

Trump paints himself as defender of religious faith



Miami, January 5 (RHC)-- U.S. President Donald Trump turned a mega-church revival gathering into a campaign rally over the weekend, referring to a group of evangelical supporters on issues that include claims of Democratic Party anti-Semitism, the promise to take the prayer to public schools and bragging about the recent assassination of an Iranian Major-General.

Trump spoke on the outskirts of Miami at the King Jesus International Ministry, a “prosperity gospel” church that teaches that the faithful will be rewarded with health and wealth on earth. “We are defending religion itself, it’s under siege,” Trump said. “A society without religion cannot prosper.”

During his speech, Trump tried to paint his Democratic rivals for the 2020 election as threats to religious liberty. “We can’t let one of our radical left friends come in here because everything we’ve done will be gone in short order,” he said.

The president targeted three liberal first-term congresswomen, noting their eager support for campaigns to boycott and economically isolate Israel. “These people hate Israel. They hate Jewish people. I won’t name them,” he said, proceeding to point fingers at Reps. Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. “But where do these people come from?” he pointed.

“The day I was sworn in, the federal government’s war on religion came to an abrupt end,” Trump declared. He later added: “We can smile because we’re winning by so much.” On the other hand, he got a big reaction from the crowd when he promised to bring religion into U.S. schools.

A clause in the U.S. Constitution prohibits the government from promoting one religion over the other, which means public schools don’t promote prayer or religious symbols. “Very soon I’ll be taking action to safeguard students’ and teachers’ First Amendment rights to pray in our schools,” Trump said.

Trump also commented again on the attack he ordered in Iraq where Iranian Major-General, Qassem Soleimani and other high-ranking officials died. But even in a house of worship, he relished the missile attack moments after hands were laid on him in prayer.

“He was planning a very major attack,” Trump said. “And we got him!”

More than 80% of white evangelicals voted for Trump in the 2016 election. But a crack in evangelical support opened up last month when the magazine Christianity Today wrote a blistering editorial on Trump’s “grossly immoral character” and called for his removal from office.

In addition, the event comes just a day after a new poll of the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research revealed that white evangelical Protestants stand noticeably apart from other religious people on how the government should act on two of the most politically divisive issues at play in the 2020 presidential election.

The poll found a majority of white evangelicals in support of significant restrictions on abortion and opposed to protections for LGBT people in workplaces, housing or schools. White evangelicals were also more likely than other voters of faith to say religion should have at least some influence on policymaking.

Evangelical support for Trump remained relatively constant from his inauguration until March of 2019, Pew Research shows. Some Christians believe that support has frayed since. The Miami rally “is Trump’s desperate response to the realization that he is losing his primary voting bloc: faith voters,” the executive director of Vote Common Good, a progressive Christian group, Doug Pagitt said.

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