

What Has FAST Accomplished?

Spring 2012

We come together annually in large public actions to encourage officials to implement solutions to community problems. We brought together 2850 people to stand together for the community. Some of FAST's most recent accomplishments are:

Education

- Got the director of the Pinellas Early Learning Coalition to provide funds so that all low-income children in Pinellas County can attend a full-day pre-k program, benefiting 5,700 four-year olds.
- Convinced the superintendent of Pinellas County Schools and the school board to implement a school-wide disciplinary program in all Pinellas County Schools

Affordable Housing

- We got Pinellas County to allocate **\$19.2 million into the affordable housing trust fund** creating **1469 new units**.

Drugs and Crime

- Worked with sister organizations to get a bill through the state legislature to expand access to drug courts, allowing 4,000 non-violent offenders to attend local drug treatment instead of going to prison. **Projected to save the state 95 million dollars in prison costs.**
- Got the Sheriff to commit to reinstating a comprehensive in-jail rehabilitation program. **A program that has historically brought the re-arrest rate down from 70% to 40%** and has saved half a million dollars.
- Through the FAST Hot Spots campaign, the local law enforcement of the County, Clearwater, and St. Petersburg have, in total, cleaned up over 60 hot spots of drugs and crime in our communities.

Jobs

- **Got St. Pete College to create a workforce-readiness certificate program** that will provide people with training in specific skills, to help job-seekers obtain entry-level positions in a variety of industries. In the first few months over 200 people have enrolled.

How Is FAST Funded?

Ongoing funds come from dues of member congregations and investments from individuals. It is our vision that each of our justice ministry network members will invest \$200 once a year to support our justice ministry. As we build our way towards self-sufficiency, our budget is supplemented by grants from foundations, religious institutions and local corporations.

Member Congregations

Rev. Donald Scott	Bayview Baptist
Rev. Manuel Sykes	Bethel Community Baptist
Msgr. Anton Dechering	Blessed Trinity Catholic, Co-Chair
Rev. James E. Byrd	Christ Church of Universal Love
Rev. Jim Rapp	Church of the Isles United
Rev. John Hiers	Church of Christ
Rev. Bob Schneider	Ascension Episcopal
Rev. Bragg Turner	Espiritu Santo Catholic
Rev. Robert Palin	Faith Memorial Missionary Baptist
Rev. Ron Kowalski	Faith United Church of Christ
Rev. John D'Antonio	Good Samaritan Episcopal
Rev. John Tapp	Holy Cross Catholic
Rev. Joe Diaz	Holy Family Catholic
	Holy Trinity Episcopal
	Hope Lutheran Church
Rev. Laurie Palmer	Lakeview Presbyterian
Rev. Vladimir Dziadek	Most Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church
Rev. Robert Ward	Mt. Moriah Missionary Baptist
Rev. William Sherman	Mt. Carmel Baptist
Rev. James V. Williams	Mt. Olive A.M.E.
Rev. Clark Hazley	Mt. Pilgrim Missionary Baptist
Rev. Clarence Williams	Mt. Zion A.M.E.
Rev. Lawrence Barriner	Mt. Zion United Methodist
Rev. Curtis Long	New Faith Free Methodist
Rev. LeRoy Howard	New Zion Missionary Baptist
Rev. Gary Dowsey	Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic
Rev. Mason Dorsey	Riviera United Methodist
Rev. Frank Peterman Jr.	Rock of Jesus Missionary Baptist Church
Rev. Willie McClendon Jr.	Shiloh Missionary Baptist
Msgr. Pat Irwin	St. Cecelia Catholic
Rev. Glad McCurtain	St. John's Episcopal Church
Rev. Fleming Tarver	St. John Missionary Baptist Church
Rev. John Gerth	St. Joseph Catholic Church
Rev. Benny Dyer	St. Mary Missionary Baptist Church
	St. Matthew Catholic Church
Rev. Pat Rebel	St. Michael Catholic Church
Rev. Theodore Costello	St. Michael Catholic Church
Imam Wilmore Sadiki	St. Petersburg Islamic Center
Rabbi Michael Torop	Temple Beth El
Msgr. Avelino Garcia	Transfiguration Catholic Church

