

# Christian Flag

The **Christian Flag** is an ecumenical flag designed in the early 20th century to represent all of Christianity and Christendom.<sup>[1]</sup> Since its adoption by the United States Federal Council of Churches in 1942, it has been used by many Christian traditions,<sup>[2][1]</sup> including the Anglican,<sup>[3]</sup> Baptist,<sup>[4]</sup> Mennonite,<sup>[5]</sup> Methodist,<sup>[2][6]</sup> Moravian,<sup>[7]</sup> Lutheran,<sup>[8]</sup> Presbyterian,<sup>[8]</sup> Quaker,<sup>[9]</sup> Reformed, among others.<sup>[10]</sup> Africa and the Americas are regions of the world where the flag remains popular.<sup>[11]</sup> The flag has a white field, with a red Latin cross inside a blue canton. The shade of red on the cross symbolizes the blood that Jesus shed on Calvary.<sup>[12]</sup> The blue represents the waters of baptism as well as the faithfulness of Jesus.<sup>[13]</sup> The white represents Jesus' purity.<sup>[14]</sup> The dimensions of the flag and canton have no official specifications.

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## Christian Flag



<b>Use</b>	Banner <span><span> </span><span>▣</span></span>
<b>Adopted</b>	1942
<b>Design</b>	A white banner with a red Latin Cross charged upon a blue canton
<b>Designed by</b>	Charles C. Overton and Ralph Eugene Diffendorfer

## Origins

The Christian Flag was first conceived on September 26, 1897, at Brighton Chapel on Coney Island in Brooklyn, New York in the United States. The superintendent of a Sunday school, Charles C. Overton, gave an impromptu lecture to the gathered students, because the scheduled speaker had failed to arrive for the event. He gave a speech asking the students what a flag representing Christianity would look like.<sup>[15]</sup> Overton thought about his improvised speech for many years afterward. In 1907, he and Ralph Diffendorfer, secretary of the Methodist Young People's Missionary Movement, designed and began promoting the flag.<sup>[16]</sup> With regard to the Christian symbolism of the Christian Flag:



The Christian Flag flies outside Focus on the Family's headquarters in Colorado.



Ecuadorians parading the Christian Flag along with an Ecuadorian one.

The ground is white, representing peace, purity and innocence. In the upper corner is a blue square, the color of the unclouded sky, emblematic of heaven, the home of the Christian; also a symbol of faith and trust. In the center of the blue is the cross, the ensign and chosen symbol of Christianity: the cross is red, typical of Christ's blood.<sup>[15]</sup>

The ecumenical organization, Federal Council of Churches (now succeeded by the National Council of Churches and Christian Churches Together) adopted the flag on 23 January 1942.<sup>[21]</sup> the Federal Council of Churches represented Baptist, Brethren, Eastern Orthodox, Episcopal, Methodist, Moravian, Lutheran, Oriental Orthodox, Polish National Catholic, Presbyterian, Quaker, and Reformed traditions, among others.<sup>[17][18][19]</sup> The Christian Flag intentionally has no patent, as the designer dedicated the flag to all of Christendom.<sup>[20]</sup> Fanny Crosby wrote the words to a hymn called "The Christian Flag" with music by R. Huntington Woodman.<sup>[1]</sup> Like the flag, the hymn is free use.<sup>[21]</sup> On the Sunday nearest 26 September 1997, the Christian Flag celebrated its one hundredth anniversary.<sup>[22]</sup>

## Usage

Mainline Protestant denominations in the United States accepted the flag first, and by the 1980s many institutions had described policies for displaying it inside churches.<sup>[23]</sup> The Federal Council of Churches recommended that if the Christian Flag is to be used alongside a national flag, that the Christian Flag should receive the place of honor.<sup>[24]</sup> During World War II the flag was flown along with the U.S. flag in a number of Lutheran churches, many of them with German backgrounds, who wanted to show their solidarity with the United States during the war against Germany.



The Christian Flag to the right of the U.S. flag and the pulpit in a Presbyterian church in California; eagle and cross finials are on each flag pole respectively.



U.S. and Christian flags displayed on the house of an Oklahoman family.

The Christian Flag spread outside North America with Christian missionaries.<sup>[25]</sup> It can be seen today in or outside many Christian churches throughout the world, particularly in Latin America and in Africa.<sup>[25]</sup> It has so far been adopted by some Protestant churches in Europe, Asia, and Africa as well.<sup>[11]</sup>

The Christian Flag is not patented and therefore, "Anyone may manufacture it, and it may be used on all proper occasions."<sup>[26]</sup>

In U.S. evangelical Christian schools, it is customary for the Christian flag to be displayed opposite the U.S. flag.

In Canada and the United States, accommodationists and separationists have entered impassioned debate on the legality of erecting the Christian Flag atop governmental buildings.<sup>[27][28]</sup>



Mexican children displaying the Christian Flag alongside the Mexican one.

## Pledge

Some churches and organizations practice a "pledge of allegiance" or "affirmation of loyalty" to the Christian Flag, which is similar to the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag. The first pledge was written by Lynn Harold Hough, a

Methodist minister who had heard Ralph Diffendorfer, secretary to the Methodist Young People's Missionary Movement, promoting the Christian flag at a rally.<sup>[29]</sup> He wrote the following pledge:

I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag and to the Saviour for whose kingdom it stands; one brotherhood, uniting all mankind in service and in love.<sup>[29]</sup>

Some more conservative evangelical, Lutheran, Adventist, and Baptist churches and schools may use an alternative version of the pledge:

I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag, and to the Saviour for whose Kingdom it stands; one Saviour, crucified, risen, and coming again with life and liberty to all who believe.<sup>[29]</sup>

Others use this version:

I pledge allegiance to the Christian Flag, and to the Savior for whose Kingdom it stands; one brotherhood uniting all [true] Christians, in service, and in love.<sup>[30]</sup>

## See also

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- [American civil religion](#)
- [Black Standard](#)
- [Christian symbolism](#)
- [Civil religion](#)
- [Cross necklace](#)
- [Flag of Israel](#)
- [Flag of the Vatican City](#)
- *[Head of Christ](#)*
- [History of Christian flags](#)
- [Islamic flags](#)
- [Nordic cross flag](#)

## References

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1. "Resolution". *Federal Council Bulletin*. Religious Publicity Service of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. 25-27. 1942.
2. Kurian, George Thomas; Lamport, Mark A. (10 November 2016). *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. p. 1359. ISBN 9781442244320. "In Protestant churches, the national flag was frequently displayed along with the "Christian Flag" (white field, red Latin cross on a blue canton), which had been created and popularized in American Methodist circles and adopted by the Federal Council of Churches in 1942. Often the staff would feature an eagle finial and a cross finial, respectively."
3. Kelland, Ariana; Howells, Laura (March 23, 2016). "[Controversial Christian flag removed as provincial, national flags flown at half-mast](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/controversial-christian-flag-removed-outside-confederation-building-1.3503671)" (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/controversial-christian-flag-removed-outside-confederation-building-1.3503671>). *CBC News*. Retrieved January 2, 2020.