

## FAST Annual Assembly Update

Holy Family's Justice Ministry had 79 Network Members present at the FAST Annual Assembly on October 28. Fr. John Tapp and Pastor Willie McClendon were installed as co-chairs, along with clergy and lay leaders from ten other congregations, as the Executive Board for the coming year. Sheriff Bob Gualtieri gave an update on the in-jail rehabilitation program we persuaded him to fund. In addition, he has begun two other programs for short term inmates. All three programs are thus far producing positive results and we will continue to monitor their results.

Network Members voted to address these issues in the 2013-2014 year:

- **Jobs** – the Jobs Committee will follow up on the recently-enacted Local Hiring Ordinance in St. Petersburg to ensure that the ordinance is implemented fully and that contractors are able to utilize local workers, especially non-violent ex-offenders.
- **Dental Care** – Dr. Damaraj of the Pinellas County Health Department has only done preliminary work on the number of dental services rendered in the county for those who have no dental insurance nor can pay full cost. Our Health Care Committee will work closely with Dr. Damaraj to encourage a speedy expansion of dental care for adults, as promised at the 2013 Nehemiah Action.
- **Education** – Two areas are slated for work by our Education Committee. We will continue to monitor the results of the four classrooms using Direct Instruction as a remedial/support for children who read below grade level, and will continue to encourage the Superintendent and the School Board to provide an adequate solution to the low reading scores in many of our public schools. In addition, it has been noted through our listening process that discipline problems have reappeared in many schools. Although the county implemented proven school-wide discipline programs in all county schools in 2006, after two years of FAST's urging, some schools have not chosen to continue training new personnel or to use the discipline programs throughout the school. We are committed to investigating and resolving this issue.
- **Housing** – the County Commission kept its word and designated \$5 million in the 2014 budget for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. FAST will monitor the use of these monies and verify that the next two years' budgets contain the remaining \$10 million designated for this fund.
- **Criminal Justice** – Network Members approved the Board's decision to engage with nine other DART justice organizations in the state of Florida to work on a specific issue of criminal justice on a statewide level between now and 2015. Preliminary work will begin in mid-November to narrow a specific issue upon which to concentrate our efforts.

This is an exciting time for our Justice Ministry, as we begin our research process. Keep the work of FAST and the Holy Family Justice Ministry in your prayers. For more information, contact Marty Brinsko (419-4419) or Stu Goldie (526-6816).