



The Bell

August, 2026

Monthly Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

Good day and God's blessings upon you. I hope this finds you doing well and staying cool during this unusual heat wave we are having, which I hope is over by the time you read this.

We just ended our General Assembly Meeting in Milwaukee on July 2. I do not normally talk to most of you about the internal politics of the Presbyterian Church (USA) because I like to focus more on our local community rather than national issues in our denomination. But I have some concerns that are truly bothering me. Call it a "crisis of conscious" if you will. I talked with one of our retired pastors who was there in Milwaukee and they felt it was the most divisive General Assembly that they could remember.

The issues that were brought up include, but are not limited to divesting from fossil fuels, calling Israel's actions in Gaza genocide, advocating for access to gender-affirming care, for all ages. But the thing that really caught my eye and ear was repudiating Christian Nationalism.

Now, I hate to talk about politics at all in church and this subject has politics written all over it. One of the documents that I believe they used to define White Christian Nationalism is the one I asked Lynda to print after my message here. It was written by one of our committees called the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Inter-religious Relations, and was written in 2025.

I would like you to read this and let me know what you think. I am sharing and asking senior pastors in our presbytery and others to share their opinion with me so I am holding my opinion to myself right now so I can take it all in and try and keep an open mind.

God bless you all and I hope you have a wonderful rest of your summer and continue to enjoy the blessings we have been given to us by God, in the Chippewa Valley.

Ed

Confronting White Christian Nationalism

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is Christian Nationalism?**

Christian nationalism is a political ideology that seeks to merge Christian identity with American civic life and national identity. It asserts that the United States was founded as a Christian nation and should continue to be governed according to what its proponents see as Christian values or biblical principles.

Core Beliefs of Christian Nationalism:

- America is divinely chosen or specially blessed by God.
- U.S. laws and policies should reflect Christian beliefs, often from a conservative evangelical perspective.
- Christianity should have a privileged place in public life (e.g., in government, schools, monuments).
- The Founding Fathers intended for the U.S. to be explicitly Christian in governance (this is historical revisionism).

2. **How does Christian Nationalism undermine the church and Christianity?**

- Conflates religious and political authority in an idolatrous way
- Contradicts the teaching and example of Jesus
- Undermines pluralism and religious liberty
- Belies the New Testament, which offers no biblical precedent for a Christian nation
- Promotes oppression and exclusion of those deemed "unworthy"
- Distorts the mission of the Church from love of neighbor to love of power
- Confuses the kingdom of God with earthly nations and earthly power with spiritual calling
- Reduces Christianity to a narrow cultural identity over the universal tradition Jesus stands for

3. **Is the United States a "Christian nation" and can Christian theology be at the root of American public policy?**

The U.S. Constitution does not establish Christianity—or any religion—as a national religion. In fact, the First Amendment explicitly prohibits the government from establishing a religion and protects the free exercise of all religions:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. ~First Amendment, U.S. Constitution

The first component of Christian nationalism is belief in a Christian nation. According to an article in *Christianity Today*,¹

Christian nationalism is the belief that the American nation is defined by Christianity, and that the government should take active steps to keep it that way. Christian nationalists assert that America is and must remain a "Christian nation."

4. **What qualifies as a Christian Nationalist action?**

One component of Christian nationalism is a political ideology that believes Christianity should have primacy in the public square in order to address so-called immorality. Christian nationalists do not call themselves by that name and do not work from a shared playbook. But the kind of policies that they espouse tell a clear story:

- Reinstating prayer in public schools
- Changing school curriculum to include biblical education
- Banning books from libraries if you disagree with the content
- Pushing for anti-immigrant policies that aim to stop demographic changes
- Discriminating against LGBTQ+ people, and more

5. **How does Christian Nationalism harm other people? Where does racism come in?**

Christian nationalism harms people by advancing a narrow, exclusive vision of American identity—Christian, white, conservative, and patriarchal—that marginalizes or actively discriminates against others. Christian nationalism is not just focused on holding Christianity above other faith traditions; rather, it uses state power to privilege Christians at the expense of all others.

Robert P. Jones, president and founder of Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), explains in his 2023 book, *The Hidden Roots of White Supremacy*² that the United States was founded with a paradox at its heart, at once striving for a democratic society, but doing so on a foundation of mass racial violence through which the indigenous population was replaced. This paradox, Jones explains, survives today in the form of white Christian nationalism, privileging white Christians above all other US citizens.

6. **Are there other religious nationalisms?**

Religious nationalism is not exclusive to Christianity. It's a global pattern where religion becomes fused with political identity, ethnicity, and power, often leading to exclusionary or supremacist ideologies. The core issue is not the religion itself, but how it's co-opted for political and nationalist goals.

Prepared by GACEIR,
General Assembly Committee on
Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations



¹ Paul D. Miller, "What is Christian Nationalism?" *Christianity Today*, February 2021.

² Robert P. Jones, *The Hidden Roots of White Supremacy* (Simon & Schuster, 2023).

