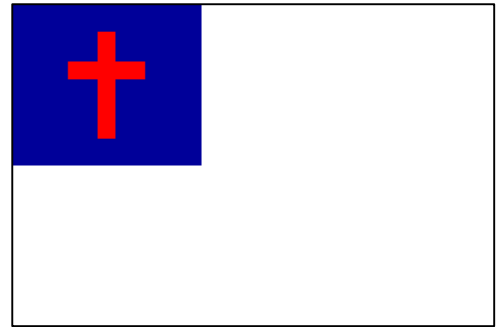


## History of the Christian Flag

The Christian Flag is a flag designed in the early 20th century to represent all of Christianity and Christendom, and has been most popular among Protestant churches in North America, Africa and Latin America. 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. The blue represents the waters of baptism as well as the faithfulness of Jesus. The white represents Jesus' purity. In conventional vexillology, a white flag is linked to surrender, a reference to the Biblical description of Jesus' non-violence and surrender to God. The dimensions of the flag and canton have no official specifications.



The Christian flag is not tied to any nation or denomination; however, non-Protestant branches of Christianity do not often fly it. According to the **Prayer Foundation**, the Christian flag is uncontrolled, independent, and universal. Its universality and free nature is meant to symbolize the nature of Christianity.

According to Wikipedia and other online sources, the Christian flag dates back to an impromptu speech given by Charles C. Overton, a Congregational Sunday school superintendent in New



York, on Sunday, September 26, 1897. The Union Sunday school that met at Brighton Chapel Coney Island had designated that day as Rally Day. The guest speaker for the Sunday school kick-off didn't show up, so Overton had to wing it. Spying an American flag near (or draped over) the podium (or piano), he started talking about flags and their symbolism. Along the way he proposed that Christians should have their own flag — an idea that stayed on his mind after the speech.



With the assistance of a seamstress, the following week Overton constructed the flag he had described to the Sunday school audience the previous Sunday, and on the following Sunday, October 3, 1897, presented the first Christian flag to his Sunday school. It remains unchanged over 100 years later.

In 1907 Overton teamed up with Ralph Diffendorfer, secretary to the Methodist Young People's Missionary Movement, to produce and promote the flag.

Here's an excerpt from an 1898 newspaper article reporting on how it came about:



*The Christian Flag was created in 1897 by Charles C. Overton. On September 25, Mr. Overton was conducting a Sunday School at Brighton Chapel in Coney Island, New York. He led the children on a parade after passing out numerous small hand held American flags to them. Afterwards, he noticed a group of liquor dealers marching over the same ground with similar flags.*

*"He was at once struck by the thought that a distinctive emblem was needed which might be symbolic of Christianity. And in this he meant no disrespect to the American flag..." He went on to say, "An army without its colors is inconceivable: then why not equip the army of the Lord with a flag appropriate to its mission?" Mr. Overton immediately began working on a design. Thus, the Christian Flag was born. \**

*\*The above information can be found in a newspaper article from De Ruyter Gleaner, Thursday, August 18th, 1898.*

(Note: the above date indicates Sept. 25, which would be a Saturday -- if it was reported correctly -- and it could also show what seeded his thoughts and contributed to inspiring his talk the next day):

The colors on the flag, not surprisingly, match those on the American flag. White represents purity and peace, blue indicates fidelity, and red stands for Christ's blood sacrifice.

The first pledge to the Christian flag was written in 1908 by Methodist pastor Lynn Harold Hough, who heard Diffendorfer's flag presentation at a rally. Hough, a liberal, wrote a fairly broad pledge:

"I pledge allegiance to *my flag* [replaced with "*the Christian flag*" by Diffendorfer] and the Savior for whose kingdom it stands; one brotherhood uniting all mankind in service and love."

Conservative churches generally use an alternative, more detailed version:

"I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag, and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands; one Savior, crucified, risen, and coming again with life and liberty to all who believe."

Controversies: The pledge isn't the only aspect of the Christian flag that has caused controversy over the years. Churches have struggled with the flag's placement in relation to the American flag, its implied link between faith and patriotism, and whether flags belong in a sanctuary at all. For more on those debates, see the essay (PDF) by [Mark Sidwell](#).

[Source: Wikipedia, ChristianityToday, Christian Heritage]

Reference links:

Discussion Forum: [Purpose and Meaning](#)

<http://christianflagministry.com/>

[http://www.prayerfoundation.org/christian\\_flag.htm](http://www.prayerfoundation.org/christian_flag.htm)

<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/rel-chr.html>

<http://christianheritagefellowship.com/fly-christian-flag/>

<http://christianflagministry.com/history-of-the-christian-flag/>

An early 1900's Rally poster with Christian Flag.



