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This combination photo shows Vice President Kamala Harris, left, at the White House in Washington, July 22, 2024, and Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump at an event July 26, 2024, in West Palm Beach, Fla. (AP)

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The other day, the news site Axios called this "the first presidential election in half a century in which neither candidate is openly telling voters much about their religion or faith." That's not quite true.

In 2016, for example, Donald Trump didn't tell voters much about his religion or faith, forcing those interested to exhume old stories about his attachment to the late celebrity pastor Norman Vincent Peale. And in a departure from her faith-heavy 2008 campaign for the Democratic nomination, Hillary Clinton didn't have much to say in 2016 about her long-standing Methodist identity either.

Be that as it may, campaign coverage this year has certainly been light on attention to the religious lives of the candidates and their running mates. The journalistic posture has pretty much been: If you don't tell, we won't ask.

So, what do we know?

The most recent info on Trump comes via RNS reporter Jack Jenkins eliciting from the then-president four years ago that though he had long identified as a Presbyterian, he was now considering himself a nondenominational Christian. There are a good 20 nondenominational Christian churches within hailing distance of Mar-a-Lago but so far as we know (or expect), Trump doesn't attend any of them.

Kamala Harris has recounted how she attended both a Black Protestant church and a Hindu temple growing up — an expression of her Black and Indian parentage. But her membership as an adult has been in San Francisco's Third Baptist Church, a historic Black congregation dating back to 1852. After President Joe Biden announced his withdrawal from the race, Harris called the pastor, the Rev. Amos C. Brown, and asked him to pray for her. He went on to give a prayer at the Democratic National Convention.

A flurry of press attention to Brown followed, with right-wing media doing its best to portray the pastor, who is also president of the San Francisco NAACP, as another version of Barack Obama's controversial pastor, Jeremiah Wright. "You're going to love this," Fox News' Sean Hannity chortled, pointing to a 2021 sermon where Brown called America a "racist country."

Nothing much has come of this attack. That may be because the 83-year-old Brown, a native of Jackson, Mississippi, and graduate of Morehouse College (where he was tutored by Martin Luther King Jr.), is a far more mainstream figure than Wright. It may also be because Harris, conscious of how the Wright controversy shook up Obama's candidacy in 2008, has steered clear of talking about her faith on the campaign trail. Of course, that's not something politicians in California tend to do much anyway.

In the Midwest, where both vice presidential candidates come from, they often do talk about their faith. But those two, these days, barely.

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Tim Walz has, to be sure, not been shy about identifying himself as a Minnesota Lutheran, which is to say a member of the mainline Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In his Aug. 6 remarks accepting Harris' offer to be her running mate, he offered his own version of the most famous of Jesus' injunctions (Matthew 7:12): "In Minnesota we respect our neighbors and the personal choices that they make. Even if we wouldn't make the same choice for ourselves, there's a golden rule: Mind your own damn business!"

Beyond that, Walz has not done much to connect his policy views with his faith.

The most interesting religious trajectory on the two tickets belongs to JD Vance, taking him from a weak evangelical upbringing to adolescent atheism to a conversion to (right-wing) Catholicism. It's a journey he described not long ago in some detail, and the press has not hesitated to write about it. But like the other candidates, he doesn't talk about it on the stump.

Unlike the others, however, Vance gladly subjects himself to interviews — including interviews with journalists who are not part of his ideological world. It would be nice if one of them asked him about, say, how he feels about the Catholic position on the

death penalty, and about Pope Francis' position on immigrants, and about Francis and his magisterium generally.

It would also be nice if, as the Democratic candidates begin to give one-on-one interviews (beginning with Stephanie Ruhle interviewing Harris on MSNBC), reporters and media outlets would go ahead and press them to speak about the role of their religion in their lives and policy positions. And sure, maybe Hannity et al. could do the same with Trump.

Maybe by now the nondenominational Christian has learned how to offer his version of Matthew 7:12. Call it the Gilded Rule: Whatever you don't want men to do to you, do it to them.

This story appears in the **Election 2024** feature series. View the full series.