

Pastor Louie Giglio Pulls Out of Inauguration Over Anti-Gay Sermon

The evangelical pastor that **President Obama** picked to deliver the benediction at his inauguration ceremonies withdrew from the high-profile assignment on Jan. 10 following a furor over a sermon from the mid-1990s in which he denounced the gay rights movement and advocated efforts to turn gays straight.

In a statement, the Rev. Louie Giglio of Atlanta, founder of the Passion Conferences for college-age Christians, did not directly renounce his remarks on gays but indicated that fighting gay rights is not one of his “priorities.”

Still, because of the controversy—which erupted on Jan. 9 after the liberal group Think Progress posted audio of the sermon—Giglio said that, “it is likely that my participation, and the **prayer** I would offer, will be dwarfed by those seeking to make their agenda the focal point of the inauguration.

“Clearly, speaking on this issue has not been in the range of my priorities in the past 15 years,” said Giglio, who was chosen because of his longtime work against **human trafficking**.

“Instead, my aim has been to call people to ultimate significance as we make much of Jesus Christ. Neither I, nor our team, feel it best serves the core message and goals we are seeking to accomplish to be in a fight on an issue not of our choosing, thus I respectfully withdraw my acceptance of the President’s invitation.”

Obama drew similar ire from gay groups at his 2009 inauguration when California megachurch pastor Rick Warren was chosen to give the benediction. The best-selling evangelical author had worked to pass **Proposition 8**, which ended gay

marriages in California.

Here is the full text of Giglio's withdrawal statement:

"I am honored to be invited by the president to give the benediction at the upcoming inaugural on Jan. 21. Though the President and I do not agree on every issue, we have fashioned a friendship around common goals and ideals, most notably, ending slavery in all its forms.

"Due to a message of mine that has surfaced from 15-20 years ago, it is likely that my participation, and the prayer I would offer, will be dwarfed by those seeking to make their agenda the focal point of the inauguration. Clearly, speaking on this issue has not been in the range of my priorities in the past fifteen years. Instead, my aim has been to call people to ultimate significance as we make much of Jesus Christ.

"Neither I, nor our team, feel it best serves the core message and goals we are seeking to accomplish to be in a fight on an issue not of our choosing, thus I respectfully withdraw my acceptance of the President's invitation. I will continue to pray regularly for the President, and urge the nation to do so. I will most certainly pray for him on Inauguration Day.

"Our nation is deeply divided and hurting, and more than ever need God's grace and mercy in our time of need."

Here is the text of a statement from the Presidential Inaugural Committee:

"We were not aware of Pastor Giglio's past comments at the time of his selection and they don't reflect our desire to celebrate the strength and diversity of our country at this Inaugural. Pastor Giglio was asked to deliver the benediction in large part for his leadership in combating human trafficking around the world. As we now work to select someone to deliver the benediction, we will ensure their beliefs

reflect this administration's vision of inclusion and acceptance for all Americans."

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