

5 faith facts about...

... Donald Trump: A Presbyterian who collects Bibles

By Kimberly Winston and Cathy Lynn Grossman | January 31, 2016

1. He identifies as a Presbyterian.

He told Christian Broadcasting Network in 2012: “I’m a Protestant; I’m a Presbyterian. And you know I’ve had a good relationship with the church over the years. I think religion is a wonderful thing. I think my religion is a wonderful religion.”

For years he’s attended Marble Collegiate Church, a Reformed Church in America congregation and once the pulpit of Norman Vincent Peale, author of the mega-best-seller “The Power of Positive Thinking.” Trump has mentioned Peale so frequently in his campaign that the late minister’s son told media his father would not have been pleased.

Then Trump added: “I’m a Sunday church person.” He made good on that statement in January in Iowa when he attended the Sunday morning service at First Presbyterian Church in Muscatine, Iowa, one week before the Iowa caucus.

The Associated Press reported Trump sang hymns (including “God Is Here”) and dropped \$50 bills in the offering plate. The subject of the sermon — how Christianity requires the welcoming of the stranger — was particularly relevant for Trump, who has called for banning Muslims from entering the United States.

2. One religion Trump seems to think is not so wonderful is Islam.

In the lead-up to the 2012 presidential election, Trump told Fox News’ Bill O’Reilly that there is a “Muslim problem.” “I don’t notice Swedish people knocking down the World Trade Center,” Trump said, and then moved on to the so-called Ground Zero mosque. “I came out very strongly against the mosque being built virtually across the street.”

But Trump assured O’Reilly there are many “fabulous Muslims” in the world.

Trump berated political activist Pamela Geller in May 2015 for launching a “Draw the Prophet” contest in Texas. “What is she doing drawing Muhammad? I mean, it’s disgusting,” he said on Fox News’ “Fox & Friends.” “Isn’t there something else they could be doing? Drawing Muhammad?”

But that tune has changed. In March 2016, he told CNN’s Anderson Cooper, “I think Islam hates us” and reiterated his belief in the use of waterboarding and “a lot worse.”

3. He collects Bibles.

In the same 2012 CBN interview, Trump said fans often send him Bibles and he keeps every one of them “in a very nice place.” “There’s no way I would ever throw anything, to do anything negative to a Bible,” Trump said.

Trump has been known to take one along to wave at campaign events, but he has said: “I would have a fear of doing something other than very positive, so actually I store them and keep them and sometimes give them away to other people but I do get sent a lot of Bibles and I like that. I think that’s great.”

4. While some evangelicals love him, others are still skeptical.

Exit polls show Trump captured evangelicals in early primaries, but as the field has thinned, so has some of his support there.

Popular Christian blogger Rachel Held Evans points out, “His scant church attendance and clumsiness at citing Scripture have not gone unnoticed here in the Bible Belt.”

Russell Moore of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission has said that evangelicals who vote for Trump abandon their values and join the side of the culture war where “image and celebrity and money and power and social Darwinist ‘winning’ trump the conservation of moral principles and a just society.”

When Trump spoke to students at Liberty University, founded by the late evangelical power broker Jerry Falwell, things were a little bumpy — Trump misspoke the name of a book of the Bible and named his book “The Art of the Deal” as the second-best book in the world — after the Bible, of course.

A recent New York Times piece by economist Eduardo Porter asked if Trump’s popularity, despite his being perceived as the least religious of the candidates, is a sign that evangelicalism’s political heft is on the wane: “It does suggest that Republicans’ longstanding strategy of building majorities for their anti-tax platform by appealing to working-class voters’ Christian morals has lost a lot of its power.”

5. On the campaign trail ...

He is confident in his own powers as well as a higher power. Trump has said:

In September, Trump met with three dozen evangelical and Pentecostal leaders, including televangelists Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, pastor David Jeremiah, broadcaster Jan Crouch, Paula White and pastor Darrell Scott. According to the Christian Broadcasting Network, the meeting ended with a laying-on of hands — a Pentecostal practice of physically touching a person being prayed for.

The pre-Iowa highlight for Trump's religion pitch may have been his address to more than 10,000 Liberty University students in a sports arena and thousands more online. He cited Liberty as a place that has lived up to the biblical passage from 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Trump pointed out how evangelicals have been betrayed in the past by politicians who made promises to gain their votes and turned their backs once elected.

But what stuck was the laudatory introduction from Jerry Falwell Jr., president of Liberty, who said Trump "lives a life of loving and helping others as Jesus taught in the great commandment." Days later, Falwell formally endorsed Trump. And Dallas megachurch pastor Robert Jeffress, a Southern Baptist, led opening prayers at his events in Iowa.

Since then, Trump went on to win several Southern states, helped by large numbers of evangelical voters.

... Mike Pence: A 'born-again, evangelical Catholic'

By Emily McFarlan Miller and Kimberly Winston | July 14, 2016

Here are five faith facts about Pence and how his unusual faith mix has shaped him as a politician.

