

White Supremacy/Christian Nationalism/White Christian Nationalism in The UMC North Central Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church

Definitions

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In sharing some working definitions there are two goals. (1) To have some agreed upon territory we are discussing; and (2) to simultaneously acknowledge that definitions are not written in stone and part of our on-going conversation is to offer better definitions, while also not making coming to perfect agreement about definitions the most important thing we do. To that end, I am going to share a couple of definitions of each key term.

Racism

- “Race-based discrimination and social hierarchies where individuals receive advantages or disadvantages because of perceived racial differences.” [Faithful Anti-Racism](#), Christina Barland Edmondson and Chad Brennan
- “A racist idea is any idea that suggests one racial group is inferior or superior to another racial group in any way.... Racism is a powerful collection of racist policies that lead to racial inequity and are substantiated by racist ideas.” [How To Be An Anti-Racist](#), Ibram X. Kendi
- Racism is about ideas and power, about advantages and disadvantages. Racism affected where people could live (red-lining), where they could feel safe (sundown towns), if they could vote, GI benefits (GI bill for whites only), schooling, where highways were built. You don't need to look very hard to find how racialized thinking and power differences entwined with it have had an impact on our society.

White Supremacy

- “The belief that White people have better morals, cleanliness, work ethic, intelligence, etc., than people in other racial groups. Therefore it is good and natural for them to be at the top of the social hierarchy.” [Faithful Anti-Racism](#), Christina Barland Edmondson and Chad Brennan
- “Both individual belief that White people are inherently better than others *and* the broad systems of inequality that insure racial disparity of health, income, life, and

freedom.... Note that systems can produce White supremacist outcomes without individual belief or racial animus.” A Field Guide to White Supremacy, ed. Kathleen Belew and Ramon A. Gutierrez

- “White supremacy has been – and continues to be – the most repressed truth in American history.” The Psychology of Christian Nationalism, Pamela Cooper White
- It is important to note that “Whiteness” has been a somewhat elastic category in our history. It has also come with privileges. The Naturalization Act of 1790 limited naturalization to “free white persons... of good character.”

Christian Nationalism

- “A political ideology and cultural framework that seeks to merge American and Christian identities.” Amanda Tyler, Baptist Joint Commission for Religious Liberty, “Justice Talks: The Rise of Christian Nationalism
- “Christian nationalism is a cultural framework – a collection of myths, traditions, symbols, narratives and value systems – that idealizes and advocates a fusion of Christianity with American life.... The “Christianity” of Christian nationalism... includes assumptions of nativism, white supremacy, patriarchy and heteronormativity, along with divine sanction for authoritarian control and militarism.” Taking America Back for God, Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry
- “Christian nationalism is not a religious creed but... a political ideology. It promotes the myth that the American republic was founded as a Christian nation. It asserts that legitimate government rests not on the consent of the governed but on adherence to the doctrines of a specific religious, ethnic, and cultural heritage.” The Power Worshipers, Katherine Stewart
- It is important to distinguish Christian nationalism from being a patriotic citizen and a Christian. Distinctions and nuances are critically important. One can love and care about one’s country and its foundational/constitutional principles as a Christian without being a Christian nationalist. One can want to see one’s faith-based values be part of public conversation and public policy without being a Christian nationalist. Given the recent news stories about the rise in anti-Semitism, it may also be important to note that Americans who strongly embrace Christian nationalism subscribe to anti-Semitic views.

White Christian Nationalism

- “It is the belief that America’s founding is based on Christian principles, white protestant Christianity is the operational religion of the land, and that Christianity should be the

foundation of how the nation develops its laws, principles and policies.... Christ is at the core of efforts to establish and promote white protestant Christianity in the service of white male autocratic authority.” Anthea Butler, “Christian Nationalism and the January 6, 2021 Insurrection”

- “Christian nationalism is a “deep story” about America’s past and a vision of its future.... White Christian nationalism [is] a constellation of beliefs... that... reflect a desire to restore and privilege the myths, values, identity and authority of a particular ethnocultural tribe.... Power for whites.” The Flag and the Cross, Philip S. Gorski and Samuel L. Perry
- Not all racism is part of White Christian Nationalism, but White Christian nationalism is a particularly prevalent manifestation of racism and White Supremacy in our current historical context, exercising significant power and influence in our public life.

James Baldwin: “Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced” (I Am Not Your Negro, 103).