

Pastors Pray with Iowa Lawmakers

A group of pastors from various denominations has formed a team to pray every day at the Iowa State Capitol. The group first meets at a nearby church to pray and discuss what the lawmakers will take up that week. Then they head over to the Capitol and start meeting with elected officials from both sides of the aisle.

This practice, known as the Church Ambassador Program, took shape after the 2012 election when Bob Vander Plaats, president of The Family Leader, saw a need for deep change. “We really did a gut check. We looked at ourselves in the mirror and said, ‘What is this all about?’” Vander Plaats recalls. “That’s when we said we need to authentically engage the church. We need to be about cultural transformation—and the only way we’re going to get cultural transformation is if we lead with the gospel.”

Pastor Trevor Pinneger has been praying at the Capitol for three years. “That’s my role here, is to come alongside to find out how we can pray for . . . people and how we can lift them up so that ultimately they realize that they matter, and that they matter to God [so] that they will do things with godly intent and godly wisdom.”

Lawmakers have expressed their appreciation for the prayer support. Rep. Ruth Ann Gaines, (D-District 32), told CBN News that the prayers of the pastors have helped with issues in her home life. And she says that has helped her to “carry those issues as I continue to work for my constituents.”

Sen. Craig Johnson, (R-District 32), echoes a similar sentiment. “Whether I get to see [the pastors] personally or whether they’re meeting with someone else, it’s always good to

see that moral support out there,” he says.

Greg Baker, who leads the pastors, has seen legislators change their stance after prayer. On a controversial issue regarding abortion, one legislator “completely turned 180 by relationships with pastors,” he says.

Baker maintains that the key to success is remaining nonpartisan. “Our end goal isn’t policy. It’s not favoring one person over the other. Our end goal is a relationship, and we’ll see where God allows that relationship to go,” explains Baker. “And it’s an intentional relationship, meaning there’s a gospel component to it.”

While hundreds of pastors from around Iowa are involved in the program, only a small group goes into the Capitol each day. The pastors are now regular fixtures in the Capitol, and in the four years of their visits, only five members have turned down the pastors’ offers to pray with them.

—Adapted from CBN News.