God in America Viewing Party Kit

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First-of-its-kind, six-hour documentary series explores the 400-year history of religion in the public life of the United States

Since the days when the Puritan “city on a hill” beckoned on the horizon of the New World, religious faith and belief have forged America’s ideals, molded its identity and shaped its sense of mission at home and abroad.

For the first time on television, *God in America* explores the tumultuous 400-year history of the intersection of religion and public life in America, from the first European settlements to the 2008 presidential election. A co-production of AMERICAN EXPERIENCE and FRONTLINE, this six-hour series examines how religious dissidents helped shape the American concept of religious liberty and the controversial evolution of that ideal in the nation’s courts and political arena; how religious freedom and waves of new immigrants and religious revivals fueled competition in the religious marketplace; how movements for social reform—from abolition to civil rights—galvanized men and women to put their faith into political action; and how religious faith influenced conflicts from the American Revolution to the Cold War.

Interweaving documentary footage, historical dramatization and interviews with religious historians, the six-part series will air over three consecutive nights beginning on Oct. 11, 2010. Narrated by actor Campbell Scott, the series includes appearances by many well-respected actors, including Michael Emerson (as John Winthrop), Chris Sarandon (as Abraham Lincoln) and Keith David (as Frederick Douglass).
“The American story cannot be fully understood without understanding the country’s religious history,” says series executive producer Michael Sullivan. “By examining that history, God in America will offer viewers a fresh, revealing and challenging portrait of the country.”

God in America is an AMERICAN EXPERIENCE/FRONTLINE co-production, headed by series executive producer Michael Sullivan, series producer Marilyn Mellowes, series director David Belton and producer Sarah Colt. The executive producer for FRONTLINE is David Fanning. The executive producer for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is Mark Samels.

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE and FRONTLINE are produced by WGBH and broadcast nationwide on PBS. Major funding for God in America was provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Fetzer Institute, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and public television viewers, with additional support from The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations.

Exclusive corporate funding for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is provided by Liberty Mutual. Major funding is provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and public television viewers. Major funding for FRONTLINE is provided by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation with additional funding by the Park Foundation.
Why Host a *God in America* Viewing Party and Discussion?

*A God in America* viewing party offers a rare opportunity to gather with family, friends and neighbors to talk more about the role religion and contemporary spirituality play in our daily lives. By its very nature, television is a social medium. We gather to watch all sorts of events on TV—sports, concerts, movies, award shows. Why not consider doing the same with a thought-provoking film like *God in America*?

Here are a few ways to approach your viewing party and discussion:

**Option A:** Invite your group to gather together to watch the premiere of *God in America* on Monday, Oct. 11, at 9 p.m. on PBS. (Be sure to check your local television listings, as the time may be earlier in some markets.) Gather in your home or any other location that receives the PBS broadcast signal or cable channel. You might consider your church, local library, community center or college campus lounge.

**Option B:** Watch the series at home starting on Monday, Oct. 11, through its conclusion on Wednesday, Oct. 13. Then gather together for a dynamic discussion on another date. This will allow you to watch the entire series independently, without being influenced by others’ opinions before you’ve had a chance to form your own. Keep a small notebook and pen with you and take notes while you watch. Consider surprising stories, characters and revelations. It would be ideal to plan your discussion for Thursday, Oct. 14, when the material is still fresh in your mind. Invite others in your group to bring their notes, too. Ask them to be prepared to share their reactions and insights.

**Option C:** Host a virtual viewing party and discussion using Facebook, Twitter or other popular social media tools. Watch *God in America* at home and use Facebook (facebook.com) or Twitter (twitter.com) to post your reactions in real time. If you run a Facebook group, you can set up an event for Monday, Oct. 11, at 9 p.m. and invite other members of your group to watch at home, too. Then use our suggested discussion questions on page 10 to get an online conversation started. Or better yet, post your own original questions! You can also become a fan of *God in America* by searching for the series in the Facebook search box.

If you use Twitter to broadcast your reactions to *God in America* in real time, please use the hashtag #GodinAmericaPBS. You can follow the series on Twitter @GodinAmericaPBS. Look for interesting behind-the-scenes anecdotes, religion headlines and other facts about the series in the weeks leading up to the national broadcast on Monday, Oct. 11.

