

Why a Tongue-Talking, Hand-Laying Chaplain Is Going Against Major Pentecostal Leaders

“Suddenly we have this wedge within us; the community in Christ is torn asunder by the politics of a socially conservative agenda.”

The chaplain’s voice cracks as he pours out his heart: Namely how the American church is so fiercely Republican that they confuse party values as gospel truths.

Scott Scrimshaw is a former Vineyard pastor who now serves as a chaplain for Vine and Branches and as the head of “Oregon for Gary Johnson,” as well as a volunteer Chaplain to the Campaign and to the Campaign Coalition in Oregon state.

Today’s church is so afraid of religious freedom battles that they willingly embrace candidates—like Donald Trump—who promise to eliminate the political confines placed on churches who identify as 501(c)(3) nonprofits.

If Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton are the only options, it is logical church support falls to Trump; but they are not.

The Libertarian party, Scrimshaw says, gives every branch of Christianity what their heart desires most: Religious liberty. The Libertarian Party is the only third-party option available in all 50 states. Johnson and Vice Presidential Nominee Bill Weld both served as state governors. The duo has more governing experience than rivals Trump and Clinton combined.

The Libertarian party now polls in double digits, nabbing

support from Republicans and Democrats evenly. One main principle guides the party: upholding the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

If Americans elected a constitutional president, Scrimshaw says, "This opens the floodgates for the church to be the church."

And Scrimshaw knows the church: He came in on the tail end of the Jesus People Movement in the early 1980s; he planted and served as a leader on a handful of Vineyard Church staffs; he studied at L'Abri under Dr. Francis Schaeffer; and Demos Shakarian's granddaughter Renee Scalf-Berge is the godmother for Scrimshaw's daughter. Scrimshaw says Scalf-Berge taught him one of the most valuable lessons of all: For the community to learn from Christians, we must maintain our credibility. If we lose it, we lose our ability to communicate.

Scrimshaw sat at the feet of Calvary Chapel's Brian Larson, he saw the formation of the Christian Coalition, and he was an early supporter of Pat Robertson's presidential run.

Now, Scrimshaw fiercely advocates for the same liberty those familiar with the Reagan administration admire.

"The Reagan Revolution was one about small government, individual freedom and a sovereign United States, which are issues still dear to my heart," Scrimshaw says. "But wrapping this all up into a hard right political agenda ... of particular social issues—not larger social issues like drinking and driving, the right to bear arms—the church is afraid to speak its conscience (because it could) lose its IRS status."

Scrimshaw's passion demands a restoration of personal civil liberties outlined by the Founding Fathers in the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Indeed, Johnson and Weld's Libertarian, third-party ticket fits the bill of a Christian wishlist.

“As a chaplain, Gary Johnson and Bill Weld—what we talk about here is to look at Gary Johnson’s integrity. He has no scandal; he has integrity! Nothing can impune his character,” Scrimshaw says.

“(Johnson’s) taking a stance against corruption. He wants term limits to end the corruption we see in Congress,” Scrimshaw says. “Honesty—isn’t that one of the virtues and ethics the Christian Coalition should rally around? It’s not just the face of things; he’s calling for removal and term limits for Congress to stop corruption, which is in complete alignment for our Christian values.”

As for the faith of the candidates, Johnson believes in God, and the Lutheran faith of his childhood left an imprint, Scrimshaw says. The Welds understand the power of prayer and nearly teared up as they thanked Scrimshaw for his constant invocations to God on their behalf.

The ticket wants to eliminate the Internal Revenue Service, which would assist churches in getting more involved in politics, and the Department of Education, which would eliminate restrictions some families face when home-schooling their children.

Under a constitutional presidency, Scrimshaw says, Americans would be protected from the political ideologies of Sharia.

And for other issues, the third-party option gives charismatics the ability to embrace their personal liberties and all the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and Bill of Rights. But Scrimshaw says a deeper theological perspective lurks beneath.

Scrimshaw is desperate for the nation—and the American church—to return to this liberty.

The nation cannot turn back to God, Scrimshaw says, because they do not have the liberty to do so. In the current system,

morality is legislated from the top down, when real change—revival and refocus on God—needs to happen at a grass-roots level.

“I would plead with the *Charisma* audience, plead with them that we can no longer behave in this manner because we have lost our ability to speak to the larger community because we isolated ourselves from the community. We’ve become the fundamentalists ... ,” Scrimshaw says. “We’ve gone from the fundamentalism of 1920s to an evangelical fundamentalism of 2016. We’ve changed the name but are doing same thing. Our message should be one of liberty. We say God gives people a choice to accept Him or not accept Him, so why do we impose a fatalistic view for the person next to us when we pass this law? We have a fatalistic view toward our neighbor while embracing the free will view of God for ourselves.”

Scrimshaw says many prominent evangelical and Pentecostal leaders embrace this mentality. That’s why they’ve come alongside Trump, a move that devastates the chaplain.

Trump’s Faith Advisory Board is a virtual who’s-who of the Christian community: James Dobson, Jerry Falwell Jr., Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, and Jentezen Franklin among others.

What horrifies Scrimshaw isn’t their endorsements but their apparent complicity in Trump’s words and actions.

“Why are our leaders doing this? You can still support and endorse a candidate, but that doesn’t mean you can’t speak out, that you can’t be true salt and light to speak out against what Donald Trump is. Call him to task!” Scrimshaw says.

“Why is no one saying Donald Trump’s language is inappropriate? They could say, ‘As a spiritual leader of this nation, I endorsed him because I love him.’ You can build him up and still hold him to task.”

The bottom line, Scrimshaw says, is Christianity holds the seeds of change within its DNA.

“I as a Christian man, reaching out I see our phenomenal Christian heritage,” Scrimshaw says. “We talk in theology about special grace and common grace ... and it’s the same with Jesus and God: God gives His grace, a common grace available to all. (The United States is) a city on hill (because of the) unique U.S. experience of freedom. But it’s not simply freedom, but liberty. Our Founders, their rallying cry was liberty—not social conservatism.”