. So, this notion of squeezing everybody into this homogenized — and I think in some ways, very militaristic — understanding of what it means to be an American is contrary to how I understand Scripture and the promise we have in the Gospel that diversity is, in fact, created by God and is beautiful, and it’s not something to be rubbed out or erased. ...

No nation and no leader can guarantee the kind of freedom that we have as redeemed children of God. Also in this freedom — this is a big part of how Lutherans understand justification — we have been set free, so now we’re free to serve the neighbor. And the neighbor is everybody — not just people who look like us or sound like us or vote like us.”

Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Episode 3: Were we founded as a Christian nation?

“The Baptists who first founded congregations in the Colonies — Roger Williams at Providence and John Clarke in Newport — declare from the very beginning that there are no Christian nations; only Christian people, bound to Christ not by citizenship, but by faith. That is a major departure from Christian environments in Europe, in Britain, and in — as we’ve said — parts of the Colonies, because the understanding was to be born in a Christian commonwealth was to be baptized in the particular church. That was normative in the Colonies, and the early Baptists repudiate that altogether and lobby for religious freedom for all including, Roger Williams will say, Turks — meaning Muslims — Jews, freethinkers and others.”

Dr. Bill Leonard, Wake Forest University School of Divinity



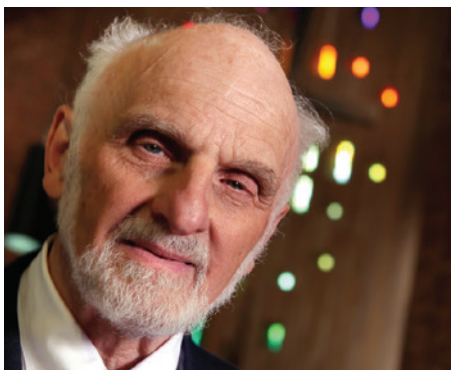
Episode 1: Christian leaders on Christian nationalism

“I understand Christian nationalism as an extreme practice of American civil religion. This practice of civil religion elevates patriotism and loyalty to the ideology of ‘America first’ above Christianity.

Christian nationalism is a self-contradiction because Jesus teaches ‘love of God and love of neighbor as ourselves’ as first principles. We understand what it means to love God with all our heart, mind and strength, and Jesus goes to some length to unpack the idea of ‘neighbor.’ In fact, the parable of the Good Samaritan — who went out of his way to give aid to an individual of a different nationality, a different ethnicity and a different religion — was told in response to the question, “Who is my neighbor?”

The religion of Jesus does not prioritize one nation or tribe or language or political ideology or racial group above another. Sadly, the same cannot be said for nationalism, a movement which seeks to equate itself with the Christian religion.”

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, American Baptist Home Mission Societies



Episode 4: Theological view of Christian nationalism

“When our claims for gospel truth are attached to a political and economic power, they are inevitably distorted and designed to maintain the privilege of the status quo. And it seems to me that in gospel truth there is something inherently subversive about it, and obviously that subversive edge disappears when one gets allied with power.

So, it seems to me it’s a very seductive way of being talked out of the critical edge of the Gospel. And I think, obviously, if you look at Christian leaders who have signed on with power, they characteristically have no critical edge left anymore. And I think that those of us who are entrusted with the Gospel are indeed entrusted with a critical edge that continues to point out the way in which power depends upon injustice for its maintenance of privilege.”

Dr. Walter Brueggemann, theologian and scholar



Episode 1: Christian leaders on Christian nationalism

“Quakers came to this country to pursue religious freedom, so that they would be able to follow their own understanding of the divine — their understanding of God — and were persecuted for it. And so we have a history in that regard.

Today, I am not aware of Quakers being persecuted in any way, but it’s clear that there are other people of faith in this country who are disregarded, who are targeted, who are maligned, who do not have the religious freedom that I enjoy as a Christian and that I enjoy as a Quaker. And so problems of equating some other religion as less than American is really a problem for all of us, because when religious freedom is upheld for Christians as well as for Jews and for Muslims, that’s good for everyone. And if we’ve only defined religious freedom as being supportive of one religion, then it’s not truly religious freedom.”

Diane Randall, Friends Committee on National Legislation



Episode 7: Christian nationalism, racism and white supremacy

“[A]ll the way back in 1667, the Virginia Assembly — which was a group comprised of white Anglican men — made a law that said baptism would not free an enslaved Native American, a person of African descent, or [a person with a] mix-raced background. That really stuck with me for a couple of reasons. Number one, this is a group of Christian men. This is 17th century and a society where you really couldn’t be a public figure in good standing unless you were part of the church. At that time, it was British Colonial Virginia, so the church was the Anglican church. So, it’s a group of Christian men. They’re making a law, which is political, about baptism, which is religion. And so you get this conflation of politics and race and religion all the way back several centuries ago. Those things are inseparable even as we talk about them today. And they’re creating this dichotomy between a person’s spiritual well-being and their physical or material well-being, which is an argument that persists into the 21st century.”

Jemar Tisby, author of *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism*



The 2019 BJC Fellows (from left to right): Chris Crowley, Molly Shepard, Brittany Graves, Kyle Nicholas, Keisha Patrick, Jillian Hankamer, Sarah Dannemiller, Eftakhar Alam, Sarah Henry, and Taylor Bell.

BJC Fellows prepare for advocacy beyond the classroom

We welcomed our 5th class of BJC Fellows this summer, introducing 10 young professionals to Colonial Williamsburg and providing a theological, historical and legal look at religious liberty.

The BJC Fellows Program continues to prepare and equip young leaders for a lifetime of religious liberty advocacy. Participants include ministers, entrepreneurs, lay leaders, scholars, attorneys, activists and others, who come from a variety of Christian and non-Christian religious traditions. We now have 50 BJC Fellows across the country, and we can connect you to a young leader in your area to speak in your church or community.

Read about the 2019 BJC Fellows Program from the participants in their own words, and learn more about the program at BJCOnline.org/Fellows. Applications for the 2020 class will be available by December 2, 2019.

Sarah Dannemiller, Abilene, Texas

I reflected upon questions, observations and issues with a cohort of nine other young professionals, as we attempted to craft a coherent narrative of religious liberty that all religious and non-religious traditions may make sense of. I was immediately impressed with the poise, competency and courage in which BJC approached these questions. I find simple and pat answers to be quite frustrating, especially when it comes to questions of great import. I found a kindred spirit within BJC. This refusal to accept the issue as black and white or a matter of conservative and liberal agendas was quickly addressed within Amanda Tyler's opening statements. I knew that I was going to enter into an uncomfortable space that would stretch my understanding of religious liberty, of the people around me, and of my own personal relation to it all. Yet, as the week progressed and as an intimacy was fostered between the BJC Fellows, I felt my confidence grow. This was a confidence

not only in my ability to contribute a constructive voice to issues relating to religious liberty, but in others to do the same. As my own sense for my role in the fight for religious liberty grew, so did my sense that I was not alone in the fight. I left the BJC Fellows Program inspired by the courage and missional identity of the organization and those connected to it.

Keisha Patrick, Washington, D.C.

I was reminded that religious life in America began with the "othering" of people who didn't adopt their Colony's established religion. In Colonial Virginia, Baptists were the others. Baptists preachers faced beatings and imprisonment for exercising their faith instead of the Christian denomination that Virginia's Colonial government had chosen. Our tour guides read to us the personal accounts of some persecuted Baptists and led us to replicas of the small, dark, brick prison cells where the persecut-

ed were often confined. As a punishment, one white Baptist preacher was forced to witness the beatings of enslaved Africans who had been in his audience. There were layers to this governmental "othering." Yet, it seemed to me that even Baptists were eligible for some of the privileges of Colonial citizenship, but such privileges were utterly denied to persons identifying as Catholics or Jews. No concern was shown for the religious choices of the enslaved Africans, who constituted slightly more than half of Virginia's population.

