

Trump's Spiritual Advisor, Paula White, Facilitates Unplanned Meeting with South Korean PM

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March 16, 2026

Paula White arranged 20-minute discussion on North Korea dialogue, religious concerns amid U.S.-Korea tensions

Published 2026.03.15. 08:31Updated 2026.03.16. 13:42



Pastor Paula White, called the 'spiritual mentor' of U.S. President Donald Trump. She currently serves as a senior advisor to the White House Office of Faith-based Initiatives. /AP-Yonhap

Prime Minister Kim Min-seok met with U.S. President Donald Trump for approximately 20 minutes at the White House in Washington, D.C., on the 13th, discussing topics including U.S.-North Korea dialogue. The unplanned meeting was arranged by Paula White, 60, a pastor referred to as Trump's "spiritual advisor." White, who became close to the Trump family after forming a relationship with Trump in the early 2000s, served as a senior advisor in the faith office established within the White House during Trump's second term. She briefed the president on various domestic and international issues beyond religion. Her influence is evident in her use of a conference room adjacent to the Oval Office.

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During a press briefing that day, Prime Minister Kim stated, "As our conversation extended beyond the nearly one-hour scheduled time, Pastor White seemed aware that President Trump had an important meeting that day. She checked the meeting status multiple times, going back and forth, and appeared to determine that it was necessary to arrange our meeting. She confirmed the timing after President Trump's meeting concluded and facilitated our discussion." White gained significant attention during Trump's first term by delivering the opening address as the first female clergy member at his inauguration. Their connection began when Trump, watching a TV broadcast in the early 2000s, saw White preaching and reached out. She is now widely regarded as Trump's "spiritual mentor." The Trump administration's second term includes numerous devout Christians, such as Vice President J.D. Vance.

White, a native of Mississippi, experienced a difficult childhood after her father made an extreme choice when she was 5 years old and her mother struggled with alcohol addiction. Married three times, she has

one son. She embraced Christianity in her late teens and began religious activities, later founding a church in Tampa, Florida, with her first husband, Randy White, in 1991. The church grew to host thousands of congregants. While actively preaching on television, she connected with Trump, who initiated contact. Today, she is reportedly close enough to oversee the Trump family's Sunday worship. White has served as a bridge between Trump and religious networks, representing white evangelical Christians - a voter group with the highest approval ratings for Trump. During Trump's first term, she advised the "Faith and Opportunity Initiative" and, in the second term, led the expanded faith office, promoting religious freedom in the U.S. and combating anti-Christian bias. A notable achievement was reviving the "Merry Christmas" greeting, which progressive governments had avoided due to perceived Christian bias.



In October 2024, Pastor Paula White and then-Republican presidential candidate U.S. President Donald Trump pray in Georgia. /AP-Yonhap

White has visited Korea multiple times and is known to have close ties with domestic religious figures, including Lee Young-hoon, senior pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church. Prime Minister Kim mentioned that the meeting with White was arranged through "help from the religious community and his own request." Prior to this visit, Lee traveled to Washington, D.C., earlier this month to attend events related to the "Korean War Veterans Korea-US Memorial Project," of which he is chairman. Last year, U.S. conservative figures, including Trump, raised specific concerns about Korea's religious situation - a deviation from previous protocols - and White is widely believed to have acted as a liaison between the U.S. and Korean religious communities.

During the meeting, White inquired about cases such as Pastor Son Hyun-bo of Segero Presbyterian Church, who was convicted in the first trial for violating election laws, and Han Hak-ja, a Unification Church leader accused of violating political funding laws. She asked, "What exactly are Korea's election laws, and which provisions were violated?" Prime Minister Kim noted, "I was aware of misunderstandings in U.S. political and diplomatic circles regarding alleged religious persecution or discriminatory treatment of conservative politicians and religious groups in Korea," adding, "The meeting was ultimately very helpful."