Don’t worry if you miss *God in America* on television. You will be able to watch all six hours of the series online, starting Oct. 14. You can also order the DVD version of the series complete with bonus features at shoppbs.org. Look for a special offer and discount code at the back of this guide.
Potential Guest and Speakers

Like politics, religion is a subject many people avoid in public settings, even in intimate gatherings of friends. Chances are that until now, your conversations about what you believe and why have been limited to inside your own house of worship or your own home. If you have been educated in U.S. public schools, your access to world religion courses may have been limited. If you’re someone who is struggling with your beliefs or trying to find a faith community where you feel welcome, religion might be a difficult subject for you. We’re hoping the broadcast of *God in America* will help believers and nonbelievers alike discover more about themselves and the vast religious marketplace that is unique to America.

When considering guests to invite to your viewing party, it’s probably easiest to start at home with your family. If you’d like to broaden the discussion and include people of different faiths or beliefs, try reaching out to a group you already belong to: Book groups, Bible study groups, civic clubs, adult-learning classes and neighborhood associations can be great places to start.

Consider inviting a local expert, teacher, clergy member or interfaith group representative to help facilitate the dialogue for your group. A facilitator can help ensure everyone has a chance to participate in the conversation and be heard. When gathering in groups, it’s sometimes helpful to set up ground rules or shared agreements at the start of the meeting. This can help keep the conversation respectful and orderly.

Shared Agreements

The following shared agreements come from the Fetzer Institute (www.fetzer.org), an underwriter of *God in America*. Your group may amend or customize this list or choose instead to brainstorm your own set of agreements. You can vote on your shared agreements and refer to them as needed throughout your discussion. We’ve also included some tips on how to listen with focused attention as a way to support everyone participating in the conversation.

- We intend to balance sharing and listening, allowing everyone to participate, and we’ll pass on talking whenever we wish.
- When someone is speaking, we’ll allow him or her to speak uninterrupted and refrain from giving unsolicited feedback, advice or commentary.
- We commit to using “I” statements as often as possible when we share.
- We will assume good intentions on everyone’s part, agree that we may disagree at times, and learn together about respecting differences.
- If a question or topic makes us uncomfortable, we can skip it or ask the facilitator about an alternative.
- We will listen with focus and attention.
Listening with Focus and Attention

- As a group, you might take a few minutes to discuss the value of listening. A discussion about good listening skills might include these points:

- Listening with an open heart and mind

- Allowing the speaker to finish his or her thoughts and sentences, even when we feel impatient to speak

- Accepting that the speaker feels what he or she feels, no matter what we think, and refraining from “correcting” the speaker’s feelings

- Listening with no agenda other than to be a sounding board for someone who needs to speak

- Imagining that we are speaking and listening to ourselves

- Listening without trying to solve or fix a problem, unless feedback or advice is sought
Viewing Party Event Timeline

Once you’ve decided to host a viewing party and discussion and selected the date, you’ve got a little work to do to make it a success. The following timeline and checklist is provided as a general guideline for how to organize and promote your party.

4 weeks prior to the event:

___ Decide where the viewing party will be held and secure the space

___ Confirm that you can receive a broadcast or cable signal in the party space and arrange for any necessary A/V equipment (screens, speakers, etc.)

___ Find God in America graphics in the outreach section of our website, pbs.org/godinamerica/outreach (graphics can be used in electronic and hard invitations)

___ Send a viewing party invitation via e-mail using free tools on websites like evite.com, paperlesspost.com or punchbowl.com, or send a paper invitation by mail

___ Consider whether your event will include food, and if so, include a potluck sign-up with your invitation

___ Decide whether or not you’d like a facilitator or speaker at your party

___ Contact a local interfaith group, college religion studies department, social services agency or local chapter of the Interfaith Alliance, Anti-Defamation League or Interfaith Youth Core to locate potential speakers (see page x for additional suggestions)

___ Become a fan of God in America on Facebook

3 weeks prior to the event:

___ Post a flyer or poster to promote your viewing party

___ Publish a notice in your group’s newsletter or online bulletin board

___ Embed the God in America 5-minute trailer on your website or direct people to view it at pbs.org/godinamerica

___ Create a page in the God in America Faithbook at pbs.org/godinamerica/faithbook

___ Review the discussion questions and shared agreements for the conversation
2 weeks prior to the event:

___ Check your RSVPs and send an e-mail reminder to invited guests
___ Make follow-up phone calls if necessary and confirm party details with your speaker
___ Make arrangements for any additional tables or chairs you might need in your space
___ If your party is virtual, post reminders online using the social media tool of your choice