Despite Colonial America's dehumanizing religious establishments, my week in Williamsburg made me hopeful that religious freedom can be achieved in America today.

Chris Crowley, Richmond, Virginia

On our walking tour of Colonial Williamsburg, we began with some classic Baptist stories by the Rev. Nathan Taylor (executive



Amanda Tyler welcomes the 2019 BJC Fellows.



Dr. Corey Walker talks with Kyle Nicholas during the tour of Colonial Williamsburg.

director of the Virginia Baptist Historical Society), alongside reminders by Dr. Corey Walker (professor at the University of Richmond) to de-construct the classic stories to include those who were there, but left out of the narrative. A small placard at the jail mentions that the choir director down the street at Bruton Parish Church also served the town as its jailer. Immediately this inspired a laugh for me, also a bi-vocational church music director, that the jailer/musician probably had an easier time convincing his choir members to come to rehearsal. More importantly it prompted a brief but meaningful exchange with Dr. Walker, a former prison chaplain, about the paradox of being both called to serve a God who sets captives free and a warden who ensures their captivity.

Brittany Graves, Cedar Park, Texas

Not only were we Baptist, we were Episcopal, Church of God in Christ (COGIC), Muslim and nonreligious. I am glad that we were a diverse crowd. There's nothing worse than having conversations with people that are the same kind of different as you. We each brought varying perspectives that carried our dialogues and gave each of us new insights.

How can we fight for progress and change, if we aren't also knowledgeable and making strides with the courts and Congress? BJC is doing the hands-on work to effectively support religious liberty. It is inspirational to see and encourages me to make moves in my hometown, especially among people and groups that remain voiceless and marginalized.

As I learn to advocate for religious liberty in new ways, the BJC Fellows Program gave

me language to equip me for years to come. Not to mention, now I have a number of resources that will help on my journey.

Molly Shepard, Dallas, Texas

Throughout our week in Colonial Williamsburg, we kept returning to the idea that religious liberty and racial equality are inextricably linked. At the very beginning of our nation, as our Founders argued over the meaning and practice of religious liberty for themselves, they simultaneously denied any freedom or dignity to the African slaves they were importing.

By tying the concept of racial justice to the idea of religious liberty, I now feel like I have the power and the obligation to pick up this torch. I cannot stand by and watch my religion be twisted into a weapon to alienate anyone who doesn't look or believe like me. Likewise, Christians Against Christian Nationalism is something that white and black Christians can share, hopefully using this common enemy as a means to find reconciliation and relationship.

Taylor Bell, Birmingham, Alabama

The interweaving of knowledge with action makes the BJC Fellows Program, at its core, deeper than any sort of professional development or educational opportunity. At its root it is an empowering invitation to become an actively engaged citizen and advocate for religious liberty. In democracy, citizenship means being present and deliberately engaged within the public sphere. Being an engaged citizen who enacts change doesn't occur through public reservation and private commentary that

resonates only within an ideological siloed echo-chamber. We need to be citizens in the democratic sense. Meaning we need to directly engage our diverse public square and its complex discourse on religious liberty, with all its political, legal and religious nuance, as an expressed commitment to religious liberty.

The BJC prepared and empowered me for this engagement by modeling this public discourse amongst us. We were not a homogeneous group; we were not an echo chamber. We were not all white, were not all Christian, and we didn't vote the same way. We were a diverse group of individuals who came together to engage, support and challenge each other in a deeper engagement of religious liberty. In other words, BJC's means were just as formational as its ends. The process of teaching is just as important as the knowledge itself. So much so that I know being a BJC Fellow has prepared me to engage the public discourse on religious liberty in a truly constructive way because I have already begun to practice it.