1. He was raised Catholic and later attended an evangelical megachurch.

Growing up in an Irish Catholic family that reportedly revered the Kennedys, Pence served as an altar boy and went to parochial school in Columbus, Ind., according to Fehrman.

Pence has said he made that "commitment to Christ" while taking part in a nondenominational Christian student group in college, according to the journalist. Pence had told The Indianapolis Star that he and his family attended Grace Evangelical Church in the 1990s, but by 2013, he told Fehrman they were "kind of looking for a church."

2. He supported causes important to evangelicals as a congressman.

As a member of the U.S. House from 2000 until his election as governor, Pence had a "reputation as a culture warrior (that) was unsullied," according to Roll Call. The website lists his bona fides: He opposed the expansion of abortion rights and federal spending on embryonic stem cell research, pushed a constitutional amendment against same-sex marriage and briefly cut off new federal funding for Planned Parenthood.

3. He clashed with the Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis over refugees.

Late last year, Pence clashed with the Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis when he halted state support for efforts to relocate refugees, citing security concerns.

The archdiocese defied him by welcoming a Syrian family to the city anyway. In the end, the governor said that while he disagreed with the archdiocese's action, he would not block food stamps and other state aid for the family.

On the other hand, he came out against Trump's plan to halt all Muslim immigration to the U.S., tweeting last December that "calls to ban Muslims from entering the U.S. are offensive and unconstitutional."

4. He supports Israel.

Pundits have said one reason Trump may pick Pence is that the governor's strong pro-Israel sentiment would shore up Trump's shaky relationship with Jewish voters. Speaking before AIPAC in 2009, then-Rep. Pence linked his support for Israel with his faith: "Let me say emphatically, like the overwhelming majority of my constituents, my Christian faith compels me to cherish the state of Israel."

He backed that up last December at the Republican Jewish Coalition's conference when he said: "Israel's enemies are our enemies, Israel's cause is our cause. If this world knows nothing else, let it know this: America stands with Israel."

5. He signed Indiana's controversial "religious freedom" law.

Last year, Pence found himself at the center of a storm when he supported Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which would have allowed businesses and individuals to refuse to do business with some people based on their own religious beliefs. In his 2016 State of the State address, he added: "I will not support any bill that diminished the religious freedom of Hoosiers or that interferes with the constitutional rights of our citizens to live out their beliefs in worship, service or work. ... No one should ever fear persecution because of their deeply held religious beliefs."

His stance on the issue made him the darling of evangelicals and other conservatives, and he signed the bill into law in March. But a week later, he had to sign a revised version after major corporations, organizations and celebrities vowed to boycott Indiana.

...Hillary Clinton: Social Gospel Methodist to the core

By Cathy Lynn Grossman | **January 29, 2016**

1. Look to the Methodists.

She drew that tweet from a popular saying among Methodists: “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can,” says Paul Kengor in his book “God and Hillary Clinton.”

As a girl, she was part of the guild that cleaned the altar at First United Methodist Church in Park Ridge, Ill. As a teen, she visited inner-city Chicago churches with the youth pastor, Don Jones, her spiritual mentor until his death in 2009. During her husband’s presidency, the first family worshipped at Washington’s Foundry United Methodist Church, and this fall she spoke at the church’s 200th anniversary. Time magazine described her membership in a bipartisan women’s prayer group organized by evangelicals.

2. There’s a Bible in her purse and a gospel song in her heart.

But, she told the 2007 CNN Faith Forum, “advertising” her faith “doesn’t come naturally to me.” Every vote Clinton made as a senator from New York, she said, was “a moral responsibility.” When asked at the forum why she thought God allows suffering, Clinton demurred on theology, then swiftly turned her answer to activism: “The existence of suffering calls us to action.”

In a 1993 speech at the University of Texas, Clinton declared: “We need a new politics of meaning. ... We have to summon up what we believe is morally and ethically and spiritually correct and do the best we can with God’s guidance.” A month later, she was pictured as a saint in a Sunday New York Times Magazine exploration of that “politics of meaning” phrase.

Just days before Super Tuesday, with its hefty Southern state contingent of black evangelical voters, Clinton appeared at a gospel music event honoring African-American performers. According to Christian News, she told them the song that most encourages her in times of trouble: “His Eye Is on the Sparrow.” She told the cheering crowd: “I know this is not just about music. It truly is about the message. It’s about the gospel and all that it means to so many of us.”

3. Prayer matters.

Clinton joked at the Faith Forum that sometimes her plea is, “Oh, Lord, why can’t you help me lose weight?” But her daily habit, she said, is praying, “for discernment, for wisdom, for strength, for courage ... ”

What she calls “grace notes” matter, too. She described them to adviser Burns Strider as “a gift that is undeserved but bestowed by the everyday joys, beauties, kindnesses, pleasures of life that can strike a deep chord of connection between us and the divine and between us and the mundane.”