Faith and Action for Strength Together



Isaiah 58:6

This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke;

Faith and Action for Strength Together (FAST) is a congregation-based community organization whose purpose is to train low- to moderate-income residents from diverse congregations to work together to identify root causes of community problems and take action on these problems. Through FAST, diverse people come together to powerfully address the needs in their own communities

Mailing address:

P.O. Box 10421

St. Petersburg, FL 33733

www.thedartcenter.org/FAST.html

Phone: 727-823-9197

Phone:

Lead Organizer, Haley Grossman
(727) 823-9197

Assc. Organizer, Claire Ellery
(727) 524-3303

Assc. Organizer, Lauren Bennett
(727) 823-9197

Assc. Organizer, Christina Chin
727-524-3303

Faith and Action for Strength Together

What is FAST's Vision?

The Biblical Basis for Our Vision

Micah 6:6-8 (NRSV)

⁶ "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" ⁸He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

The Lord requires us ***“to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God (faithfulness).” (Micah 6:8)***

- Our congregations do a good job of reminding us to be faithful: We gather at least 52 times a year to worship, and do other faithfulness ministries that encourage our “humble walk” with God
- Many of our congregations do a good job of showing mercy by providing services like tutoring to the victims of injustice.
- Unfortunately, our congregations don't “do justice” very well. Doing justice means holding systems accountable – such as making sure our school district gets all of our children reading on the same grade level.
- It takes a lot of “people-power” to hold the political and economic systems accountable for fairness in our communities.

FAST Vision continued

How do we “do justice”?

We learn from Nehemiah's calling of a great assembly of people to bring charges against the unfair money-lenders, how we can do justice successfully. (Nehemiah 5:1-13)

- While in Jerusalem, Nehemiah hears of the economic exploitation of the people by public officials – who charged unfair interest rates to make money off of the poor and vulnerable people of the land
- Nehemiah is a powerful man in his own right – a cupbearer to the King, but doesn't have enough power to confront the unjust economic system that is displacing people from their properties
- Nehemiah could have set up some mercy ministries, like clothes closets or food pantries, but decides instead to do justice by getting the money lenders to act fairly
- Nehemiah calls a “great assembly” and the whole community came out to confront the public officials demanding that the land, children, crops, and interest (money), be returned to the people immediately.
- The nobles and officials agreed, and did what they promised.

One congregation doesn't have enough people-power to hold the systems accountable for justice.

- Therefore, we build our power by joining up with congregations across the county, **bringing together thousands of people to a big Nehemiah Action to win needed changes**
- **FAST is a tool that allows our congregation to work with other congregations to effectively live out God's call to “do justice”**

FAST Vision continued

Our Congregations' Vision

Our congregations' vision is to work toward turning out our average worship attendance (AWA) once a year, to really “do justice” at that great Nehemiah Action!

- 52 times a year, our congregation comes together to worship, praise God, and deepen our “faithfulness” and our “humble walk” with God, so we can certainly turn out that same number of people at least once a year for justice.

The Tool to Reach Our Vision

- To reach that vision, we organize our people into **Justice Ministry Networks.**
- Justice Ministry Network members :
 - Bring 3 people with them to the Action in the Spring, and
 - Attend 3 other big assemblies during the year, which prepare us for action and build toward self-sufficiency.

Our “Big Holy Audacious Goal” (BHAG)

FAST congregations have a **Big Holy Audacious Goal of bringing together 10,000 people to the Nehemiah Action in the year 2020!**

Faith and Action for Strength Together

- We believe this is the kind of power we need to bring about serious changes in our community.
- Our congregation has set a goal of turning out _____ of those people in the year 2020.