

Lesbian Mayor Sees Rising Tide of Christian Backlash

Steve Riggle, the megachurch pastor who wrote a letter to Houston Mayor Annise Parker, is throwing some fuel on the fires of public backlash against the lesbian official.

Riggle sent a letter to Parker last month asking her to stand up for traditional marriage after she began referring to her homosexual partner as "First Lady." Local media jumped on the story and support for Riggle's stance is growing.

The Houston Area Pastor Council just launched a new website that aims to drive support for traditional marriage in the Texas state: . The site offers pastors, citizens and elected officials an opportunity to sign a declaration to support marriage between a man and a woman.

"This was never to garner any kind of publicity. It is about a deep conviction. I do realize that what I have done will cause some to question why and will also invite some criticism," says Riggle, senior pastor of Grace Community Church in Houston. "As for me, I cannot remain silent as a spiritual leader when our mayor is now publicly advocating in her position as mayor of Houston for what God clearly condemns."

Riggle sent a link to to his 15,000 church members asking them to sign the petition and to encourage family and friends in support of traditional marriage to sign it.

"The Houston area and our nation need to know how the people of the greater Houston area feel about how marriage is defined," Riggle says. "If we don't speak up, Mayor Parker has already and will continue to speak for us. I do not want her speaking for me when she advocates for what God has clearly spoken against."

Riggle is also asking his church to help him make viral. He would like to see hundreds of thousands of people from the Greater Houston area sign the petition, including 1,000 credentialed ministers and dozens of elected officials. That, he says, would make a massive statement regarding marriage in Houston.

“If we allow the political label to control whether we stand up for marriage, we have surrendered the moral high ground. If we will make a massive, collective statement, it could ignite a spreading movement all across the nation,” Riggle says. “For me, life has some showing up times when I must speak up and stand up as a leader so the people have someone to follow. This is one of those times.”