

MyChurchFinder identifies Christian nationalist churches

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(RNS)—Since taking the pulpit at Legacy Baptist Church in Coolidge, Ariz., Pastor Rob Hudelson has not shied away from hot-button political issues, including disputing the results of the 2020 election.

His taste for politicking has expressed itself in his two campaigns for state representative.

Recently on X, formerly Twitter, Hudelson [responded to a post](#) from the conspiracy-minded journalist Lara Logan about recent arrests of Jan. 6 rioters with a post that read: “Marxism will not be something that is debated ... only taken by force. It cannot win in the battlefield of ideas.”

That kind of rhetoric has earned Hudelson’s church an “A” rating from MyChurchFinder, a 6-month-old online directory that promises to connect Americans to “biblically sound” congregations across the country.

‘Biblically sound’ ratings

MyChurchFinder sends surveys to pastors nationwide and assigns a letter grade to their church based on their answers. To receive an A rating, pastors must demonstrate that they lead a “biblically sound, culturally aware & non-socialistic legislatively active church.”

Failing to meet any of the above criteria earns a church a “WNR”—Would Not Recommend.

The vast majority of the 270 churches in the directory received an A rating. Twenty-eight churches received B ratings, one church received a C, and

three received “WNR.”

MyChurchFinder’s rating system rewards pastors who thumb their noses at the concept of separation of church and state and believe patriotism, politics and Christianity are inextricably, biblically linked.

The site is run by a Texas automobile executive, Roger Elswick, through his organization, the Eleven Six Institute, which describes its mission as “ensuring the Church becomes and remains, not only the conscience of the Government, but also the moral guide to legislation and the moral standard for all Government.”

The directory was co-founded by Neil Mammen, who is also listed as a speaker MyChurchFinder makes available.

Mammen, author of the self-published 2012 book *Jesus Is Involved in Politics!: Why Aren’t You? Why Isn’t Your Church*, [gave an interview](#) earlier this year to American Family News, a publication of the Christian fundamentalist American Family Association. In the interview, he stressed the importance of people being in “good churches” in an election year.

“Bad churches,” he said, are “just propping up the decay of America.”

Neither Elswick nor Mammen responded to requests for comment.

Mammen told American Family News a church’s A rating means “you are not only biblically sound, but you’re also culturally aware; you know and you preach about how abortion is bad and how CRT [critical race theory] is bad, but the most important part of that is then you do something about it.”

Conservative advocacy organization Turning Point USA, whose faith-based arm has endorsed MyChurchFinder, has been on a similar mission of late.

Turning Point’s founder, Charlie Kirk, has teamed up with far-right Christian nationalist pastor [Lance Wallnau](#) to turn churches in swing states

such as Wisconsin, Arizona and Georgia into “campaign powerhouses,” *Rolling Stone* magazine [reported](#) earlier this year.

Liberty Pastors, another organization that has endorsed MyChurchFinder, is dedicated to “training” pastors “to think Biblically in every area of life—including the realms of civil government, economics, human sexuality, charity, and family.”

And, the organization touts high-profile instructors such as former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee and Act for America founder Brigitte Gabriel.

MyChurchFinder identifies congregations that have become members of Liberty Pastors.

Familiar Christian nationalist names

For those who follow Christian nationalist pastors, a few familiar names pop up in MyChurchFinder’s directory. “Patriot Churches,” a network founded by Ken Peters with locations in Knoxville and Lenoir City, Tenn., and Spokane, Wash., all have A grades.

Peters’ mini empire began with the “Church at Planned Parenthood” in Spokane, which [previously used](#) members of the Proud Boys as security.

Another is the Ekklesia church in Pomona, Calif., whose pastor has [deep ties to the Proud Boys](#) and other far-right groups in Southern California. On Fire Ministries, in Spokane, run by former Washington state Rep. Matt Shea, is also in the directory.

In 2019, Washington legislative investigators concluded Shea had “participated in an act of domestic terrorism” when he “planned, engaged in, and promoted a total of three armed conflicts of political violence against the United States government” between 2014 and 2016—including

armed standoffs in Nevada and Oregon that involved members of the Bundy family and an armed conflict with the U.S. Veterans Affairs Department in Priest River, Idaho.

On Fire Ministries came under scrutiny in 2022 when it turned out two members of white nationalist group Patriot Front [were affiliated](#) with the church. A pastor from On Fire Ministries [later denounced](#) Patriot Front as “racist.”

While the MyChurchFinder list is by no means comprehensive (notable absences include Sean Feucht’s congregation, Let Us Worship), the 270 churches that are rated offer some insight into geographical hot spots for Christian nationalist congregations.

Alaska, Maine and Vermont do not appear at all on the list, but some other states appear to be overrepresented. An [extensive report](#) by the Public Religion Research Institute published earlier this year found sympathy for Christian nationalism was most prevalent in conservative rural states.

But MyChurchFinder lists 40 churches in California, the most of any state, despite PRRI finding just 22 percent of Californians sympathize with or adhere to Christian nationalism.

PRRI also found support for Christian nationalism was “strongly correlated” with voting for Donald Trump in 2020. But of the more than 200 A-rated churches where [county-level election data](#) was available, 60 percent were in counties that went red for Trump in the 2020 presidential election.

More than a third were in counties that voted for Biden. And of the at least 133 churches located in pro-Trump counties, a third were adjacent to a blue county.

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