4. God politics is tough.

In 2008, Clinton battered then-Sen. Barack Obama for saying economically hard-pressed Americans were bitter and “cling to guns or religion.” At the CNN Compassion Forum, Clinton said the Democratic Party “has been viewed as a party that didn’t understand the values and way of life of so many Americans. ... It’s important that we make clear that we believe people are people of faith because it is part of their whole being. It is what gives them meaning in life.”

In April 2015, Clinton told the annual United Methodist Women Assembly that their shared faith has guided her to be “an advocate for children and families, for women and men around the world who are oppressed and persecuted, denied their human rights and human dignity.”

But no matter what she says about her faith informing her life, she faces a Catch-22, as American religion expert Daniel Silliman wrote in The Washington Post. “It’s not clear how she should talk about faith on the campaign trail. Voters want to hear about her beliefs, but they also often don’t believe her.”

5. On the campaign trail ...

Clinton often outrages conservative evangelicals.

Just weeks after her 2016 campaign launch, Clinton told a global woman’s conference that, in countries where women struggled for education and reproductive rights, “laws have to be backed up with resources and political will. And deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed.”

Christian media and Republican candidates took that comment to the bank. Fox News’ headline: Hillary: ‘Religious Beliefs’ Must Change For Sake Of Abortion.

Her support for Planned Parenthood, in the wake of a series of covert videos that purported to show executives negotiating the price of fetal tissue, is a rallying cry for the anti-abortion rights movement. Yet, Clinton never fails to mention her support for reproductive rights, along with backing gay rights, same-sex marriage and equal pay.

This did not prevent several African-American pastors from laying hands on her in prayer and blessing in early February. But she also has gathered the condemnation of some faith bloggers. Christian Today, for example, reported one pastor blogger, Bryan Ridenour, writing on his blog: "If a church member asks in 2016 if I can support Hillary Clinton, I can unequivocally respond, 'Not in this lifetime.'"

But political pundits still expect Clinton to do well with evangelical black Protestants, women and older voters, and the South Carolina massive vote for her — from exactly those groups — confirmed this.

Tim Kaine: 'I do what I do for spiritual reasons'

By Kimberly Winston | July 22, 2016

1. He was taught by Jesuits.

Kaine was raised Catholic in Missouri. His parents were so devout, Kaine told C-SPAN, that "if we got back from a vacation on a Sunday night at 7:30 p.m., they would know the one church in Kansas City that had an 8 p.m. Mass that we can make." He attended an all-boys Jesuit high school in Kansas City and worked for a year with Jesuit missionaries in Honduras, where he taught welding — his father's trade — and carpentry.

He and his wife attend St. Elizabeth Catholic Church in Richmond, Va., which has a predominantly African-American congregation. He co-founded a men's study group there.

2. Kaine says he separates the personal from the political.

Kaine is personally against abortion and the death penalty and has sometimes spoken against same-sex marriage and gay adoption, all of which aligns with Catholic teaching. But he has taken different stances in his political life. He has upheld *Roe v. Wade* and told Chuck Todd of "Meet the Press": "I have taken the position, which is quite common among Catholics — I have got a personal feeling about abortion, but the right rule for government is to let women make their own decisions."

As Virginia's governor, he oversaw 11 state executions. "I have a moral position against the death penalty," he said in 2012. "But I took an oath of office to uphold it. Following an oath of office is also a moral obligation."

He was fairly late to supporting same-sex marriage, saying in 2013, "I believe all people, regardless of sexual orientation, should be guaranteed the full rights to the legal benefits and responsibilities of marriage under the Constitution."

And while Kaine opposed gay adoption in 2005 — also in line with Catholic Church teaching — by 2012 he had reversed his position.

3. He favors allowing women to become priests.

When Pope Francis visited Washington, D.C., in September 2015, Kaine attended the pontiff's historic address to Congress. Before the speech, he issued a statement. "If women are not accorded equal place in the leadership of the Catholic Church and the other great world religions, they will always be treated as inferiors in earthly matters as well," Kaine said. "There is nothing this Pope could do that would improve the world as much as putting the Church on a path to ordain women."

4. Kaine is a fan of Pope Francis' "Laudato Si'."

Not all Catholics thought the pontiff should write an encyclical on a secular issue such as global warming, but Kaine agrees with Francis' framing of the issue as one of faith. "I'm sure he's not going to opine on whether a carbon tax is better than a cap-and-trade mechanism," Kaine said of the pope days before the encyclical was published in 2015. "That doesn't need to be where he goes — but to say, 'You know, you guys and everybody in power these days, you've got the next generation's future in your hands, and you don't want to have to face that question later in life: With the science what it was, and with you having the opportunity to do something about it, why did you choose not to?'"

5. Kaine speaks openly about his faith.

"My faith is central to everything I do," he once told the website Patch. "My faith position is a Good Samaritan position of trying to watch out for the other person." And in a recent C-SPAN interview he said: "I do what I do for spiritual reasons. I'm always thinking about the momentary reality but also how it connects with bigger matters of what's important in life."