



Faith and Capitol Hill

Todd Tiahrt, R-Kan., has served as a member of the House of Representatives for 14 years. He recently visited with Today's Pentecostal Evangel. Following is an excerpt of that conversation.

tpe: What were the circumstances surrounding your decision to follow Jesus?

TIAHRT: I grew up in church. But, like most people, I thought I had faith because I was going to church. It took me awhile to understand the difference between going to church and having a relationship with Christ. I think I was about 20 when I attended a crusade in Sioux City, Iowa. I realized then that I needed a personal relationship with Christ.

tpe: You decided to attend an Assemblies of God university (Evangel). What led you in that direction?

TIAHRT: I had been attending engineering school and was playing football, but I had an injury that prevented me from playing. So I began looking for another goal in life. My uncle

recommended that I pursue a business degree, so I transferred to Evangel.

tpe: You were working at Boeing when you felt led to run for political office. How did that come about?

TIAHRT: My wife encouraged me to meet with my state representative. After meeting with him, I realized his view of the world was that children were the property of the government. He was pro-choice, for higher taxes, and for less personal responsibility and a more intrusive government. My wife began looking for someone to run against him. She couldn't find anyone, so I finally said I'd do it. That was in 1990. Election night I thought I had won by 24 votes. But in a recount, 48 hours later, I discovered I had lost by 8 votes.

tpe: Even though you lost your first election, you didn't walk away from politics. You ran again.

TIAHRT: Yes. I felt like I was doing the right thing. It was something more than a desire; it

was a sense of purpose. But, after the election, while going around and picking up my campaign signs in my pickup, I wondered if I had missed God's signal. My faith was telling me I had done the right thing, but my result was telling me I had done the wrong thing. It took me six months to work through that. But I realized the battle wasn't over.

I had invested all this time and come close to winning, so I decided to run for the state senate. I worked every day at Boeing and then walked door to door at night seeking votes. During my lunch hour I'd make phone calls on my cell phone for the campaign. I defeated a candidate whose family had held the seat for more than 24 years. In 1992 I won a four-year term to the state senate. I served two years in the state senate then was elected to Congress in 1994.

tpe: What do you like the most and least about your job?

TIAHRT: I like working for the values of the people of Kansas and people of faith.



Farm-related issues remain a priority for the Kansas congressman.

We often forget our Christian heritage. When the tsunami hit Southeast Asia, Americans sent \$1 billion to the region. The U.S. government matched it with another \$1 billion. When asked why we were doing this, I said, "We're doing this because we're a Christian nation. These are Christian values. These values are the basis of this great society." The underlying values that guide our government and individual lives are based on Christianity.

I dislike the lack of accountability I see within the national media. Often the media accept statements that are absolutely false without verifying the facts because it parallels, or supports, their ideology or view of the world. Unfortunately, that seems to be acceptable these days.

tpe: Most people view Congress as gridlocked. How do you deal with political disappointments, stalemates and partisanship?

TIAHRT: Politics certainly functions at a different pace than most people are used to. I have to get 217 people to agree with me before I can get anything done. Coming out of business, that was a change for me. I had to learn to practice patience, be tolerant of different views, accept people for who they are and listen to people — which are all facets of my faith.

tpe: As you look over your 14 years in Congress, what do you see as your major accomplishments?

TIAHRT: I've worked hard to eliminate barriers to businesses

keeping jobs here in America. I've also been a proponent of the faith-based community receiving resources in order to help people in need.

Jesus taught that everyone has value, that individuals are persons and not property. When I discovered how tax dollars were being used by non-governmental organizations in the form of food, medication and clothing, and leveraging it to encourage sterilization and abortion in foreign countries, I was able to put language in place to prevent it. No longer can agencies coerce people to have abortions or be sterilized in order to receive food or medicine.

tpe: Some question whether a person can really make a difference for the

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Todd Tiahrt believes high fuel costs constitute a "war on the poor."

kingdom of God as a public servant. What would you say to them?

TIAHRT: Christians should be engaged in the culture. Sometimes that requires that we leave our comfort zone. Christians need to be in politics. I grew up hearing that politicians were dirty and dishonest. Politics was something you pushed aside because there were risks involved.

It's difficult. It's out of the pew and out into the community. But Christ didn't stay in the synagogue. He was engaged in His culture. There are people who go to church every Sunday who are articulate, who have a good worldview, who have the ability to lead people. Some of them need to be in politics. They can help change our culture by serving on the school board, city council or at the state and federal levels.

tpe: Are we making progress in terms of Christian involvement in the public square?

TIAHRT: We're more involved today than we were in 1994. It ebbs and flows. There are more faith-based organizations today like Convoy of Hope, more health care is being provided, and more people are involved with adoptions. In 2006 I felt like we took a step back. People stayed home on Election Day. Because

of that we saw a change of direction in Washington. We need people to go to church on Sunday, go to work on Monday, and vote on Tuesday.

tpe: What part do prayer and Bible study play in your professional life?

TIAHRT: I'm involved in several prayer and Bible study groups. They've been a great encouragement to me. And encouragement breeds courage, which is vital to my work as a congressman.

tpe: What's at stake whenever Christians vote?

TIAHRT: There are two worldviews. One view is intrusive and wants to force faith-based organizations to incorporate non-faith-based people. Pro-choice versus pro-life is another issue. People can't help determine the direction of our nation unless they get involved in elections. Find a candi-

date who supports your view. Put a sign in your yard, make a donation to that candidate's campaign, pray for that person and be sure to vote.

tpe: How can the readers of TPE and the people of the Assemblies of God pray for you?

TIAHRT: First, pray for the protection of my family. This is a difficult lifestyle — a lot of travel, a lot of time away. You become a target in the media and a target spiritually, too.

People need to pray that church leaders and people of faith who are in politics have the courage to stand their ground in the battle and avoid the temptations. We forget that this is a battleground. We're fighting for the soul of this culture.

Please pray for your elected officials — from your township to the president of the United States, to those who serve in the court system. **tpe**

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.



Tiahrt enjoys meeting with constituents across his district.

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