



# Franklin Graham

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- William Franklin Graham III is a Christian evangelist and missionary. He was born in 1952 in North Carolina, the son of the evangelist Billy Graham.
- In 2020, he is planning a four-month tour of the UK, but seven out of eight venues have banned him, citing opposition to his views, especially on homosexuality, as incompatible with values of equality, diversity and inclusivity. The venues which have banned him are: the ACC conference venue in Liverpool, the FlyDSA Arena in Sheffield, the SSE Hydro venue in Glasgow, the International Convention Centre Wales in Newport, the Marshall Arena in Milton Keynes, The Arena Birmingham and another in London. The venue in Newcastle is the only one remaining.
- Despite this, the [Billy Graham Evangelistic Association](#) which is organising the tour, said it will still go ahead and they are finalising sites for events, sticking to original dates.
- Peter Lynas, UK Director of the Evangelical Alliance, [said they have members](#) who support and have concerns about the tour, but “. . . venues, often owned by local people and run by their councils, are challenging freedom of speech and freedom of religion. We should all share concerns about that.”
- In 2018, there were protests over his visit to “The Festival of Hope” in Blackpool, Lancashire. The festival was organised by 200 churches from many denominations, including the Church of England, but 8,000 local people signed a petition against the visit. The Muslim Council of Britain called on the government to refuse Graham a visa on the grounds that comments he has made amount to Islamophobia and homophobia. Three MPs also called for the visit to be cancelled.

## EARLY LIFE

- Franklin Graham was a child when his father, Billy Graham, led “crusades” throughout the world, including the UK – big evangelistic campaigns featuring mass audiences, choral singing and lively sermons ending with a call for people to signal their conversion to Christianity by “coming forward” – walking to the front of the stage.
- The first Billy Graham UK event was the [1954 Haringey crusade](#), when more than two million people heard him preach, with live broadcasts in towns throughout the country. Another 18 crusades were held in the UK – famously, Cliff Richard announced at the 1966 Billy Graham rally in Earls Court that he was a Christian.
- The leadership of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association was handed to Franklin Graham in 2000 and he is following his father’s pattern of mass audience rallies.

- Franklin Graham is the fourth of five children, married with four children and 11 grandchildren and ordained in Grace Community Church, Arizona.
- As a teenager, he was [expelled](#) from a private school in the state of New York, and later from LeTourneau College in Longview, Texas, for keeping a female classmate out past curfew. He has described how, aged 22 and on a trip to the Middle East in 1974, he underwent a conversion experience, after which he says he committed himself fully to Jesus Christ.

## CAREER

- In 1974, Graham joined an international Christian relief organisation, Samaritan's Purse, which works in countries throughout the world, raising hundreds of millions of dollars in donations. In 1979 he became president of Samaritan's Purse, and later chief executive, a post he still holds. He was ordained in 1982 by the Grace Community Church in Tempe, Arizona, and in 1989 began preaching with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. He became chief executive of the association in 2000, and president in 2002, and still holds both posts. In 2001, Graham gave the opening prayer at the inauguration of George W Bush. He also spoke at the inauguration of Donald Trump in 2017.

## EARNINGS

- In 2015, a North Carolina newspaper, the Charlotte Observer, [reported](#) that Graham was receiving annual salaries of about \$880,000, comprising \$622,000 from Samaritan's Purse and \$258,000 from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. This compared with salaries of between \$350,000 and \$450,000 for the chief executives of America's top 50 [charities](#).

## CONTROVERSIES

- **Islam.** Graham has been criticised many times for what have been perceived as anti-Muslim comments. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, he described Islam as “a very evil and wicked religion”. In a Time magazine interview in 2010, Graham was [reported](#) as saying Islam was “a religion of hatred. It’s a religion of war.” In 2010, the Pentagon withdrew his [invitation](#) to speak at a National Day of Prayer event, after objections from the Military Religious Freedom Foundation and a Muslim group, the Council on American-Islamic Relations. In 2011, he [attacked](#) the Muslim Brotherhood, claiming it had infiltrated “every level” of the US government.
- **Obama.** In 2010, Graham said in a CNN interview that Barack Obama’s “problem” was that he had been [born](#) a Muslim. He went on to acknowledge in the same interview that the president had renounced Islam and had accepted Christianity. But two years later, in an [interview](#) with ABC, he said that although Obama was “a fine man”, he could not know if the president was a Christian in his heart. He later [apologised](#) to Obama, saying: “I regret any comments I have ever made which may have cast any doubt on the personal faith of our president, Mr Obama. The president has said he is a Christian and I accept that.”
- **Gay rights.** In 2012, Graham [criticised](#) Obama for supporting same-sex marriage, saying that the president had “shaken his fist at the same God who created and defined marriage”. He later defended Vladimir Putin’s gay propaganda law, [praising](#) him for “protecting children from any homosexual agenda or propaganda”.
- **Trump.** In 2011, Graham described Donald Trump, who had expressed interest in the Republican nomination for the 2012 presidential election, as his [preferred](#) candidate. In November 2016, he [told](#) the Washington Post that God had played a role in Trump’s successful election campaign.

*(updated Feb 2020)*