Sarah Henry, Arlington, Virginia

Of the ten BJC Fellows this year, and the 50 in total who have worked through the program, I may be the only nonreligious person to participate. At the very least, I'm the only open humanist.

As a high-schooler, I often tried to stand up against what I saw as inappropriate encroachments of the church into my public school. I cannot imagine the confidence it would have given me (and the greater impact it would have had) to have a Christian ally stand next to me, asking for faith freedom for all. I hope more religious



leaders and representatives join allies at organizations like BJC in fighting back against the distortion of religious freedom and the restriction of all but a select few faiths.

Kyle Nicholas, Charlottesville, Virginia

I greatly benefited from the explicitly theological explanations of religious liberty that were taught from a Baptist perspective. Not being a Baptist myself, it was an excellent opportunity to live into others' narratives and explore pathways for ecumenical conversations around a shared value (religious liberty) that several of us held for different reasons. What stuck out to me was the revolutionary nature of the early Baptist commitment to religious liberty. For them, religious liberty was not merely a compromise between a homogeneous Christianity on the one hand, and a secular or deist population on the other. Rather, they held this value against other Christians from the belief that no creed, backed up by government force, should be forced upon an unwilling conscience. So the sheer radicality of their contribution to religious liberty impressed me, and it is a strikingly relevant and contemporary formulation in many ways. I was also impressed by the history and legal advocacy of BJC, and I'm

glad the seminars went into depth on these points.

I was humbled by the way BJC entrusts and equips its Fellows to join in urgent projects concerning religious liberty. The BJC Fellows Program was not just a place where one comes for a week and then moves on. Rather, the BJC staff and the structure of the program made it clear that the fight for religious liberty will continue to be a joint affair long into the future.

Eftakhar Alam, Alexandria, Virginia

I believe collaborative programs like this help us communicate with one another more fluidly. Getting to know others' faith perspectives not only gets you to become more connected with that individual, but it helps break down obstacles and create genuine relationship.

As a young leader in the American Muslim community, I believe the friendships and knowledge will be beneficial to take back to the community — to help them connect to new friendships and to get to know new people and understandings. I hope to be a better advocate for people outside of faith and stand shoulder-to-shoulder in uplifting everyone.

Jillian Hankamer, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

During our seminar, I was struck by how giving BJC staffers were and how available they made themselves to us with all of our questions. While we were in Williamsburg, BJC staffers were our event planners, drivers, teachers and photographers. The staff was open, responsive and engaged, even through long conversations over dinner. BJC invests in their Fellows personally. It was also made clear to us that, as Fellows, our relationship with BJC is not a one-time event. As Associate General Counsel Jennifer Hawks said, to be a Fellow is to be part of a family who supports each other long after the "program" is over.

But perhaps my biggest takeaway from Williamsburg is the necessity of BJC's work. BJC exists and works every day on that thin line between what it means to be faithful followers of Christ and ensuring that all Americans are free to worship or not worship as they choose. BJC invests in their Fellows by making us advocates, and I am incredibly grateful to be part of this family.

Read more from this class of BJC Fellows and see additional photos on our website at BJCOnline.org/BJCFellows2019.



BJC welcomes interns

Get to know our fall semester interns currently working alongside our staff in Washington, D.C.



WILL BRUMMETT, a native of Jefferson City, Tennessee, earned his M.A. in Applied Social Justice from Carson-Newman University in 2017 and a B.A. in Religious Studies from Elon University in 2013. Brummett recently worked as the Program Coordinator for Service Initiatives at Brandeis University. The husband of Grace Boone and son to Ross and Lea Ann Brummett, he is a member of First Baptist Church of Jefferson City. After the internship, he plans to continue working in the faith-based advocacy field.

RACHEL JONES, a native of Richmond, Virginia, is a 2018 graduate of the University of Virginia, earning a B.A. in Religious Studies. She most recently worked at RJJ, an anti-human trafficking nonprofit devoted to education and advocacy. The daughter of Tim and Barbara Jones, she is a member of and deacon at Huguenot Road Baptist Church in Richmond. Jones plans to pursue a career working toward peace and reconciliation.

