

Faith and the presidency

How the leading candidates compare

	Faith background	Religious Right	Abortion rights	Gay rights	Iraq	Church and state
REPUBLICANS						
John McCain	Episcopalian. Attends North Phoenix Baptist Church.	Assailed Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson as “agents of intolerance” in 2000 but recently tried to mend fences.	Opposes legalized abortion but favors embryonic stem-cell research.	Says same-sex marriage is state issue. Ranked low by pro-gay Human Rights Campaign.	Voted for Iraq war; remains staunch supporter.	Endorses government support of religion, such as faith-based initiatives and private school vouchers.
Mitt Romney	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Would be the first major-party Mormon presidential nominee.	Most evangelicals denounce Mormonism as a cult. Polls show maybe a third of voters would not elect a Mormon.	Now labels himself “firmly pro-life,” but as Mass. governor he supported abortion rights.	Supported gay rights in 1994 but opposed Mass. decision to legalize same-sex marriage in 2005. Supports anti-gay-marriage amendment to U.S. constitution.	Supports Iraq war, including Bush’s troop “surge.”	Endorses government support of religion, such religious slogans on currency and faith-based initiatives.
Rudy Giuliani	Roman Catholic, but social views at odds with church. “For me, being a Catholic is not limiting but liberating.”	Viewed with suspicion because of social views and his three marriages. But in Pew poll of evangelical Republicans, he bested other GOP hopefuls.	He personally disapproves but says it should be legal. His support for “strict constructionist” judges could overturn <i>Roe v. Wade</i> .	Opposes same-sex marriage but opposes federal constitutional ban. Supports other gay rights, such as domestic partnerships.	Supports Iraq war, including Bush’s troop “surge.”	Has said little on the topic. Opposes government-sanctioned prayer in public schools but advocated a school-voucher plan for religious schools in New York City.
DEMOCRATS						
Hillary Clinton	Lifelong United Methodist who attends private Bible studies for Congress members.	Reviled by many evangelicals but has made some recent attempts to mend fences.	Supports it, including “partial-birth abortion,” but calls abortion “sad, even tragic.”	Opposes same-sex marriage but supports civil unions.	Voted for Iraq war and doesn’t apologize, saying Bush misled Congress. Supports “phased redeployment” of troops and opposes Bush’s “surge.”	Opposes “false division” between church and state but opposes Ten Commandments in public schools. Supports government funds for religious groups to provide non-religious public services.
Barack Obama	United Church of Christ. Raised in secular household, he became a Christian as an adult.	Religious Right is critical of his social views. “While we will never see eye to eye on all issues, surely we can come together with one voice to honor the entirety of Christ’s teachings....”	Supports abortion rights and voted against an Illinois ban on “partial-birth” abortions.	Supports civil unions and opposes a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage. Opposes same-sex marriage but has said he remains “open to the possibility that my unwillingness to support gay marriage is misguided.”	Opposed the war from its inception and has introduced a bill in Congress to withdraw the vast majority of U.S. troops.	Believes in church-state separation but: “To say that men and women should not inject their ‘personal morality’ into public-policy debates is a practical absurdity.”
John Edwards	Raised Southern Baptist, he became a Methodist as an adult. “It’s important in my case to have a personal relationship with the Lord, so that I pray daily and I feel that relationship all the time.”	Abortion support hurts here, but his moral opposition to poverty could energize some evangelicals.	Supports abortion rights and opposes partial-birth abortion ban. Rated 100 percent pro-choice by an abortion-rights group.	Supports civil unions and partnership benefits. “But it’s a jump for me to get to gay marriage. I haven’t yet got across that bridge.”	Voted for Iraq war but later apologized. Proposed withdrawing all U.S. troops within a year and a half.	Believes in church-state separation but: “My faith informs everything I think and do. And to suggest that I can somehow separate and divorce that from the rest of me is not possible.”