

2012 Presidential Hopefuls Discuss Faith

✖ Recognizing the power of Christian voters, 2012 presidential hopefuls are already beginning to stake out their territory in the religious landscape.

In March, likely Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich, who converted to Catholicism two years ago, spoke at Cornerstone Church, a San Antonio megachurch pastored by John Hagee. The thrice-married former house speaker told his audience that he was concerned his grandchildren could eventually find themselves “in a secular atheist country” that is potentially dominated by “radical Islamists.”

More recently, billionaire Donald Trump appeared on CBN News to express his religious convictions and confirm his newly-embraced pro-life credentials. “I believe in God. I am Christian. I think the Bible is certainly, it is the book, it is the thing,” he said. “First Presbyterian Church in Jamaica, Queens, that’s where I went to church. I’m a Protestant. I’m a Presbyterian.”

Trump, who noted that he always goes to church on Easter and Christmas, also weighed in on Islam, describing the “negative vibe” he receives from the Qu’ran. Reacting to Trump’s CBN interview, columnist Cathleen Falsani argued that, as Christian voters take a closer look at Trump, religion may be a hindrance rather than a help.

“Trump, twice-divorced with a very public history of philandering and questionable ethics, is not just a wealthy man,” Falsani noted “He is the poster child for conspicuous consumption and delusions of grandeur.”

Other potential candidates who have been open about their Christian faith include Sarah Palin, Mike Huckabee and

Michelle Bachmann.

Former Massachusetts governor, Mitt Romney (a Mormon), is expected to throw his hat in the ring for the 2012 race, but faces the liability of his Mormon faith—considered by many evangelicals to be a cult. Romney's deputy campaign manager and political director in 2008, Carl Forti, told the National Journal Insiders Conference that Romney will face prejudice because of his Mormonism, should he choose to run.

While Republican hopefuls look to leverage their religious connections, incumbent President Barack Obama will also likely be looking for ways to strengthen his relationship with religious figures on the left who may be unhappy with his recent military campaigns in the Middle East, and conservative-leaning religious leaders who jumped the aisle to vote for him in 2008 but are disappointed with his repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell.