

# SOULS TO THE POLLS

[Souls to the Polls is a network of urban churches building a groundswell of voters in 2018.](#)

## Milwaukee pastors aim to get souls to the polls in midterm elections

[Rick Barrett](#), Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Published 1:50 p.m. CT Sept. 29, 2018 | Updated 2:02 p.m. CT Sept. 29, 2018



(Photo: Rick Barrett)

The Rev. Greg Lewis leaned into the microphone to deliver his message for one of Milwaukee's most troubled areas: the 53206 ZIP code.

Lewis, with St. Gabriel's Church of God in Christ, was speaking at a Souls to the Polls rally Saturday at Canaan Missionary Baptist Church, 2975 N. 11th St. His message: Get out and vote if you want change in an 80-square-block area on the city's north side that's been mired in crime and poverty. "Nothing is going to happen unless we go to the polls," Lewis said.

Lewis was one of a few dozen pastors and church-goers at the Souls to the Polls event where people went door-to-door urging residents to vote in the Nov. 6 midterm elections. "Our people must use their votes as a megaphone to call for jobs, health care, police accountability, safe streets and quality schools. As religious leaders, we can rebuild hope that voting makes a difference in who makes decisions that can help or hurt us," Lewis said.

Thousands of African-American voters in Milwaukee didn't cast ballots in the 2016 elections, Souls to the Polls organizers said. "Our community has been seriously damaged by decisions made in Madison and Washington. We are losing resources for critical services because our community is not a priority for many politicians," said Pastor Mose Fuller of St. Timothy's Baptist Church.

"In 2018, we are going to show political leaders that our voting block matters, and that we better be a priority in the future," he added. The Sundays of Oct. 28 and Nov. 4 are when black, church-going voters say they will flex their political muscle by casting early ballots. They intend to go to the polls, in droves, right after church service.

It's the only choice many people have to be recognized by politicians, according to Fuller. You don't need a lot of money to make a difference. You just have to get involved and do something," he said. It fits with the church's mission to bring about positive change, according to Lewis and Fuller. "The church is the only business that's still vibrant in our community," Lewis said of the 53206 ZIP code. "We should give people hope, vision, purpose, destiny. We should be a transforming force in people's lives," Fuller said.

Residents need to see the church working in the community, and not being separated from it, according to Lewis. "So many people think we really aren't concerned about things going on in the streets, but that's so far from the truth," he said.

The goal of Saturday's event was to knock on about 1,000 doors, helping people get registered to vote and urging them to cast their ballots in the midterms. If stronger participation in the primaries was an indication, the 53206 ZIP code is fired up about this election, according to Fuller. "They are not out of the game by any means," he said.