



Subject: Sign the petition! Baptists Worldwide: Global Covenant on Freedom of Religion and Conscience

Dear Friends,

Doug Hynd kindly sent me through this article which provides a wonderful summary of the Baptist World Congress held two weeks ago – particularly the concerns highlighted by Tim Costello and other Baptist leaders regarding Christian nationalism. *(I encourage you- if Rebecca’s congress summary on Sunday only whetted your appetite - to read the whole article here - https://publicwitness.wordandway.org/p/global-baptists-gather-down-under?utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web)*

As the *Global Covenant on Freedom of Religion and Conscience* delegates were encouraged to sign states: “We covenant together to... live as neighbours committed to hospitality, honesty, and shared humanity. We reject all forms of religious nationalism, stereotyping, slander, and scapegoating, and instead seek to build friendships of mutuality and peace.”

Tim Costello called out the thinking of MAGA Christians, saying, “We think if we just have our person in the prime minister or in the White House or wherever, then we rule.... It’s a fundamental mistake. It’s a heresy. We are called to witness. God in the second return of Jesus will actually establish and rule. Not us. With religious nationalism and Christian Nationalism, we have mistaken witness for power.”

Below are the words of the *Global Covenant on Freedom of Religion and Conscience*.

We are compelled by the conviction that every person is created in the image of God and endowed with inherent dignity, beauty, and worth. We believe that upholding the right for individuals and communities to live according to their faith and conscience is foundational to societies of justice, peace, and societal wellbeing. Because of these convictions, we covenant together to:

1. Defend the dignity of every person and, in an age that increasingly intersects technology into life and society, the rights for every individual and community to live with freedom of belief and conscience. We affirm that no one should be coerced into belief or non-belief. The journey of faith and conscience is not one of force or fear but of love.
2. Protect freedom of religion, belief, and conscience for all people and communities. This includes the right to profess, practice, and peacefully share and disseminate one's faith, individually or in community, publicly or privately, and to change one's religion without compulsion, discrimination, persecution, or penalty.
3. Encourage societies where people of faith, or no faith, are ensured equal citizenship, dignity, and protection under just laws. This is especially true as individuals and communities live their convictions of faith and conscience in caring for the needs of the most vulnerable.
4. Live as neighbours committed to hospitality, honesty, and shared humanity. We reject all forms of religious nationalism, stereotyping, slander, and scapegoating, and instead seek to build friendships of mutuality and peace.
5. Stand against religious persecution and repression whenever it occurs. We call upon ourselves, governments, and people everywhere to assist the oppressed and to work towards healing, justice, and restoration.

Believing that freedom of faith and conscience is foundational to human dignity and the flourishing of societies, I sign this global affirmation with hope, generosity, and a prayerful commitment to advocacy and action.

You are welcome to add your name to the petition here

- <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/global-covenant-on-freedom-of-religion-and-conscience> Baptist World Alliance is hoping to eventually have one million signatories.

Grace and peace,

Belinda