BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE

NETWORKING THE BAPTIST FAMILY TO IMPACT THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

BWA General Council Resolution 2024.2

RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM

The Baptist World Alliance General Council, meeting in Lagos, Nigeria, July 7-12, 2024:

LAMENTS the rise of religious nationalism around the world in all forms of government from totalitarian systems to democracies. Religious nationalism is the co-opting of the language, symbols, imagery, sacred texts, or holy figures of the dominant religion to justify wielding legal, political or social power or privilege, and may depict a nation or political party as divinely approved and guided.

UNDERSTANDS that religious nationalism threatens religious freedom and may corrupt or exploit any religion in the pursuit of obtaining or maintaining political power. Such fusing of religion with community or national identity may create flawed expressions of devout faith and patriotism.

DECRIES the harm caused by all forms of religious nationalism that may include discrimination against and silencing of religious minorities and other marginalized communities, resulting in vandalism, harassment, violence, arrest, forced displacement, and death.

RECOGNIZES that Baptists and other Christians are not immune to this dangerous trend. In Christian nationalism the gospel of Jesus Christ is reduced to a gospel of earthly political power.

ACKNOWLEDGES that Christian nationalism is a form of idolatry as it makes one's nation-state equal to if not superior to the Triune God. Christians who perpetuate and fuel Christian nationalism should repent of, not celebrate, their participation.

REPUDIATES the theology of dominion and the way it undergirds Christian nationalism as a Christian duty. Dominionism distorts gospel values to misuse churches for political gain, spurs societal aversion to the gospel, creates divisions within the church, and silences Christians and Christian leaders who oppose this theology of power. In contrast, we endorse Jesus's model of civic engagement characterized by love and sacrifice for our neighbors.

AFFIRMS our Baptist heritage of fighting for more than 400 years for a radical separation of the institutions of religion and government as the best way to protect the religious freedom of all people. We further affirm a constructive and prophetic Christian strategy of civic engagement and advocacy that defends the freedom of religion or belief for everyone, protects the human rights of all, and promotes the common good.

COMMENDS Baptists around the world who are leading the religious, academic, cultural, and political opposition to religious nationalism in their contexts and calls for an increase in multifaith advocacy in support of religious freedom for all. We also applaud efforts opposing Christian nationalism such as the Christians Against Christian Nationalism campaign run by the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty in the United States and the Freedom of Religion or Belief course from the International Baptist Theological Seminary in the Netherlands.

CALLS on all Baptist individuals, churches, unions, and institutions—and all people of good will—to find ways to publicly and privately oppose religious nationalism, and especially resist the temptations of Christian nationalism. We also urge Baptists and other Christians to support positive Christian engagement in the public square.

Approved by the General Council (Thursday, July 11, 2024)