Meet our two summer semester interns, who worked alongside our staff throughout May, June, July and August.



DYLAN RATLIFF, a native of Powhatan, Virginia, is a student at The Ohio State University. He has two majors: Public Management, Leadership, and Policy; and Political Science. Ratliff is involved in the Undergraduate Student Government, the Sportsmanship Council and College Republicans. The son of Joseph and Kimberly Ratliff, he is a member of Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church. Ratliff plans on pursuing a career on Capitol Hill.

MATTIE RICH, a native of Alexandria, Virginia, is a student at James Madison University, majoring in Public Policy and Administration with a minor in Philosophy. At JMU, she is a member of Phi Alpha Delta, a co-ed pre-law fraternity. The daughter of Lonnie Rich and Marcia Call, she is a member of Commonwealth Baptist Church. After graduation, Rich plans to attend law school.

Come lead the conversation with us!



Supporting BJC interns is one of the many ways you can help lead conversations about faith freedom for all. More than 200 people have spent a semester learning with us as part of our BJC Internship Program, which has been ongoing for nearly 40 years.

Each academic semester, two students or recent graduates join our professional team in our Capitol Hill offices, where they get meaningful experience in legal and legislative advocacy, communications, education, mobilization and development. Former BJC Interns use their training in a variety of fields — professional ministry, law, politics, government service, business, education and more.

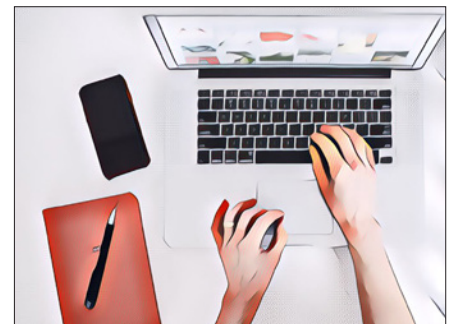
BJC interns receive housing on Capitol Hill as well as a stipend to cover additional living expenses. For more information on the BJC Internship Program and information on application deadlines, go to BJCOnline.org/internships.

Donors have funded this important educational program for decades. **Save the date of December 3**, when you will have an opportunity on Giving Tuesday to show your support for continuing to equip these emerging leaders with the tools they need to advocate for religious freedom.

The BJC Blog is now ‘Latest News’ on our website

Don’t miss the news impacting church-state conversations across the country. The BJC Blog continues to be part of our website, now going by the name “Latest News.”

Written by Don Byrd, it provides coverage and analysis of the religious liberty stories making headlines. Look for the “Latest News” section under “Media Center” on our website, or visit the direct link to all of the posts at BJCOnline.org/blog.





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We are attorneys, Capitol Hill insiders, ministers, mobilizers and scholars. We file briefs in pivotal Supreme Court cases, advocate for and against legislation, testify in Congress and unite with others across faiths to ensure that every American has, and will always have, the right to follow his or her spiritual beliefs. Founded in 1936, we bring our uniquely Baptist perspective of "soul freedom" to protecting religious liberty for all and defending the separation of church and state.

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REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

Amanda Tyler EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Cherilyn Crowe EDITOR



MORE FROM BJC

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A guide from BJC



STUDENTS CAN PRAY IN SCHOOL

Prayer is a constitutional right, but it cannot be forced on others. Prayer also cannot be performed in a manner that could be taken as a school endorsement of the prayer. Voluntary, student-initiated, student-led prayer is permitted if it is not disruptive, but school-sponsored prayer is not allowed.

Religion and public schools

Want a quick overview of the intersection of religion in the public schools? Visit BJCOnline.org/resources for a printable handout on this and other topics.



Support BJC

If you have included BJC in your estate plans or would like to learn how, visit BJCOnline.org/planned-giving for information on the James Dunn Legacy Circle.