A Pastoral and Confessional Statement on Christian Nationalism
to Our Siblings in the Christian Faith

As fellow members of the one body of Christ, and in a spirit of ecumenical witness, we, the undersigned, have come to recognize Christian Nationalism as more than a theological difference—it is a heresy, akin to what St. Paul called "another gospel." To clarify our concerns, we offer the following theses for the sake of the integrity of our faith and to define what constitutes faithful gospel practice within the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church of Christ.

We call this a "confessional" statement, in the spirit of Peter's confession of Christ in Matthew 16:13–20. The word "confess" literally means to "say-with," or to "repeat" what we have received through the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3-8). Therefore, we do not present this statement as personal opinion, but as a response to God's revelation concerning Jesus as the Messiah. As Jesus said to Peter, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven" (Matthew 16:17).

American Christian Nationalism misidentifies Christ, portraying him not as the crucified Messiah and friend of sinners, but as a prophet of judgment and domination—used to promote their own narrow, self-serving vision of America and to secure power for themselves. As you read these theses, we urge you to test them against the Apostolic testimony handed down to us in the New Testament.

First, we confess as members of the one body of Christ, that there is only one Church, headed by one Lord, Jesus Christ.
Because the Church's identity is inseparable from Christ's identity, we cannot remain silent when fellow Christians embrace and promote a version of Christianity that distorts its Christological, evangelical, and ecumenical foundations. Christian Nationalism has so entangled Christianity with nationalist politics that it has created a "cult of personality" around President Donald J. Trump—a cult that rivals the lordship of Christ and equates the "America First" political agenda with the Word of Christ. This is a false creed and must be exposed as such. No human being may usurp the place of Jesus Christ, and no human doctrine may replace the Word of God. Doing so is a betrayal of our confession and a distortion of faithful Christian life.
(1 Corinthians 8:6; Romans 5:1; Philippians 2:11)

Second, we confess, as members of the one body of Christ, that we need to repent that our denominational boundaries have limited us in bearing ecumenical witness to what it means for us to be the one church of Jesus the Christ.
We, the Church in America, have become complacent in our denominational divisions. We no longer see ourselves as one body, but as a collection of fragmented associations, each claiming its own "truth," often indifferent to the unified pursuit of the gospel in Jesus Christ. This denominational mindset has undermined our ability to engage one another meaningfully and to bear unified witness to the world. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer observed in his critique of American Protestantism ("Protestantism Without Reformation"), repentance and humility—not arrogance or self-congratulation—are the only appropriate response. We grieve our divisions and humbly repent of the ways we have contributed to a spirit of divisiveness and misunderstanding.
(Matthew 18:15–22; Ephesians 4:1–6)

Third, we confess that our crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ, shows his Lordship through forgiveness, compassion, and love—not domination.
Christian Nationalism has led many believers to wrongly believe that Christ's Lordship means enforcing "Christian domination" over the world. This distorted view underpins the idea of a "Christian nation" and is used to justify "Christian legislation" or—even more troubling—political violence to impose his rule on earth. But this "dominion theology," as Christian Nationalists call it, stands in direct opposition to the gospel. Jesus clearly said he came not to be served (to dominate), but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). In the same way, the authority Jesus gives his followers is not power to control, but power to serve. The identity of both Christ and his disciples is inseparably linked to the cross. To follow Jesus means denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following him (Mark 8:34–35; 10:41–45). Any teaching that pursues power over others, rather than humble service and sacrificial love, rejects the very heart of Christ's Lordship.
(Mark 8:34-35, Mark 10:41-45)

Fourth, we confess that Christians live under both God's Kingdoms, the rule of grace (as disciples of Christ) and the rule of law (as citizens), and can do so faithfully through the various callings or vocations they occupy.

The governing authorities are appointed by God to maintain the rule of law for the sake of upholding and enforcing justice and peace—and it matters not whether they are Christian. Christians are to honor and respect these authorities through the exercise of the vocation of citizenship. This includes being as informed as possible concerning the state of the nation, electing leaders with an eye towards the "common good," and holding leaders accountable through the existing constitutional and political processes. Since "the rule of law" includes not only government but everything that functions to promote the general welfare and restrain humanity's worst inclinations, Christians also serve society through a variety of vocations or secular occupations. However, the rule of law must never be used to enforce or impose the Christian faith. To do so is a blatant contradiction of the rule of grace. To the contrary, Christian witness is carried out through love, hospitality, and testimony—not through coercion, enforcement, or domination. Christian Nationalism explicitly opposes this Christian perspective because it confuses God's twofold governance (law and gospel), and in doing so, undermines both.
(Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–17; 1 Peter 3:15; John 18:36)

Fifth, we confess that the Church is an Exilic Community that welcomes the foreigner, the outcast, and the forsaken—not a Dominionist Movement.

The idea of God's "preferential option for the poor" not only runs throughout both the Old and New Testaments, but is a central theme in both ways God relates to the world—law and gospel—even though each understands "the poor" differently. Under the category of the law, "the poor" are the "needy," the socially, physically, economically "disadvantaged," those fundamentally deprived of fairness. Under the category of the gospel, "the poor" are sinners, those who are "poor in spirit," who lack treasure in heaven, who stand in need of forgiveness. Jesus so identifies with the poor that whatever we do for them, he says, we do for him. Therefore, the Church is called to identify with both kinds of poverty and to speak prophetically on their behalf. Indeed, identifying with the poor is one of the marks of the church. For although the Church is in the world (for the sake of service), it is not of the world (fixated on domination). It is an exilic community whose security and hope do not rest in worldly power or wealth—even if some of its members possess them— but in the promise of its crucified and risen Lord.
(Matthew 6:19-21; Matthew 25:31–46; Hebrews 11:13–16)

Sixth, no one in Christ's community is immune from betraying the good news of Jesus. This includes not only Christian Nationalists but also many liberal and mainline Christians. For each, in in their own way, reduce the gospel to a form of "social gospel" that neglects the central reality of God's work of reconciling sinners through repentance and faith in Christ.

We acknowledge that this statement primarily addresses the false gospel of Christian Nationalism and its roots in dominion theology, often espoused by right-wing religious groups. However, we also must critique the liberal or left-wing reduction of the gospel to a message of "justice and peace." Although the left is not as aggressive and egregious as the right in its tactics, ironically, both groups operate out of the same "social gospel" paradigm, "Christ the transformer of culture," to use H. Richard Niebuhr's category. The difference is that the left views the gospel as a set of liberal social mandates and the right as a set of conservative social mandates. In Luther's terms, both confuse the gospel with their perception of the "social function of the law." What is missing is the proper distinction of law to the neglect of the core message of Christian proclamation: repentance and faith in the forgiveness of sins, secured through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Any distortion—whether from the right or the left—that replaces the reconciling work of Christ with a political or social agenda undermines the gospel. We must be on guard against all false gospels, even those that emerge from within our own theological traditions.
(Mark 13:5–6; Galatians 3:1–5; 1 Corinthians 10:12)

Conclusion
We share these theses not in anger or judgment, but in hope—hope that the Church will unite around its first love: Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. We invite our fellow Christians to measure these words against Scripture, to join us in repentance where needed, and to recommit ourselves to the one true gospel—the gospel that brings salvation, not through worldly power, but through the cross.