1 week prior to the event:

___ Send one final reminder to guests
___ If you are gathering to watch *God in America* together, be sure to have guests arrive about an hour early so conversation settles down before the series starts
___ If you are gathering for a discussion after *God in America* is broadcast, be sure to remind your guests to watch at home starting Monday, Oct. 11

Day of event:

___ Set the stage for your party and be sure there is enough seating for all guests
___ Hold a brief technical rehearsal to test the signal from your local PBS station; check that the screen is viewable from all areas and the sound is adequate
___ Print enough copies of the Religious Literacy Quiz on page 12 so each guest can test his or her knowledge at the party (don’t forget to provide pencils)
___ Arrive at your party location early to set up and be ready to welcome guests
___ Ensure that you have enough refreshments for your group or clear a table if it’s a potluck
___ Use name tags if there are people attending the screening or discussion who do not know each other
___ Be sure to welcome everyone and share a little about the *God in America* series
___ Explain how you heard about the series, what you are looking forward to learning more about, and consider how you as a group can continue to explore the topics of religion and contemporary spirituality in today’s society
___ Enjoy the show!
Discussion Questions

Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

“Americans are awash in a sea of faith, but their knowledge about religious faiths and religious history often runs as shallow as their commitment to religion runs deep,” says Stephen Prothero, chief editorial consultant for *God in America*, professor of religion at Boston University and author of *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—And Doesn’t*.

This is just one potential starting point for your group discussion. The *God in America* study guide, which will be published on the website in time for broadcast, offers several thought-provoking discussion questions for you to pose to your group. There are also questions and topics you might prefer to reflect on privately through journaling, talking with a partner one-on-one or in a quiet, sacred space.

You can download the complete study guide here:
[pbs.org/godinamerica/outreach/study.html](http://pbs.org/godinamerica/outreach/study.html)

To give you a sense of what’s inside the guide, here are a few discussion questions from the premiere broadcast featuring Episode One: “A New Adam” and Episode Two: “A New Eden.”

- **What is religion? How do you define it? Is it a matter of doctrines, creeds, rituals and traditions as it was for Catholic Spain?**

- **How would you describe John Winthrop’s Puritan vision of human community, and how attainable do you think it was? What advice was he giving to his companions?**

- **How did the Puritan religious community define itself and how would you compare it to the ways contemporary religious communities define themselves today?**

- **What did conversion mean for the Puritans and what does it mean today?**

- **The intellectual Thomas Jefferson and the evangelical Baptists of Virginia set aside their differences and together defended a belief they shared: the right to worship freely. Why does Jefferson argue for religious liberty? Why do the Baptists? What are the similarities and differences in their views?**

- **What does the First Amendment say about religion? How do its words contribute to sustaining American religion? What do you think Thomas Jefferson’s famous phrase “wall of separation between church and state” means?**

- **Cynthia Lynn Lyerly notes that one of the consequences of expanding religious choices in America was opening them up to include “none of the above.” Discuss how freedom of religion allowed ordinary people to take charge of their own religious destinies and the extent of the diversity that resulted.**
The following questions focus on contemporary perspectives of religiousness and spirituality. *God in America* offers many opportunities to look at the religious and spiritual lives of historical figures in relation to our own experiences today.

- *How do you relate to the experiences of the characters in* God in America? Are they at all similar to your own experiences today? Why or why not?

- *Do you see a distinction between religiousness and spirituality? Many regard them as indistinguishable, others believe religiousness has specific characteristics because it involves a system of worship while spirituality is more transcendent, addressing ultimate questions about life’s meaning. What do you believe?*

- *How do religion and spirituality complement one another? Do strong religious practices deepen your spiritual beliefs? Can you have a strong sense of spirituality without religion?*

- *What are the regular practices, religious and/or spiritual, that you have made a part of your life? How do they impact your life?*

- *Do you make a conscious effort to live in accordance with your spiritual values or religious beliefs? How so?*

More information on questions of religiousness and spirituality can be found at [http://www.fetzer.org/research/248-dses](http://www.fetzer.org/research/248-dses). An analysis of scholarly research on the measurement of religiousness and spirituality was supported by the Fetzer Institute in collaboration with The National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health.
Religious Literacy Quiz

The following quiz is from Boston University Professor Steven Prothero’s book Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—And Doesn’t. It’s a quiz he administers to undergraduate students enrolled in his world religions course. The quiz and the answers are reprinted with permission.

