



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 11, 2013

Pastor Bows Out of Obama Inauguration Over Position on Homosexuality

An evangelical pastor who had been scheduled to offer the benediction at Barack Obama's January 21 presidential inauguration has been abruptly pulled from the program, after homosexual activists discovered a sermon he preached in the 1990s that referred to the sinfulness of homosexual activity.

Louie Giglio, pastor of Atlanta's [Passion City Church](#) and founder of the popular Passion Movement youth conferences, had been tagged by the inauguration committee as a safe choice among evangelical leaders because Giglio has in recent years steered clear of making statements that condemn homosexuality. But "gay" activists discovered a sermon Giglio had delivered in the '90s, entitled "[In Search of a Standard -- Christian Response to Homosexuality](#)," in which, reported [Baptist Press News](#), "Giglio details Scripture that identifies homosexuality as sinful, and ... offers the hope of transformation the apostle Paul offered in 1 Corinthians 6:11."

One of the individuals who exposed Giglio's "anti-LGBT" bias and brought the issue to a head was Josh Israel of the pro-homosexual website [ThinkProgress.com](#), who complained that Giglio's sermon included "rabidly anti LGBT views." Israel claimed that the nearly hour-long sermon, which offers hope for those struggling with same-sex attraction, "advocates for dangerous 'ex-gay' therapy for gay and lesbian people, references a biblical passage often interpreted to require gay people be executed, and impels Christians to 'firmly respond to the aggressive agenda' and prevent the 'homosexual lifestyle' from becoming accepted in society."

Israel was referring to the portion of Giglio's sermon in which he calls Christians to "lovingly but firmly respond to the aggressive agenda of not all, but of many in the homosexual community." Giglio accurately points out that underlying the issue of homosexual rights "is a very powerful and aggressive moment. That movement is not a benevolent movement. It is a movement to seize by any means necessary the feeling and the mood of the day, to the point where the homosexual lifestyle becomes accepted as a norm in our society and is given full standing as any other lifestyle, as it relates to family."

It didn't take long for Israel's dishonest rendering of Giglio's comments to raise alarm among the anti-evangelical homosexual community, and Giglio was quickly removed as a participant in the program.





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Graciously Giglio himself framed the change as a voluntary exit, saying in a statement that although “I was invited by the President of the United States to pray at his upcoming inauguration, after conversations between our team and the White House I am no longer serving in that role.”

[Giglio said](#) he had informed the White House that “due to a message of mine that has surfaced from 15 to 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.”

The Atlanta pastor told the White House: “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.” Giglio said that he would “continue to pray regularly for the President, and urge the nation to do so. I will most certainly pray for him on Inauguration Day.” He concluded his message to the presidential team by saying that America “is deeply divided and hurting, and more than ever need God’s grace and mercy in our time of need.”

For its part, the White House inauguration committee claimed in a statement that “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.” The statement added that “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.”

The statement made it clear that the White House intended to be extra careful in its selection of Giglio’s replacement, making certain that the minister who offers the benediction was on record as being pro-homosexual — perhaps even an openly “gay” or lesbian pastor.

Homosexual groups reacted to the news predictably, with Chad Griffin of the Human Rights Campaign calling Giglio’s move “the right decision. Participants in the Inaugural festivities should unite rather than divide. Choosing an affirming and fair-minded voice as his replacement would be in keeping with the tone the president wants to set for his Inaugural.”

Similarly, Gregory T. Angelo of the pro-homosexual group Log Cabin Republicans said that while Giglio “should be commended for his humanitarian work, his decision to step down was the right thing to do and is a testament to his humility. Going forward we would welcome an open dialogue with the minister on issues of gay acceptance and love of all of God’s children.”

By contrast, conservative Christian leaders noted that the action appears to be part of a concerted effort to replace biblical Christianity in the public square with a religious facade that embraces tolerance of sin. “When it is now impossible for one who holds to the catholic Christian view of marriage and the gospel to pray at a public event, we now have a de facto established state church,” wrote Russell Moore, dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. “Just as the pre-constitutional Anglican and congregational churches required a license to preach in order to exclude Baptists, the new state church requires a ‘license’ of embracing sexual liberation in all its forms.”

Ed Stetzer, vice president of research for the Southern Baptist Convention’s Lifeway publishing arm, wondered what Giglio’s removal represents for the evangelical church, as well as “for Catholics, Mormons, Muslims, Orthodox Jews, and so many more who believe that their authoritative religious



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texts teach something the prevailing culture finds so unacceptable that ... they are no longer welcome in mainstream context?"

The Obama administration faced a similar situation during the 2009 inauguration when mega-church pastor Rick Warren was chosen to offer the benediction. Homosexual activists complained that Warren had a track record of speaking out against their lifestyle, and had also offered his support to California's Proposition 8 effort that succeeded in adding a state constitutional amendment defining marriage as only between a man and a woman.

In bowing out of his inaugural duties, Giglio reflected that the issue of homosexuality "is one of the most difficult our nation will navigate. However, individuals' rights of freedom, and the collective right to hold differing views on any subject is a critical balance we, as a people, must recover and preserve."

He noted that as a pastor, "my mission is to love people, and lead them well, while lifting up the name of Jesus above anything else. I'm confident that anyone who knows me or has listened to the multitude of messages I have given in the last decade would most likely conclude that I am not easily characterized as being opposed to people — any people. Rather, I am constantly seeking to understand where all people are coming from and how to best serve them as I point them to Jesus."

Michael Cromartie of the Washington, D.C. Ethics and Policy Center told [CNN](#) that unlike some conservative Christian leaders who play a high-profile leadership role in cultural issues, Giglio represents a new type of evangelical leader who "doesn't like to get involved in the culture war because it blurs the larger points he wants to make." Cromartie said it was important to remind Giglio's critics that he was "not being named to a Cabinet position. He was being asked to deliver a prayer. All sorts of people deliver prayers who we don't agree with on a number of issues." He added it was "unfortunate that this kind of political correctness doesn't allow people who are doing great work to pray at an inauguration."



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