We invite you to participate in a series of interactive seminars with Dr Jonathan Chaplin, Associate Fellow at the British public theology think tank Theos, a member of the Cambridge Divinity Faculty and former Director of the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics. He has recently published *Faith in Democracy: Framing a Politics of Deep Diversity* (SCM Press, 2021), a discussion of how religious citizens can participate in society with integrity, and how secularism needs to recognise its own faith commitments which seek to exclude those of other faiths. Chaplin seeks to present a vision for how those of various (and conflicting) commitments can find a way of life together which does justice to everyone and allow for expression in public life of the many and varied faith convictions which make up today’s pluralist society.

This seminar will be of especial interest for those working in faith-based organisations which operate in the public square, civil servants and others who wonder how their faith can legitimately be expressed in their service in a pluralistic, although predominantly secular, public square.

The seminars will involve an introductory presentation from Dr Chaplin, a formal response, break-out group discussion, and open discussion with all participants able to share their responses and ask questions. The session will close with a summary presented by an invited guest.

Each seminar will last for 90 minutes.

Schedule: Thursday 30 September, Thursday 14 October, Thursday 28 October
8.00 am UK time.

Please note that the seminars will be recorded for release on the internet.


Registration is free.
For background preparation, read the book, or see the Theos blog series on ‘Faith in Democracy’:
https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/comment/?category=Faith+in+Democracy

DETAILS OF THE SESSIONS

Session 1
Thursday 30 September: “Why Faith in Democracy?”
This session gives an overview of Dr Chaplin’s book, with a summary of the content, and background for writing the book and its target audiences. This leads in to a discussion on why Christians should be involved in, and concerned about, the promotion and practice of genuine democracy.

- Why this book, and why now?
- Is there a Christian rationale for democracy?
- What kind of democracy should Christians support?

Session 2
Thursday 14 October: “Christianity and Secularism”
Secularism is not an alternative to religion; it is in reality a competing religion. Both Christianity and secularism, as well as other religions like Islam, present competing visions of public justice. How can such competing visions make genuine contributions to, and participate in, the search for how we can work towards public justice for all?

- ‘Secularism’: rights and wrongs
- Democratic pluralism or a ‘Christian nation’?
- Defending religious freedom against the wrong sort of secularism

Session 3
Thursday 28 October: “Political Engagement by Faith Communities”
How should we engage politically with integrity? What enables us to take account of Deep (faith-based) Diversity in public governance? How does this affect issues such as the structure of government, public policy and administration, the legislative process, judicial function and institutions such as law courts?

- Can there be ‘faithful power’? Good and bad examples
- Faith-based engagement in civil society and the state
- Implications of the book for the academic study of politics