1. Name the four Gospels. List as many as you can.
2. Name a sacred text of Hinduism.
3. What is the name of the holy book of Islam?
4. Where according to the Bible was Jesus born?
5. President George W. Bush spoke in his first inaugural address of the Jericho road. What Bible story was he invoking?
6. What are the first five books of the Hebrew Bible or the Christian Old Testament?
7. What is the Golden Rule?
8. “God helps those who help themselves”: Is this in the Bible? If so, where?
9. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God”: Does this appear in the Bible? If so, where?
10. Name the Ten Commandments. List as many as you can.
11. Name the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism.
12. What are the seven sacraments of Catholicism? List as many as you can.
13. The First Amendment says two things about religion, each in its own “clause.” What are the two religion clauses of the First Amendment?
14. What is Ramadan? In what religion is it celebrated?
15. Match the Bible characters with the stories in which they appear. Draw a line from one to the other. Hint: Some characters may be matched with more than one story or vice versa.

Adam and Eve
Paul
Moses
Noah
Jesus
Abraham
Serpent

Exodus
Binding of Isaac
Olive Branch
Garden of Eden
Parting of the Red Sea
Road to Damascus
Garden of Gethsemane
Religious Literacy Quiz Answers (and Grading)

1. Name the four Gospels. List as many as you can. (1 point each.)


2. Name a sacred text of Hinduism. (1 point.)

   There are many possibilities here. They include the Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Puranas, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Yoga Sutras, Laws of Manu and the Kama Sutra.

3. What is the name of the holy book of Islam? (1 point.)

   Quran.

4. Where according to the Bible was Jesus born? (1 point.)

   Bethlehem.

5. President George W. Bush spoke in his first inaugural address of the Jericho road. What Bible story was he invoking? (1 point.)

   The Good Samaritan.

6. What are the first five books of the Hebrew Bible or the Christian Old Testament? (1 point each.)

   Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

7. What is the Golden Rule? (1 point.)

   “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Matthew 7:12), or a similar sentiment from Rabbi Hillel or Confucius. (“Love your neighbor as yourself” is not the Golden Rule.)

8. “God helps those who help themselves.” Is this in the Bible? If so, where? (2 points.)

   No, this is not in the Bible. In fact, it is contradicted in Proverbs 28:26: “He who trusts in himself is a fool.” The words are Ben Franklin’s.

9. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God”: Does this appear in the Bible? If so, where? (2 points.)

   Yes, in the Beatitudes of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3).
10. Name the Ten Commandments. List as many as you can. (10 points.)

The Protestant, Catholic and Jewish versions of the Ten Commandments differ. Give yourself credit for any 10 of the following 12 commandments, each of which appears in at least one of those three versions:

1. I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage.
2. You shall have no other gods before me.
3. You shall not make yourself a graven image.
4. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
5. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
6. Honor your father and your mother.
7. You shall not kill/murder.
8. You shall not commit adultery.
9. You shall not steal.
10. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
11. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.
12. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.

11. Name the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism. List as many as you can. (4 points.)

1. Life is suffering.
2. Suffering has an origin.
3. Suffering can be overcome (nirvana).
4. The path to overcoming suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path.

12. What are the seven sacraments of Catholicism? List as many as you can. (7 points.)

1. Baptism
2. Eucharist/Mass/Holy Communion
3. Reconciliation/Confession/Penance
4. Confirmation
5. Marriage
6. Holy Orders
7. Anointing of the Sick/Last Rites
13. The First Amendment says two things about religion, each in its own “clause.” What are the two religion clauses of the First Amendment? (1 point each.)

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The words before the comma are referred to as the Establishment Clause; the words that follow constitute the Free Exercise Clause.

14. What is Ramadan? In what religion is it celebrated? (2 points.)

Ramadan is a Muslim holiday characterized by a month of fasting.

15. Match the Bible characters with the stories in which they appear by drawing a line from one to the other. Some characters may be matched with more than one story or vice versa. (7 points.)

