

**Statements on FAST Vision
for
Board Meeting – August 10, 2009**

Usually, when one of us stands up to talk about our Vision, he or she will make a reference to one of the traditional Scriptural quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures book of the prophet Micah or from the Gospel of Matthew. Tonight I'd like to begin talking about our Vision by referencing the late Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. He said:

"Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph."

Sometimes even those of us who are fully committed to working for justice can lose sight of WHY we do what we do. We look at charts and statistics and evaluate how our Nehemiah Assembly turnout was this year compared to last. Or we try to "one-up" another congregation on the amount of investments we've brought in during the investment drive. Or we review the accomplishments of FAST since its inception and we bask in the glow of those "wins". But while those activities might make us feel good about our efforts, that's not why we are joined together in FAST.

Pinellas County may not know it, but Pinellas County needs FAST! No matter who our elected and appointed officials are, no matter which political party wields the most power, the fact remains: injustice exists in Pinellas County, and as long as injustice exists, Pinellas County needs FAST!

We may rejoice over our accomplishments and they are proof that our work is effective; but our work is far from finished. Just this past month, our County Commission made it clear that they are unlikely to keep the commitment made at this past April's Nehemiah Assembly, in front of over 2,700 citizens, namely, to add an additional \$5 million to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund in this year's budget. Who will remind them of that commitment? Who will speak out to urge them

not to abandon their promises? Who will keep them accountable to the people of this county? And who will gather the people once again to confront the commissioners if they fail to keep their word? FAST will! And FAST must, because there is no one else in Pinellas County doing this work of justice!

So, rather than just look back at our accomplishments, we need to look forward. Have we really invited all the potential investors we know to make a financial commitment to FAST? Have we told and retold the information on our issues to ALL of the people in our congregations, our neighborhoods, our workplaces? Have all of our congregations turned out our average worship attendance at the Nehemiah Assembly? You and I know that those are the tasks we must do in order to build our power and to keep FAST a strong and productive organization.

So, yes, our Vision is based on God's requirements, as stated in Micah 6:8, and in Matthew 23:23 – 24. And our Vision is also based on the knowledge that

"...the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most...has made it possible for evil to triumph."

Injustice will not triumph in Pinellas County, and why? Because we "stand FAST together"!

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I think this is great! I think it would be great if you still talked about the vision of turning out our average worship attendance in order to build power. Fr. Tapp and Rev. Ward are really adamant about pushing clergy/congregations to better at working towards this. Like, a stronger theme for this year. ¶