

Why America's Culture War Isn't About Democrats and Republicans—It's Spiritual

In an opinion piece for First Things magazine, titled “The Billionaires Behind the LGBT Movement,” Jennifer Bilek writes:

Today's movement, however, looks nothing like that band of persecuted outcasts. The LGBT rights agenda – note the addition of 'T' – has become a powerful, aggressive force in American society. Its advocates stand at the top of media, academia, the professions, and, most important, Big Business and Big Philanthropy. Consider the following case. “Jon Stryker is the grandson of Homer Stryker, an orthopedic surgeon who founded the Stryker Corporation. Based in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the Stryker Corporation sold \$13.6 billion in surgical supplies and software in 2018. Jon, heir to the fortune, is gay. In 2000 he created the Arcus Foundation, a nonprofit serving the LGBT community, because of his own experience coming out as homosexual. Arcus has given more than \$58.4 million to programs and organizations doing LGBT-related work between 2007 and 2010 alone, making it one of the largest LGBT funders in the world. Stryker gave more than \$30 million to Arcus himself in that three-year period, through his stock in Stryker Medical Corporation.”

This once again makes it very clear that the war for the soul of America has nothing to do with Democrats and Republicans. The war is spiritual: “For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

Which brings us to 2020.

The American Renewal Project is uniquely positioned to accomplish a grand-scale social change through the political process. No one will believe that the kingdom of God is going to arrive on Air Force One.

The American Renewal Project model began with Texas Governor Rick Perry in 2005. Twenty thousand pastors, plus spouses, in 20 states, have been our guests at Pastors and Pews events, with accommodation overnight and all meals provided.

Pastors and Pews events are the transmission agent for voter registration, GOTV and voter guides through the leadership of local pastors. In 2014, a ground game component was added, which consists of knocking on doors of low-propensity evangelicals who have voted only once in the last three to four political cycles.

On Aug. 16, 2016, the American Renewal Project was generously awarded a \$9 million grant over a phone call, which led to Pastors and Pews events [voter registration, GOTV and voter guides] and ground game [knocking on doors of low-propensity evangelical voters] in six battleground states: Florida, Ohio, Missouri, North Carolina, Virginia and Iowa.

It is no coincidence that evangelicals were credited with being the key to winning the 2016 election.

Two independent, third-party evangelical studies were produced on the effectiveness of the effort by Professor Daron Shaw, Ph.D., from the University of Texas and FOX News election night statistical analyst:

1. In 2016, American Renewal Project increased Christian turnout by 5%-7% in six battleground states.
2. In 2018, American Renewal Project increased Christian turnout by 6% in three California congressional districts.

American Renewal Project is targeting 10 battleground states in 2020: Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Michigan, Georgia, Arizona and Iowa, requiring a budget of \$22 million.

In addition, American Renewal Project organizes a project called Issachar Training: the Men and Women of Issachar, which provides pastors and local leaders with the help and tools to run for political office.

The Issachar Training resulted in 200 pastors in 2016 and 300 pastors in 2018 running for local office (such as city council, school board, parks and recreation and so on). The goal for 2020 (and onward) is to have 1,000 pastors running for local office.

The significance of this is shown by the following: In 2018 six Missouri pastors ran for local office and five won. Three of the five were Southern Baptist Convention pastors—Doug Richie, Ken Wilson and Dirk Deaton—who ran for the Missouri House of Representatives. In 2019, they helped lead the Missouri state legislature to place restrictions on abortion.

Don Hinkle reported on the success in the May 2019 issue of The Pathway, the bi-weekly publication of the Missouri Baptist Convention.

The main point we want to make comes down to this: If 50 to 75 pastors of each of the 10 2020 battleground states were to run for local office in 2020, 2022 and 2024, an explosion of grassroots, precinct-level enthusiasm would occur as probably never seen before in American history. (My pastor and former Thousand Oaks Mayor Rob McCoy ran for California Assembly in 2014 and ended the campaign with 650 volunteers, who knocked on every door and called on every home in the district.)

Five hundred to 1,000 pastors running for local office in 2020, 2022, 2024 and 2026 would spur a national movement, a grand-scale social change, bringing about a full-impact

collision between the two rival religions in America of Christianity and secularism. Since each worldview is expansive and evangelistic, there will be no reconciliation of opposites with God; one will ultimately end in the eradication of the other.

The mobilization of pastors and congregants, along with pastors running for local office as well as the proper organization of the ground game, will very likely create an exodus from public education's secularized indoctrination institutions, triggering a third great awakening in America. A "healing of the land" initiated by a merciful and loving God.

All the same, the hardest thing to do is to effectively give away money. But if the expenditure of \$22 million could produce a national movement across the board, it would be well spent. As the only organization with two independent, third-party quantitative studies demonstrating its effectiveness, the American Renewal Project is uniquely positioned to accomplish such a grand-scale social change.

Calling on Gideons and Rahabs to stand. {eoa}

Author's Note: First Things is published by the Institute on Religion and Public Life, an interreligious, nonpartisan research and educational 501(c)(3) organization. The institute was founded in 1989 by Richard John Neuhaus and his colleagues to confront the ideology of secularism, which insists that the public square must be "naked," and that faith has no place in shaping the public conversation or in shaping public policy. The institute's mission is to articulate a governing consensus that supports, among others: a religiously pluralistic society that defends human dignity from conception to natural death, and a democratic, constitutionally ordered form of government supported by a religiously and morally serious culture.