

State Capitol Auditorium
2nd FACE Housing Summit
December 2, 2006
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Good morning and aloha. We have just conducted a housing survey among those who are members of the temples and congregations belonging to FACE. The findings are revealing, but not unexpected. There are those who are secure in their housing. They have sufficient funds to pay for mortgages and repairs. At the same time, even in the congregation of which I am pastor, Church of the Crossroads, often referred to as a “middle class” church, there are some who are houseless and many others who are one pay check away from houselessness. By the way, those who are one paycheck away from houselessness include two of my own children, one who was forced to move to a smaller and less expensive rental unit because her rent was raised \$400.00 a month, and the other a daughter who lives with her husband and three children in the older rural part of Ewa (the little that is remaining of it), and who must travel up to an hour each way in order to get to her job in Waikiki.

The housing crisis on this island affects us all, if not personally, then simply because we understand ourselves to be one people, one *ohana*. In FACE, from our faith traditions, we also understand that it is our task to serve the common good, and that the common good includes the

right to affordable and adequate housing. Hear these words from the 65th chapter of the prophet Isaiah:

They shall build houses and inhabit them;
 they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
 They shall not build and another inhabit;
 they shall not plant and another eat;
 for like the days of a tree shall the days of
 my people be,
 and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of
 their hands.

They shall not labor in vain,
 or bear children for calamity;
 for they shall be offspring blessed by God
 and their descendants as well.

- Isaiah 65:21-23

The Common Good – these three words at one time meant something important and vital. Today, however, they are rarely used. The common good has been sacrificed to selfishness and private interest. Everyone, it seems, is now out for themselves. “Secure yourself,” our society says. “Let others be responsible for themselves.” “It’s up to them to make their own way in life.

The problem is that they have made their way to beaches to live in tents or to parking lots to live out of their cars. They have made their way to overcrowded apartments or to the home of one relative and then another.

A society that fails to acknowledge this intolerable state of affairs is a society that has not only forgotten the common good but a society that is at its very core, immoral.

In a democratic society, the government is that entity that exists to serve the common good. These days, in a time in which selfishness has replaced the common good, governments tend to be anti-government governments, that is, governments that refuse to do what they are called to do, and instead do all that they can to turn over their responsibility to others.

The government of our own city says that when it comes to affordable housing, it is the state that must respond, or the churches, or someone else. The evidence? Our government no longer has a Department of Housing. Imagine that. Affordable housing is perhaps the most crucial issue we face as an island people and there is no city housing department to respond.

We thank the city council members who are here. By their presence and their willingness to work with us, they are demonstrating their commitment to the common good. We are concerned that not all city council members who were invited to be with us have are in fact with us. Two members, Councilman De La Cruz and Councilwoman Kobayashi said they would be here but at the last moment have chosen to be elsewhere.

By contrast, Wallace Ching is here with us. He is the son of Clarence Ching who built Kukui Gardens and dedicated it to those who are in need of affordable housing. Wallace has publicly protested the plan of the Kukui Gardens Corporation to sell Kukui Gardens to the highest bidder without guaranteeing its continued affordability. Wallace has entered a struggle to keep his father's legacy alive. He knows all about the common good and is willing to stake his life and reputation on it.

It's all about accountability – our accountability to the common good of all and to one another – the accountability of public officials to us. We are, after all, the people. The government belongs to us. The government belongs to the houseless and those who are in need of affordable housing. The mayor is the mayor of the houseless. He is the only mayor they have. The city council is the council of the houseless. It is the only city council they have. The governor is the governor of the houseless. She is the only governor they have.

The common good, identified as the need for adequate and affordable housing, must bring us all together. We cannot say we are not involved, for from a moral and religious perspective, the good of the neighbor is our own good, and the need of the neighbor is our own need.

So let us go from this summit resolved to seek the common good, resolved to speak truth to power, resolved to put our faith into action. For that is who we are. We are members of Faith Action for Community Equity. Who are

we? We are members of Faith Action for Community Equity. Who are we? (now it's your turn) Response: We are members of Faith action for Community Equity.