

Tony Campolo to shutter his 40-year-old ministry

by [Sarah Pulliam Bailey](#) in the [February 19, 2014](#) issue

Tony Campolo, a progressive evangelical leader who counseled President Bill Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky scandal, has announced that the organization he founded nearly 40 years ago will close on June 30.

Campolo, 78, plans to retire with the closing of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education, but he will continue to write and speak, with nearly 200 engagements scheduled for 2014.

In his announcement January 14 he said his health is fine and he wants to write one more book on how Christianity fits with the social sciences.

By June, Campolo said, he anticipates there will be about \$300,000 left to distribute to the offshoot ministries started by the larger EAPE. The 22 ministries that were started under EAPE now operate independently and will continue, including Red Letter Christians, to which Campolo plans to devote most of his time.

Campolo, who ran for Congress in 1976 as a Democrat, considers himself to be theologically conservative but socially progressive. He is against legalized abortion and gay marriage while being progressive on issues related to poverty, race and American diplomacy.

While not embracing same-sex marriage, Campolo has said the two sides could find a détente if the government would “get out of the business of marrying people and, instead, only give legal status to civil unions.”

He still maintains his counselor relationship to Clinton, speaking with the former president about prayer and Bible study every couple of months. He said he is not in touch with the current Obama administration, despite being invited to an initial gathering of clergy. “To pastor one great leader in America at a time is enough for any person,” he said.

Several evangelical leaders, including Billy Graham, Oral Roberts and Jerry Falwell, have passed their ministries on to their children. But Campolo said that wouldn't be the case with his son, Bart, who left EAPE in 2011 to start his own urban ministry in Cincinnati. "My son made it clear to me that he didn't want to be responsible to carry on the old man's work. I think I can understand that," Campolo said. "My son's theology has drifted to the left, when EAPE is definitely evangelical."

Campolo and other progressive evangelicals, like Ron Sider and Jim Wallis, have taught evangelicals how to speak the language of social justice, said David Swartz, a history professor at Asbury University and author of the book *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism*. —RNS

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