

American Renewal Project Continues Battle to Elect Faith Leaders at Grassroots Level

In April 2014, Jerry Falwell Jr. called me saying he was in a bind. Liberty University's graduation was scheduled for Saturday, May 10, and he needed a commencement speaker. "What about Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal?" I asked.

"You think he'll do it?" Falwell asked in return.

"I don't know his schedule, but if he's available, I expect that he will."

At the time, Jindal was considering running in the presidential election of 2016. The first four Republican presidential primary states then were Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada. With religious leaders and the possibility of the national press being present, accepting the invitation to speak at Liberty was a no-brainer for him. Once he was confirmed as commencement speaker, we invited Iowa and South Carolina pastors to Lynchburg, Virginia, for a Friday evening dinner with him before graduation on Saturday.

On Friday evening in Lynchburg, Liberty University sent a bus to transport the 40 Iowa and South Carolina pastors to the Jindal dinner. The last person to board was *Washington Post* reporter Tom Hamburger. I introduced Hamburger as he stepped up on the bus: "This is Tom Hamburger; he's a friend of mine, and Jewish. Tom doesn't throw bouquets, that's not his job, but he's honorable and here to do a story on Gov. Jindal. He'll be with us the next day and a half, and if you don't want to be quoted simply say so, and you won't be quoted."

Seven years later, on Oct. 25, 2021, when we had just finished a Statesville, North Carolina, pastors luncheon featuring Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, that same Tom Hamburger called to say he was connecting me to Whitney Shefte, a reporter also with *The Washington Post*. He said, “*The Washington Post* is really interested in what’s going on in North Carolina with the pastors events.”

That evening I spoke with Shefte, arranging a conference call with her and our team to further discern if a story was something we needed. Having been run over by the mass media before, I have learned that discretion is the better part of valor. Or as Frog Koger from West Texas once taught me, “There’s no education in the second kick of a mule.”

Our team decided we were dealing with people of character, so we went along with the plan. On Nov. 1, Shefte and Whitney Leaming filmed our Willow Springs, North Carolina, event, and on Nov. 29, they filmed our campaign school in Asheboro, North Carolina.

Last Tuesday, May 17, *The Washington Post* published Shefte and Leaming’s report featuring the North Carolina Renewal Project’s effort to move spiritual leaders into America’s public square in obedience to Jesus’ *ekklesia* kingdom assignment from Matthew 16:18.

Like Hamburger, the two Whitneys didn’t throw bouquets in their reporting but rendered a piece similar to what a healthy, independent press once delivered to the American public for centuries: just the news, no more, no less.

Last Thursday, Charisma News reported on the North Carolina pastors moving into the public square with the headline “50 Pastors Run for Local Office in North Carolina to ‘Restore Righteousness’ in Public Square”:

In 2020, Pastor Cameron McGill ran for Bladen County Commissioner and won. This year he’s running again,

unopposed.

Pastor McGill was recruited and trained by the American Renewal Project, a group that aims to “restore righteousness in the public square.”

David Lane, the group’s founder and president, says, “Our goal is really 20 pastors in 2022 running for local office. And we’re going to prove the model in North Carolina. According to Lane, McGill is one of 50 North Carolina pastors running for local office in 2022.

“There’s no such thing as the separation of church and state. The First Amendment is to keep the state out of the church,” says Lane. “My goal is to restore America to our Judeo-Christian heritage and reestablish a biblically based culture.”

To motivate pastors to run, Lane has enlisted North Carolina’s Lieutenant Governor, Mark Robinson. Robinson is known for calling it “filth” to teach homosexuality and transsexuality in schools. Some lawmakers on the Left have even called for his resignation. He responded, “I feel compelled to say that word, ‘filth,’ because we have a filth problem in this country right now.”

Lane believes the key to “restore righteousness in the public square” is winning local elections first. “We’re interested in the local races because that’s gonna be where the magic begins,” says Lane. “They don’t need to be running for Congress and governor and U.S. Senate. They need to start out [with] city council, county commissioner, school board if they’re going to be effective.”

When Pastor McGill traveled to Israel with the American Renewal Project, he was inspired to run for office, especially when he witnessed COVID culture and “just how fragile our freedoms have become.” Whenever he makes a decision, he says that he feels the weight of it. “I realize,

boy, when I make this move, there's 30,000 people that are going to pay the consequences for a bad decision and reap the benefits of a good decision," says McGill.

When Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson addressed the pastors at a recent meeting, he said, "It's time for us to start standing up like John the Baptist, ready to give our heads for the causes of this glorious freedom that God has given us." Then he asked, "You gonna join in the fight? Or you gonna sit in the foxhole shaking in your shoes?"

Gideons and Rahabs are beginning to stand. {eo}

David Lane is the founder of the American Renewal Project.

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.