Note: In 1903 the acclaimed Fanny Crosby wrote the words (R. Huntington Woodman wrote the music) for a song, "The Christian Flag," to honor the new flag.

## The Christian Flag Code

The question of how to display the Christian flag is designated by some writers as the "Christian flag code." The question of how to properly honor the Christian flag was answered over a period of decades. One of the individuals most deeply dedicated to the use of the Christian flag has been a United Methodist minister by the name of James Russell Pollock, Ph.D., D.D. Rev. Dr. Pollock pastored churches in Michigan, Connecticut, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. During World War II, he was a front-line military chaplain with the US Army, serving with combat engineers and the 2nd Armored Division. He wrote a history of the Christian flag titled, *Congratulations to The Christian Flag*. Rev. Pollock passed away on March 25, 1996, only two days after completing the fourth edition of his book. The subject of the Christian flag was of particular interest to him, in part, because he was personally instrumental in the development of the "Christian flag code."

The following is from the Christian Flag Code [[Source](#)]

1. When the Christian flag is on the floor level, the Christian flag is placed to the right, front, of the congregation and outside of the communion railing.
2. When the Christian flag is placed within the chancel, communion railing or choir loft, the Christian flag is placed to the right side of the altar, of the clergymen, and of the choir as they face the congregation.
3. When the Christian flag is displayed with the American flag and/or other flags:
  - The American flag and/or other flags may be placed symmetrically on the opposite side of the sanctuary and on the same level as the Christian flag.
  - If desired, it is also proper to place the Christian and national flags side-by-side wherever stationed in the church, thus symbolizing both the spiritual and patriotic loyalties of the congregation.
  - When the flags are placed side-by-side, the Christian flag is always stationed on the right of all other flags.
  - The Christian flag never dips to any other flag. It may properly dip to the altar Cross.

## The Christian Flag

*Words by Fanny Crosby, 1903.  
Music by R. Huntington Woodman*

The Christian Flag! behold it,  
And hail it with a song,  
And let the voice of millions  
The joyful strain prolong,  
To every clime and nation,  
We send it forth today;  
God speed its glorious mission,  
With earnest hearts we pray.

### *Refrain*

The Christian Flag! behold it,  
And hail it with a song,  
And let the voice of millions  
The joyful strain prolong.

The Christian Flag! unfurl it,  
That all the world may see  
The bloodstained cross of Jesus,  
Who died to make us free.  
The Christian Flag! unfurl it,  
And o'er and o'er again,  
Oh! may it bear the message,  
Good will and peace to men.

### *Refrain*

The Christian Flag! God bless  
it!

Now throw it to the breeze,  
And may it wave triumphant  
O'er land and distant seas,  
Till all the wide creation  
Upon its folds shall gaze,  
And all the world united,  
Our loving Savior praise.

### *Refrain*

4. The Christian flag in other circumstances:

- Should the Cross and Christian flag both be use in a processional, the Cross always leads followed by the Christian flag.
- In a single-column processional, the Christian flag always precedes all other flags or insignias. In a double-column (or more), the Christian flag is always leads the right-most column.
- If arranged on a flagpole with other flags, the Christian flag receives the top-most position.
- When placed on separate flagpoles with any other flags, the Christian flag is placed on the right as it faces the street or audience.
- When posting the Christian flag in a supporting base, it should be adjusted so the red cross and blue canton faces the audience or congregation.
- No other symbol, insignia, or flag (including the Christian flag) should be placed above the Cross.



## Denominational Flags

		
Flag of <a href="#">Vatican City</a>	Flag of the <a href="#">Greek Orthodox Church</a>	Flag of the <a href="#">Episcopal Church</a>
		
Standard of <a href="#">The Salvation Army</a>	Flag of the <a href="#">Georgian Orthodox Church</a>	Flag of the <a href="#">Anglican Communion</a>
		
Flag of the <a href="#">Church of Scotland</a>	Flag of the <a href="#">Serbian Orthodox Church</a>	<a href="#">Armenian Apostolic Church</a> flag
		
Flag of the <a href="#">Church in Wales</a>	<a href="#">Flag of the Copts</a> - the Christians of <a href="#">Egypt</a>	Flag of the <a href="#">Albanian Orthodox Church</a>
		
Flag of the <a href="#">Church of Ireland</a>	A version of the Christian Flag, specialized for the <a href="#">Eastern Orthodox Church</a>	<a href="#">Iglesia ni Cristo</a> flag

[Source: Wikipedia]