



## ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES — OF OREGON —

### Media Release

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### EMO announces the 2026 Collins Lecture with best-selling author John Fugelsang

At first glance, John Fugelsang—actor, comedian and host of “Tell Me Everything” on SiriusXM Progress—may seem an odd choice as EMO’s 2026 Collins Lecturer. Since 1967, the Collins Lectures have brought renowned speakers to Oregon to explore issues related to religion and social ethics. What does a former VH1 host have to do with religion and social ethics?

The son of a former nun and a former priest, Fugelsang grew up in a home that was a shrine to Martin Luther King, Gandhi and Dorothy Day, who co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement. “They were the *other* Holy Trinity in my house,” quips Fugelsang. While quick to make jokes about his Catholic upbringing, he is frustrated with the far-right wrongly co-opting his parents’ faith as a cloaking device for meanness, bigotry and superiority—the opposite of Jesus’ message. “Jesus’ movement was about humility. It was about service to others,” Fugelsang says. “It was about uplifting the marginalized, not about total right-wing domination of the school board.”

Inspired, he started working on a book. Last fall, after a decade of pitching the idea to publishers, “Separation of Church and Hate: A Sane Person’s Guide to Taking Back the Bible from Fundamentalists, Fascists and Flock-Fleecing Frauds” was released. It became an instant *New York Times* bestseller and almost immediately sold out its first printing. In the book, Fugelsang uses humor and biblical scholarship to challenge far-right Christian ideologies, such as Christian nationalism, and argues for a return to the core teachings of Jesus.

During a recent interview on “The Daily Show,” he gives the “marching orders” Jesus laid out for his followers in Matthew 25: “He gives four criteria for what Christians or Christian society will have to do. And it’s to individuals *and nations*. It’s take care of the poor, take care of the sick, welcome the stranger and be kind to those in prison. Nothing about screaming at women outside clinics, nothing about being mean to trans kids, nothing about believing in a talking snake. Jesus gives his marching orders right there.”

Fugelsang maintains that Jesus’ actual teachings are as threatening to authoritarian power now as they were 2,000 years ago. He traces back a long history of non-violent Christian activism, from the Crusades through the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. “There is an amazing history of Christian activism, but it always manifests itself in resistance to Christian authoritarianism,” he says. “The whole history of Christianity is this authoritarian power, but it’s always the Jesus followers who resist. ... You’ve got the Crusades—St. Francis quits and preaches nonviolence. ... Slavery was propped up by Christianity, but it was Christ’s followers, like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman and the Quakers, who pushed back. Segregation, propped up by Christianity—Dr. King fights back.” Christianity as an institution has often been misused, but its heart—the story and the words of Jesus—provides the tools to resist.



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So how can progressives and followers of Jesus' teachings fight back against Christian nationalism and authoritarianism today? Fugelsang urges those on the left, believers and atheists alike, to engage with Christianity, even if only to combat the narrow version of the Bible that Christian nationalists are trying to impose. He reminds us that many of the people currently in power in the United States are not following Jesus, and the Bible is key to fighting back. "[The Bible] is the book they are using to force a very narrow, Jesus-free version of Christianity into our lives, our public schools, our government," says Fugelsang. "They are not fighting for anything Jesus actually talked about."

Using biblical scripture, "Separation of Church and Hate" provides readers with a toolbox for responding to Christian nationalism on the biggest issues that divide us today: immigration, LGBTQ rights, poverty, healthcare, gun safety, feminism, the death penalty and more. "You don't need to fight these people. They can fight Jesus and God. And this book will hopefully set you up to do it." As he demonstrates repeatedly, the next time you hear a bigoted statement dressed up in Christianity, ask the speaker to explain where the biblical justification for it is. Chances are, they won't be able to.

If you want to learn directly from John Fugelsang about his approach of using the Bible and Jesus's teachings to resist Christian nationalism and authoritarianism, **join us for the Collins Lecture on June 6 at 7 p.m. at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral; there is also a virtual option.** He will be joined for a portion of the event for a discussion and Q&A led by Dr. Jessica Taylor, a strategic executive advisor, ordained minister and founder of Leadership Training Initiative. Tickets are \$30 (scholarships available).

*Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is a statewide association of faith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through direct service programs, education and dialogue, creation justice, and public policy advocacy.*