PURE WATER DAYS SERVICE TO BE AUGUST 9

The ecumenical service that Chippewa Falls hosts during the Pure Water Days Festival is perhaps one of the most delightful examples of Wisconsin culture in the state. This year it will be on August 9 in Irvine Park at the gazebo and will begin at 9:00. All are welcome.

The service will include pastors and congregations from Trinity United Methodist, Our Saviour's Lutheran, First Presbyterian, Central Lutheran, Christ Episcopal, Zion Methodist and Lake Hallie Methodist churches making it a truly ecumenical service.

Deacon Rose Ruthie of Christ Episcopal Church will deliver the sermon. All the other duties of the service are divided equally. A collection is taken which goes to CareLink.

Water will be poured in keeping with the theme of Pure Water Days and attendees are encouraged to bring bottles of water collected from the river, creek or a lake to add to the water being poured. There will be traditional music provided by an ecumenical choir directed by Ron Buckles of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church.

There are benches at the band shell but many people choose to bring folding chairs or blankets to sit on the hill. The earlier than usual schedule should mean that the sun won't shine as brightly on worshippers making for a more pleasant morning. The service usually sees about 200 attendees.

In case of rain the service will move to Our Saviour's parking lot where they are already set up for services by car radio.

There will be no regular service at FPC that Sunday.

WE'RE BACK AT ERICKSON PARK FOR SUPPER

We return to Erickson Park for what may be the last First-Wednesday-Nite supper in the park of the year. If we weather permits, we will go to the Erickson again in September but that's pending.

In the meantime, brush up your potluck recipes and plan to be with us on August 5 with supper beginning at 5:00. Bring a folding chair and something to drink if you wish. There will be plates and utensils on hand.

EAT WELL AND SUPPORT GOOD CAUSES ON AUGUST 6

Since it's August, it is time for the annual Meet to Eat event to benefit the Open Door Clinic. This year's event will take place August 6 and will include Anderson's Chic-n-Fish in Chippewa Falls, Harm's Way Bar and Grill and Xpeditions/TowneHouse Coffee and Eatery both in Bloomer, Old Abe's Supper Club in Jim Falls, Horizons Bar and Grill in Tilden and the Sandbar Bar and Grill at Lake Wissota.

As usual, 25% of your bill will go to the Open Door Clinic to support their on-going project.

FROM THE ENDOWMENT TEAM...

The Endowment Team met on July 6 to determine the amount of the disbursement from the fund to the church. Our endowment's fiscal year runs from July 1 – June 30, so we are charged to determine the disbursement at this time. As per our by-laws, we give 4% of the value of the investment fund. We were able to write a check for \$13,091 to the church. Session will decide how this money is used. Last year, the endowment investment garnered \$10,000 to the church. Session voted to use that money toward our electric sign.

The above-mentioned check is placed in the church account and is tracked by the church's treasurer, Carla Ingalls. The current value of that account named "Endowment for Purchases" is \$93,091. We have a large sum of money in that account due to (1) the closing of the church due to COVID, and (2) the prolonged time that we did not have a pastor, half-time or otherwise. During some of this time, disbursements from the endowment investment were deposited in the church account. However, I assume, that we did not have a clear plan of where we were going until we hired CRE Ed Williams. Thus, the funds were not spent, and have accumulated. This is the silver lining of those uncertain years as we have a nest egg on which we can rely.

In June, the endowment received \$5000 from the Esther Frazier estate. We are grateful for Esther's generosity.

Barb Shorrel, Treasurer

FPC TO PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

As in past years, we will participate in Chippewa Falls' National Night Out at the fairgrounds from 4:30 to 8 PM on August 4.

This event was begun to introduce the police departments throughout the country to the people of the community but at least here, it has grown to include other groups like FPC who want to let people know what they have to offer. We will be sharing information about the church, the Food Pantry and the Open Door clinic as well as providing ice cream to attendees.

ELVIS IS SOON TO BE IN THE BUILDING AGAIN

Or at least an impersonator in the form of Lee Hall, who specializes in bringing Elvis back.

Hall will be appearing at "Pastor Eddie's Hangout" (better known to us as Trinity Methodist Church) on Saturday, August 15 at 5:00.

In keeping with the theme of the past, hamburgers, cheeseburgers, milk shakes and fries will be served. The cost is \$18.00 per person.

You can reserve your tickets by calling Trinity at 715-723-2806 during office hours.

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20

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MEET TO EAT FOR THE FREE CLINIC



Eat at any of the following restaurants on Thursday, August 6th, and 25% of your bill will help support the Open Door Clinic!

- Anderson's Chic-n-Fish, Chippewa Falls
- Harms Way Bar and Grill, Bloomer
- Horizons Bar & Grill, Tilden
- Old Abe's Supper Club, Jim Falls
- The SandBar and Grill, Lake Wissota
- Xpeditions / TowneHouse Coffee & Eatery, Bloomer

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