

Donald Trump Makes Big Promises to Pastors

Almost two months ago, I received a call from my good friend Bill Dallas, who is the executive director of United In Purpose—a large evangelical organization that unifies the body of Christ for societal transformation.

He wanted to know if I would be interested in serving on a steering committee of a gathering that would feature a dialogue between Donald Trump (the presumptive Republican nominee for president) and hundreds of evangelical leaders across the nation. Bill asked me what I thought of the idea and if I could help get the word out.

Originally, Bill first reached out to Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council to get his blessing, then other leaders like Dr. James Dobson, Gary Bauer and then several other leaders, like me. The idea was to have a steering committee of about 20-25 leaders who had sufficient influence to fill a room with about 750 key evangelical leaders from across the nation who can influence the election. Thereafter, we had weekly conference calls and helped craft the agenda of the gathering as well as provide the questions for Mr. Trump. Eventually, we started getting the word out. Within one week, we already hit the 750 limits UIP imposed, and by the time of the event, there seemed to be at least 1,100-1,200 leaders!

The Gathering on June 21

Mr. Trump first met privately with a small group of leaders, including Ben Carson, Franklin Graham, Harry Jackson, Paula White, A.R. Bernard, Jerry Falwell Jr., James Dobson, Timothy Clinton, Jentezen Franklin, Sammy Rodriguez and a few others. Then he met with the steering committee—which by the time of the meeting swelled to more than 30—and other leaders,

including former presidential candidate Mike Huckabee and Ben Carson.

After hearing from Mr. Trump for about 15 minutes, we all followed him out to the larger gathering where Trump spoke to the audience, moderated by Mike Huckabee. The substance of the dialogue involved previously submitted questions that were read aloud so Mr. Trump could respond.

Please note: the following content is the essence of the gathering as I remember it. They are not exact quotes since I did not write down or record the session.

Supreme Court Nominees:

He said conservative groups such as the Heritage Foundation vetted his choices and that they would have to honor the U.S. Constitution as well as be pro-life.

He also said that if Hillary got elected, she would get to choose at least two or more Supreme Court justices, which would be the end of religious liberty and the Second Amendment. He also said it is possible that the next president will choose as many as five Supreme Court justices. Perhaps he meant over the course of the next eight years.

First Amendment and Religious Liberty

Trump said he would fight for our religious liberty and even overturn the 1954 Johnson Amendment, which can penalize churches and pastors by removing their 501(c)(3) status if they speak politically and endorse a candidate from the pulpit.

Military and Defense

Trump said he would build up the military and replenish our weaponry since much of our military arsenal, including our jets, are old and starting to fall apart.

He did not directly answer a question regarding his view on women in combat, open homosexuality and transgenderism in the military.

Israel

He said he would protect and defend Israel. He castigated the present administration for abandoning this tiny nation.

Second Amendment

He said that if Hillary Clinton were elected, she would repeal the Second Amendment. If he is elected, he would uphold the Second Amendment. He also said he received the endorsement of the NRA.

Immigration

Trump again restated his plans to build a wall on the border of Mexico, and said that more than 1,600 border patrol agents stated they agree with him on the need for a wall to protect the nation. He said that a nation without borders is not a nation. Also, he is against giving amnesty to illegal immigrants.

He also stated that he would ban immigration from Muslim countries from parts of the world that harbor terrorism.

Trump did not address the issue of how he plans to build bridges with the Hispanic community. However, he said large numbers of Hispanics support him and that it will eventually shock pollsters.

Overall Thoughts

During the several times I have been with Mr. Trump in small gatherings, as well as the gathering today, he continually states his commitment to promote religious liberty and that he would be an ally of Christians and people of all religions.

Among those who publicly endorsed Mr. Trump today were leaders such as Jerry Falwell Jr., Eric Metaxas, Ben Carson, Mike Huckabee. Others, like Franklin Graham, stopped short of endorsing him but definitely showed they were opposed to a Hillary presidency.

I believe this was a huge day for Trump. If he won over a crowd of more than 1,000 key evangelical leaders, he has a much better chance of winning the election, as the evangelical leaders present represent millions of voters.

Many were probably skeptical going into this meeting. Many, like me, were more anti-Clinton than they were pro-Trump.

However, I believe Trump handled himself as well as can be expected and won over the vast majority of the crowd. He received a standing ovation when he left.

Most of the leaders I spoke to were most pleased with his position on religious liberty and his choice of possible Supreme Court Justices. Many said that they know that Clinton will continue the terrible policies of incumbent Barack Obama, but Trump seems to be correct on many of the major issues.

Nobody is perfect. But by far, Trump's position on issues is much better than Clinton's. Furthermore, he seems to like Christians, takes time to meet with key evangelical leaders and desires their advice on key policy issues—something Clinton would probably never do.

In closing, this unique gathering demonstrated the incredible potential for unity the evangelical church can muster.

Bill Dallas and United In Purpose did an amazing job creating the plan, raising the funds and gathering together one of the most strategic meetings in recent memory!

Looking around the room, I saw the “who's who” of almost every major conservative evangelical organization in the nation! Mr.

Trump has often said in meetings with evangelicals that this segment of the population has the most numbers and most influence of any other group! He challenged us to unite so we can win the election. He took more time than he was supposed to, and near the end of his session, he said that this group (evangelicals) was the most important group he could possibly meet with!

After the past eight years of the current administration, it was truly refreshing to hear a presidential candidate speak something positive about Bible-believing Christians.