Adam and Eve —— Garden of Eden
Paul —— Road to Damascus
Moses —— Exodus, Parting of the Red Sea
Noah —— Olive Branch
Jesus —— Road to Damascus, Garden of Gethsemane
Abraham —— Binding of Isaac
Serpent —— Garden of Eden

Scoring:
Add up total points, multiply by two. A is 90 points or higher; B is 80-89; C is 70-79. A passing grade is 60 points or more.
Faithbook Activity

Have you ever shared your personal spiritual journey in words or pictures? What does your faith look like when no one is watching? Do you have a favorite prayer or blessing? How do you imagine God? Do you consider yourself spiritual but not religious?

Faithbooking is a creative expression of an individual or family’s spiritual journey. Beliefs, values and life events are captured in scrapbooks, diaries or journals, often incorporating photographs, decorated papers, Scripture, thoughts, prayers, blessings and stories.

We want to create the largest and most diverse digital Faithbook ever. Help us by designing a page for yourself, your family, your community group or house of worship. Share your faith tradition or spiritual journey. Upload photos and short video clips. Help others learn and understand what you believe and why.

Get started at pbs.org/godinamerica/faithbook.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, FRONLINE PRESENT GOD IN AMERICA
OCTOBER 11-13, 2010, 9-11PM ET ON PBS

First-of-its kind, six-hour documentary series explores 400-year history of religion in the public life of the United States

Boston, MA [August 26, 2010] Since the days when the Puritan “city on a hill” beckoned on the horizon of the New World, religious faith and belief have forged America’s ideals, molded its identity and shaped its sense of mission at home and abroad.

For the first time on television, God in America explores the tumultuous 400-year history of the intersection of religion and public life in America, from the first European settlements to the 2008 presidential election. A co-production of AMERICAN EXPERIENCE and FRONTLINE, this six-hour series examines how religious dissidents helped shape the American concept of religious liberty and the controversial evolution of that ideal in the nation’s courts and political arena; how religious freedom and waves of new immigrants and religious revivals fueled competition in the religious marketplace; how movements for social reform—from abolition to civil rights—galvanized men and women to put their faith into political action; and how religious faith influenced conflicts from the American Revolution to the Cold War.

Interweaving documentary footage, historical dramatization and interviews with religious historians, the six-part series will air over three consecutive nights beginning on October 11, 2010. Narrated by actor Campbell Scott, the series includes appearances by actors Michael Emerson (as John Winthrop), Chris Sarandon (as Abraham Lincoln) and Keith David (as Frederick Douglass), among others.

“The American story cannot be fully understood without understanding the country’s religious history,” says series executive producer Michael Sullivan. “By examining that history, God in America will offer viewers a fresh, revealing and challenging portrait of the country.”

As God in America unfolds, it reveals the deep roots of American religious identity in the universal quest for liberty and individualism—ideas that played out in the unlikely political union between Thomas Jefferson and defiant Baptists to oppose the established church in Virginia and that were later embraced by free-wheeling Methodists and maverick Presbyterians. Catholic and Jewish immigrants battled for religious liberty and expanded its meaning. In their quest for social reform, movements as different as civil rights and the religious right found authority and energy in their religious faith. The fight to define religious liberty fueled struggles between America’s secular and religious cultures on issues from evolution to school prayer, and American individualism and the country’s experiment in religious liberty were the engine that made America the most religiously diverse nation on earth.

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Episode Descriptions

*God in America* comprises six 60-minute episodes:

**Episode One, “A New Adam” (October 11, 9-10pm ET on PBS):** The first hour of *God in America* explores the origins of America’s unique religious landscape—how the New World challenged and changed the faiths the first European settlers brought with them. In New Mexico, the spiritual rituals of the Pueblo Indians collided with the Catholic faith of Franciscan missionaries, ending in a bloody revolt. In New England, Puritan leader John Winthrop faced off against religious dissenters from within his own ranks. And a new message of spiritual rebirth from evangelical preachers like George Whitefield swept through the American colonies, upending traditional religious authority and kindling a rebellious spirit that converged with the political upheaval of the American Revolution.

**Episode Two, “A New Eden” (October 11, 10-11pm ET on PBS):** Hour two considers the origins of America’s experiment in religious liberty, examining how the unlikely alliance between evangelical Baptists and enlightenment figures such as Thomas Jefferson forged a new concept of religious freedom. In the competitive religious marketplace unleashed by this freedom, upstart denominations raced ahead of traditional faiths and a new wave of religious revivals swept thousands of converts into the evangelical fold and inspired a new gospel of social reform. In a fierce political struggle, Catholic immigrants challenged Protestant domination of public schools and protested the daily classroom practice of reading from the King James Bible.

