

Executive Summary

This document outlines what Christian nationalism means in the UK, how it is sometimes adopted by far-right movements, and how churches can respond.

- **Definition:** A political ideology that fuses Christian identity with national identity, treating Christianity as a marker of belonging.
- **UK context:** Often expressed as cultural nationalism, focused on a “return to English/ reclaiming of British heritage or values” and “in-group” identity more than church practice.
- **Far-right use:** Christian symbols and language have been used to justify exclusionary politics and intensify polarisation.
- **Theological critique:** Churches and theologians have challenged this as the idolatry of nation, emphasise welcome of the stranger, and resist reducing faith to a political badge.
- **Response:** As Christians and those within the body of Christ, we must teach clearly, set boundaries for church spaces, offer pastoral support, and build practical solidarity locally and across faith communities.

Major denominations, including the Church of England, have repeatedly criticised the co-option of Christian language and symbols for exclusionary politics, warning that it can corrupt Christian witness and conceal xenophobia or racism behind a veneer of respectability. While some supporters describe this rhetoric as a “revival” critics argue it often substitutes religious categories for older racialised narratives in ways that are more socially acceptable in public debate. This document is accompanied by a [suite of resources](#) drawn from ecumenical sources and networks, which provides our parishes with practical toolkits to keep faithful Christian witness in response to Christian nationalism.

Introduction

Christian nationalism is a political ideology that fuses Christian identity with national identity. It argues that a country is (or should be) fundamentally Christian in character, and that public life—law, culture, education, and institutions—ought to reflect a particular interpretation of Christian values. In practice, it often shifts Christianity from personal faith into a boundary marker for belonging, implying that national flourishing depends on protecting a defined religious heritage.

In the United Kingdom, Christian nationalism has historically been less prominent than in the United States. However, it has become increasingly visible as a form of cultural nationalism in which Christian symbols and language are used to define an “in-group” and to resist perceived threats—most commonly immigration, Islam,

and secular pluralism. In this setting, the appeal is often less about church practice or theology and more about identity, heritage, and power.

Contemporary Far-Right Uses of Christian Nationalism

In recent years, elements of this ideology have overlapped with far-right movements by providing a moral vocabulary for nationalist agendas. Political conflicts may be framed as spiritual battles between “good and evil,” which can intensify polarisation and supply a sense of divine justification for exclusionary policies. In the UK this overlap is often expressed through public symbolism and performative religious language, for example [‘Unite the Kingdom’](#) or [‘Raise the Colours’](#), rather than through sustained theological argument.

- **Symbolism and rallies:** At high-profile events such as the 2025 “Unite the Kingdom” rally, activists including Tommy Robinson have used Christian prayer, crosses, and “Christ is King” chants to lend moral weight to anti-immigrant and Islamophobic messages.
- **Group strategies:** Organisations such as Britain First have presented themselves as Christian political movements, staging “Christian patrols” and provocative actions outside mosques, sometimes using Bibles as props.
- **Political messaging:** The language of “defending Christian heritage” has also appeared in parts of right-wing politics; for example, UKIP has previously promoted a “Christian Manifesto” calling for a more “muscular” defence of national Christian identity.

Church and Theological Critiques of Far-Right Christian Nationalism

UK churches and theologians often argue that Christian nationalism conflicts with the Gospel’s core themes. Rather than describing the problem as “too much” Christianity, many describe it as a distortion of Christian faith—one that turns the cross into a political emblem and neighbour-love into an “us versus them” identity. The following themes frequently appear in UK theological responses.

1) The universality of the Gospel (anti-exclusivism)

The New Testament portrays the “Kingdom of God” as transcending borders, ethnicity, and nation. Galatians 3:28 (“There is neither Jew nor Gentile... for you are all one in Christ Jesus”) is often cited to argue that Christian identity cannot be tethered to a single national “in-group.” From this view, nationalism that defines belonging by birth, heritage, or exclusion contradicts the Christian call to universal neighbour-love and mission to “all nations.”

2) The “idolatry” of the nation

A common critique, including within the Church of England, is that Christian nationalism risks elevating the nation-state to a quasi-divine status. Slogans such as “country first,” or claims that national success proves God’s favour, are treated as forms of idolatry—placing a human institution above God. In this framing, faith

should retain the freedom to criticise the state; when Christian symbols become political props, they can be stripped of their meaning as signs of sacrifice and reconciliation and repurposed as tools of worldly power.

3) Protecting the “stranger” (immigration)

Because much of the far-right appropriation of Christianity focuses on immigration, churches often respond by emphasising biblical commands to welcome and protect the “sojourner” (e.g., Leviticus 19:34). They also point to the Parable of the Good Samaritan as a definition of “neighbour” that crosses ethnic and religious boundaries. From this perspective, invoking Christian identity to justify hostility toward refugees or closed-border rhetoric is presented as incompatible with Christian ethics.

4) The “suffering servant” versus the “militant warrior”

Christian nationalism can adopt a “muscular” or militant tone that emphasises strength and dominance. Critics contrast this with Jesus’ rejection of worldly power (John 18:36: “My kingdom is not of this world”) and the New Testament’s depiction of Christ as a suffering servant. In this light, rally slogans such as “Christ is King” are criticised when used to legitimise aggression or exclusion, because they shift a spiritual claim about authority into a secular weapon.

5) Pluralism and the integrity of faith

Many UK theologians argue that a secular, pluralistic public sphere can protect faith by ensuring belief remains a free choice rather than a coerced national identity. From this view, efforts to dominate the public square risk producing “cultural Christianity” in which the religion becomes a political badge rather than a transformative spiritual practice.

