

A religious magazine to accompany your days

We offer a resource to feed your ministry. Will you consider supporting ours?

by [Peter W. Marty](#) in the [November 7, 2018](#) issue



There's no sign that current occupants or staff of the White House are familiar with the *Christian Century*. Our subscription service indicates no delivery of this magazine to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Among faith groups invited to the White House in the last couple years, conservative evangelical Christians appear to be the most frequent, and I suspect none of them is bringing along issues of the *Century*. Our pages don't appear to be making the reading lists of the president or various cabinet members and staffers.

It hasn't always been this way. We know from correspondence and historical reference that Presidents Ford, Carter, and Clinton read the magazine periodically. John F. Kennedy commented on it at least once in personal correspondence. And from tape transcripts of Richard Nixon's presidency, we know that Nixon had an opinion of the magazine.

During a February 1972 Oval Office meeting, evangelist Billy Graham gave Nixon an earful about a pending postal rate hike. If the hike was enacted, Graham told the president, his own magazine would suffer a 700 percent increase in postal expenses. During that exchange, the conversation turned to other religious magazines.

Graham: A lot of them ought to close.

Nixon: I know.

Graham: In fact, the *Christian Century* is just about out of business.

Nixon: [That magazine] is horrible.

Graham: It's about out of business.

Nixon: It's antireligious. I used to read it as a kid and in college, but no more.

Graham: No more. Well, it's the most left-wing of all the religious press in the country.

Nixon must have been one intellectually curious kid. The *Century* never published children's stories, word puzzles, or comic strips. Dubbing the magazine "left-wing" may have provided an excuse to label the *Century* radical. But opposing the Vietnam War and being one of the first to publish Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" were signs more of sanity and insight than of radicalism. Today, the *Century* is recognized for its progressive character—liberal with respect to theological freedom and conservative with respect to promoting time-tested values.

Nearly half a century after Graham and Nixon were ready to load the *Christian Century* into a hearse, we're still in business. More vigorously in business than ever. This is due directly to people like you who appreciate the voice of the *Century* enough to support it.

As a nonprofit journalistic ministry working to make a difference in public conversations about faith, politics, and culture, we rely heavily on donations. The ever-proliferating ways that people receive news and commentary, and the growing expectation of free online content, pose a challenge for subscription and advertising revenue.

Once every year in this column I ask you to consider doing your part, if you haven't already, to help sustain the *Christian Century's* work. I long for the many bright readers and active clergy I meet or know, who often speak to me of being "unable to

live” without this terrific resource, to consider support at any level. If you didn’t have this print and digital magazine accompanying your days, what else would comparably feed the life of your mind or the spiritual affections of your heart? [Thank you for considering a gift.](#)

A version of this article appears in the print edition under the title “The Century relies on you.”