**Episode Three, “A Nation Reborn” (October 12, 9-10pm ET on PBS):** Hour three explores how religion suffused the Civil War. As slavery split the nation in two, Northern abolitionists and Southern slaveholders turned to the Bible to support their cause. Former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass condemned Christianity for sanctioning slavery. In the White House, Abraham Lincoln struggled to make sense of the war’s carnage and the death of his young son. The president, who previously had put his faith in reason over revelation, embarked on a spiritual journey that transformed his ideas about God and the ultimate meaning of the war.

**Episode Four, “A New Light” (October 12, 10-11pm ET on PBS):** During the 19th century, the forces of modernity challenged traditional faith and drove a wedge between liberal and conservative believers. Bohemian immigrant Isaac Mayer Wise embraced change and established Reform Judaism in America while his opponents adhered to Old World traditions. In New York, Presbyterian biblical scholar Charles Briggs sought to wed his evangelical faith with modern biblical scholarship, leading to his trial for heresy. In the 1925 Scopes evolution trial, Christian fundamentalist William Jennings Bryan faced off against freethinker Clarence Darrow in a battle between scientific and religious truth.

**Episode Five, “Soul of a Nation” (October 13, 9-10pm ET on PBS):** Hour Five explores the post-World War II era, when rising evangelist Billy Graham tried to inspire a religious revival that fused faith with patriotism in a Cold War battle with “Godless Communism.” As Americans flocked in record numbers to houses of worship, non-believers and religious minorities appealed to the US Supreme Court to test the constitutionality of religious expression in public schools. And civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. emerged as a modern-day prophet, calling upon the nation to honor both biblical teachings and the founders’ democratic ideals of equal justice.

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Episode Six, “Of God and Caesar” (October 13, 10-11pm ET on PBS):
The final hour of God in America brings the series into the present day, exploring the religious and political aspirations of conservative evangelicals’ moral crusade over divisive social issues like abortion and gay marriage. Their embrace of presidential politics would end in disappointment and questions about the mixing of religion and politics. Across America, the religious marketplace expanded as new waves of immigrants from Asia, the Middle East and Latin America made the United States the most religiously diverse nation on earth. In the 2008 presidential election, the re-emergence of a religious voice in the Democratic Party brought the country to a new plateau in its struggle to reconcile faith with politics. God in America closes with reflections on the role of faith in the public life of the country, from the ongoing quest for religious liberty to the enduring idea of America as the “city on a hill” envisioned by the Puritans nearly 400 years ago.

God in America Online and in the Community
To extend the reach of the series beyond the television screen, God in America has formed strategic partnerships with The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, the Religious Freedom Education Project at the Newseum, the Fetzer Institute, Sacred Space International and other organizations. An integrated multi-media campaign includes community engagement activities, media events and a comprehensive God in America website. The campaign encourages viewers to explore the history of their own religious communities, to examine their own spiritual journeys and to deepen their understanding of religion and spiritual experience in the life of the nation.

“Americans are awash in a sea of faith, but their knowledge about religious faiths and religious history often runs as shallow as their commitment to religion runs deep,” says Stephen Prothero, chief editorial consultant for God in America, professor of religion at Boston University and author of Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—And Doesn’t. “A series like God in America can help correct that imbalance and provide the basis for a common understanding of the role religion has played in American public life.”


American Experience and FRONTLINE are produced by WGBH and broadcast nationwide on PBS. Major funding for God in America is provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Fetzer Institute, with additional support from The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations. Exclusive corporate funding for American Experience is provided by Liberty Mutual. Major funding is provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Major funding for FRONTLINE is provided by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation with additional funding by the Park Foundation. God in America and American Experience are made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. FRONTLINE, American Experience and God in America also are made possible by public television viewers.

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About WGBH
WGBH/Boston is America’s preeminent public broadcasting station, producing such award-winning PBS series as AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, FRONTLINE, NOVA, Masterpiece, Antiques Roadshow, Arthur, Curious George and more than a dozen other prime-time, lifestyle and children’s series. WGBH’s television channels include WGBH 2/HD and 44, and digital channels World and Create. Local TV productions that focus on the region’s diverse community include Greater Boston, Basic Black and María Hinojosa: One-on-One.