Flags, National Symbols, and Public Space

A recurring flashpoint is the use of flags—especially the Union Jack, St George’s Cross, and the Christian flag—in rallies and, at times, in or around places of worship. Critics argue these symbols are sometimes weaponised to project a narrow, exclusionary identity, while others defend them as legitimate expressions of English or British heritage and pride. The resources below explore how these symbols become politically charged in contemporary debates.

Why This Rhetoric Resonates: Belonging and Identity

Analysts often interpret the rise of Christian-nationalist rhetoric as a response to a broader crisis of belonging in a rapidly-changing society. As local industries, community institutions, and traditional gathering places (including high-street churches) have declined, some people experience displacement or a sense of “homelessness” in their own country. Far-right movements can exploit this by offering a ready-made identity that feels ancient, protective, and morally-

charged. The community and ritualism offered by rallies, shared slogans and visible symbols such as flags and crosses create immediate solidarity and belonging.

We acknowledge that those within our churches, including but not limited to those in post-industrial or working-class communities, can experience a similar sense of emotional or economic dislocation amidst what is being experienced as fluid social conditions and global uncertainty. At such times of flux, the adopting of Christian and national symbols can be a way of asserting a traditional identity and sense of belonging. A “muscular” Christian identity is offered as a way to reclaim pride and agency.

While the desire for belonging and strengthening identity is natural, Christian nationalism satisfies it through exclusionary stances and policies, often expressed through othering minority communities (e.g. Muslim, Jewish, refugee or asylum-seeking communities). Class dynamics can also shape the appeal of Christian-nationalist symbolism in the UK, as a protest against a perceived ‘liberal elite’. Far-right Christian nationalism is thus sometimes expressed through offering a ‘common sense’ faith presented as a ‘return-to-roots’, as a plain-speaking Christianity. Regardless of ethnicity or immigration status, some in post-industrial or working-class communities might embrace Christian and national symbols as a way of asserting a traditional identity they feel has been devalued or mocked by a globalised, secular professional class.

However, the universality and ultimately inclusionary message of the Gospel must not be diluted. Scripture bids us to discern prophets or movements ‘by their fruit’ (Matthew 7:16-20). Something or someone that expresses exclusion of certain communities or by a narrow national identity that defines itself by who it keeps out is unbiblical and against Christ. True Christian belonging is found in a diverse, global community that welcomes everyone into God’s multi-ethnic kingdom, as in Revelations 7:9. True Christian response must re-centre Christian faith on worship, discipleship, and the universality of the Gospel—rather than treating Christianity as a national boundary marker or ‘in-group’ premised on keeping others out.

Interfaith and Civil Society Responses

In the UK, the debate is often discussed through the lens of interfaith relations because Christian-nationalist rhetoric can threaten the “multicultural consensus” built over decades. Many faith leaders view the movement as a rejection of collaborative civic life and respond by emphasising solidarity across religious communities.

- **Weaponising faith against minorities:** Inter-religious bodies (including national interfaith networks) warn that Christian symbols can be used to “other” Muslim and Jewish communities by casting them as “foreign” or “invading,” undermining belonging for many British citizens.

- **Solidarity and co-existence initiatives:** In response to provocations such as “Christian patrols” or mosque harassment, local projects have brought churches, mosques, and community groups together publicly to demonstrate that religious identity can be a resource for peace rather than conflict.
- **Jewish communal concerns:** Jewish organisations note that “Judeo-Christian” language can be deployed selectively to exclude Muslims while masking or softening antisemitic tropes (for example, conspiratorial rhetoric about globalism or “liberal elites”).

What Christians Can Do in Response

Because the Church of England is woven into local life through its parish system, it is well placed to respond by re-centring Christian faith on worship, discipleship, and the universality of the Gospel—rather than treating Christianity as a national boundary marker. In sermons, confirmations, and small-group formation, clergy and lay leaders can explicitly distinguish ordinary love of country from the sacralisation of the nation, and can name the ways Christian language is sometimes used to legitimise exclusion. Bishops and diocesan teams can reinforce this through consistent public theology and training that draws on established themes in Church of England critique: warning against idolatry, reaffirming the dignity of the “stranger,” and insisting that Christian belonging is rooted in Christ and baptism rather than ethnicity, border, or heritage.

At parish level, the Parochial Church Council (PCC) can set clear expectations about the use of church buildings, noticeboards, and communications so that consecrated space is not treated as a platform for intimidation or party-political mobilisation. Where symbols are contested, parishes can address the issue through existing processes of consultation and oversight (including diocesan advice on church buildings and, where relevant, the faculty jurisdiction) rather than through ad hoc decisions in moments of pressure. In parallel, churches can strengthen pastoral responses for those drawn into conspiratorial or extremist online ecosystems: offering supervised conversations with clergy, signposting to diocesan safeguarding or wellbeing support where there is risk of harm, and modelling careful truth-seeking and charitable speech as part of Christian formation.

Many churches are serving their communities in various ways and we encourage them to continue their great work of bringing people together and showing loving, biblical service through initiatives and community engagement such as Community Cafes, Advisory support, warm spaces and the vast variety of social action and church community engagement that is displayed daily across our parishes.

The accompanying [resources document](#), drawn from ecumenical sources, inter-faith organisations and parachurch networks, provides our parishes with practical toolkits to keep faithful Christian witness in response to Christian nationalism.