

Pastors, It's Up to You

If America is to experience a **Third Great Awakening**—which some evangelicals say is vital to the survival of our country—then local pastors must play a critical role in educating their congregations politically prior to the November general election, Vision of America Founder and President Rick Scarborough said Wednesday.

Scarborough, who has spent the past eight months touring the state of Florida and other parts of the country speaking to local pastors, told an audience of more than 50 pastors at Charisma Media's offices in Lake Mary, Fla., that it's their responsibility to get members of the their churches registered to vote and to instruct them to "vote their values."

"I say everywhere I go, 'As the church goes, so goes the nation.' In all honesty, as the pastor goes, so goes the church," Scarborough said. "We have really focused our energies on finding what I call the remnant of pastors who, like the sons of Isaachar, under the times and know what they should do.

"We've been trying to convince them that with a little cooperation among each other and with a little effort through their churches, they literally could be catalysts to launch this country back in the direction that our founders laid for us. Now that we're down to the last 40 days, we're really going to be concentrating on getting the vote out."

Voter registration deadlines vary from state to state, with most deadlines set for October. The deadline to register in Florida, which many consider to be a crucial swing state in winning the presidential election, is Oct. 9.

Scarborough and his organization are asking pastors to: 1) Preach at least one message between now and Election Day on why God's people should vote as followers of the Lord Jesus

Christ; 2) Participate in a statewide citizenship effort on either Sept. 30 or Oct. 7—or both—during which voter registration will be encouraged; 3) Encourage every member of their church to vote their values on Election Day; and 4) Lead their church fellowship to participate in 40 Days to Save America—a national call to **prayer**, fasting and repentance in the 40 days prior to the election.

During the past eight months, Vision America, along with the Florida Family Policy Council, has been educating pastors on their rights in the pulpit. John Stemberger, president of and general counsel for the Florida Family Policy Council, said there are many reasons why pastors have not encouraged their congregation to in active citizenship, policy advocacy and cultural engagement.

“First, there are theological and philosophical reasons; there is internal church politics, and there are legal reasons involving the IRS,” Stemberger said. “What churches can do without limitation is preaching, teaching, and/or studying any issue related to policy, politics and morality. You can also do unlimited voter registration drives; hand out voter guides contrasting issues; start a social issues committee; educate on viewpoints of candidates; have candidates appear at church services; and introduce candidates at church (as long as you give all candidates the same deference).

“What churches cannot do include endorsing or oppose candidates or a political party, make contributions to political candidates, use a church’s name to endorse candidates. Pastors, however, can do anything as private citizens. They are still a citizen of the United States and can fully engage the process in any way.”

Pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Yukon, Okla., and a candidate for state representative, Dan Fisher, challenged pastors to be bold in the pulpit. Fisher is the founder and leader of the Black Robed Regiment movement, a presentation he

has given across the country.

In his presentation, Fisher gives the history of American pastors during the Revolutionary War and shows how they were one of the primary forces in the fight for liberty.

"If it had not been for these preachers and their strong stand for liberty in the 18th century, the America we know today would probably not exist," Fisher said.

Fisher also quoted the late Baptist preacher Adrian Rogers, who said, "It is inconceivable that God would ordain government and then ask His people to stay out of it."

Vision America will hold two more events for pastors on Thursday in Melbourne and Merritt Island. Scarborough will then participate in America for Jesus in Philadelphia this weekend.

Scarborough said he isn't a Democrat or a Republican. He is a "Christocrat."

"I want to be quick to add that I don't think America's problems can be solved with political solutions," Scarborough said. "We simply want to equip people to vote knowledgeably. We've been working to get the vote out, and we're also calling the nation to prayer.

"My belief is that if enough people pray in earnest, reflecting 2 Chronicles 7:14—if they pray, cry out to God, repent and vote—then maybe, just maybe, God will be pleased to start that Third Great Awakening, apart from which America will not last."