WGBH Radio serves listeners from Cape Cod to New Hampshire with WGBH 89.7, Boston’s NPR Station for News and Culture; 99.5 All Classical; WCAI for the Cape and Islands; WNCK on Nantucket; and the All-Classical WGBH HD channel. WGBH also produces the national radio news program The World. WGBH is a leading producer of online content and a pioneer in developing educational multimedia and new technologies that make media accessible for people with disabilities. Find more information at www.wgbh.org.

pbs.org/pressroom
Promotional photography can be downloaded from the PBS pressroom.

Press Contact:
Chris Kelly, Fifth House Public Relations, 617/532-0574 or kelly@fifthhousepr.com

#####
Join a Viewing Party

DATE:
TIME:
LOCATION:

A CO-PRODUCTION OF
AMERICAN EXPERIENCE
FRONTLINE
Encountering *God in America*

Your viewing party and discussion may have ended, but there are still plenty of other ways to experience America’s diverse expressions of spirituality and to engage in dialogue, debate and discussion. These selected resources can guide you in learning more about America’s religious landscape. They can help you do your own research; support your own explorations of the questions, themes and issues raised in the series; and provide useful contact information for a variety of organizations, projects and initiatives around the country.

**God in America website**
http://pbs.org/godinamerica

The series website includes extended interviews from the filmmakers, a timeline of religious history in America, profiles of important characters, links to additional reading, as well as our “How-to Guide for Visiting Sacred Spaces” and downloadable tour guides for visiting sacred spaces in eight U.S. cities: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, New York, Santa Fe, San Francisco and Portland, Ore.

**Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life**
http://pewforum.org/

Through surveys, social science research, roundtables and briefings on aspects of religion and public life in the United States and around the world, this group “seeks to promote a deeper understanding of issues at the intersection of religion and public affairs.”

**Freedom Forum**
http://www.freedomforum.org/

This nonpartisan foundation in Washington, D.C., “champions the First Amendment as a cornerstone of democracy.” Its First Amendment Center is “a forum for the study and exploration of free-expression issues, including freedom of speech, of the press, and of religion, and the rights to assemble and to petition the government.”

**Sacred Space International**
http://www.sacredspaceinternational.org/

This Chicago-based secular nonprofit draws awareness to the diversity of faith traditions in America and promotes interfaith education and dialogue through the understanding of religious architecture.

**Center for Spiritual and Ethical Education**
http://www.csee.org/

The center offers national and regional events, workshops, and conferences for schools and teachers on a variety of topics, including teaching the world’s religions and spiritual development for children.
Interfaith Alliance
http://www.interfaithalliance.org/
This national organization promotes religious freedom through advocacy, activism, education and interfaith dialogue.

North American Interfaith Network
http://www.nain.org/
Dozens of interfaith councils, associations and projects around the country are members of this organization.

The Faith Club
http://www.thefaithclub.com/
Based on the book The Faith Club, written by three mothers of three different faiths, this website is a resource for starting a faith club and initiating interfaith discussion groups in living rooms, churches, temples, mosques and other settings.

Daughters of Abraham Women’s Book Club
http://www.daughtersofabraham.com/
This group’s website offers extensive reading lists, ground rules for interfaith discussions and links to local clubs.

The Pluralism Project
http://pluralism.org/
For almost two decades, this Harvard University project has helped Americans “engage with the realities of religious diversity through research, outreach and the active dissemination of resources.”

Center for Religion and Civic Culture
http://crcc.usc.edu/
This center at the University of Southern California links scholars and faith communities to study “the civic role of religion in a globalizing world.” Its online resources include videos, photographs, publications and demographic information.

Interfaith Youth Core
http://www.ifyc.org/
Launched in 1998, this organization “builds mutual respect and pluralism among young people from different religious traditions by empowering them to work together to serve others.”

The Material History of American Religion Project
http://www.materialreligion.org/
Religion in America is more than ideas and institutions. This website features documents and photographs of objects that have played a role in America’s religious life, as well as links to other online resources.
**Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly**  
http://www.pbs.org/religion  
The website of this weekly PBS news and public affairs program is a source for extensive audio, video and other resources on news and analysis of people and events in the world of religion and ethics.

**Speaking of Faith**  
http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/  
This public radio program offers conversation about “religion, meaning, ethics and ideas” and explores the significance of religion and spirituality in every aspect of life.
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