



While President Bush has been open about sharing his faith and how it has influenced his life, John Kerry has preferred to describe himself as, "John Kerry, Catholic, and John Kerry, U.S. Senator." He wants to make a clear distinction between his faith and his politics, which is fine for those adamant about maintaining separation between church and state. Kerry is only the third Catholic to run for president on a major party ticket. He has found himself in the awkward position of being quizzed by leaders of his own church, who wish him to vow that his Catholicism will play a large role in how he conducts his presidency.

Pollsters have discovered that an individual's degree of religious commitment (measured by how often they go to worship services) is a more significant indicator of voting behavior than gender, income level, or even education. However, survey figures can oversimplify the highly complex relationship between a person's religious beliefs and voting habits. Some polls have revealed that 85 percent of voters feel religion is important, so it would be difficult to have a presidential campaign that failed to address the issue of religion.

Yet, the question of how much faith and politics should be intertwined remains a divisive issue, and is likely to remain that way for future elections.

Locally, Bob Calhoun, Pastor of Membership at Lowcountry Community Church in Bluffton, urges people to make good decisions when it comes to voting. He feels voters should research the candidates' positions on the issues, and then select the candidate that is most in line with their beliefs. Calhoun has been cheered by people's renewed interest in seeking a relationship with God, especially during these troubled times. He said "God made all of us with a purpose and a passion, and when a person finds their passion in life, it often helps them find their purpose." When you have a purpose and passion, life begins to make sense. Things fall into place, and you are better able to handle the "curves" that life often throws at all of us. And, as most of know, life has a way of sending those "curves" at us when we least expect them. People who maintain strong religious views report that faith is what gets them through the troubled times.

Pastor Greg Kronz of St. Luke's on Hilton Head agrees that faith is fundamental in life. Additionally, he states that while listening to the majority or one's own desires may be the easy thing to do, it isn't always a good way to go. It can actually cause a person to make poor decisions. Kronz recommends that people "take time each day to read the Bible and pray."

We are blessed to have such a wide variety of worship houses in our area. Residents and visitors alike are sure to find a special place to practice their faith. Our area is home to over eighty different worship houses, with more currently under construction.

For specific information, call the worship house of your choice. With so many choices, you are sure to find the one that is just right for you. — Kristy Gillinder

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