

# *The Pastor's Pen*

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*To be the voice of justice for the Black church in America* is our vision for the next five years. Today we inaugurate that vision with the theme for this year being, *Understanding justice through the lens of Jesus*. Yes, our vision is ambitious, but as Jim Collins stated in his book **Good to Great**, goals should be big, hairy and audacious; in other words, goals should be intended to stretch people to reach beyond themselves and see the possibilities beyond recognized capabilities. When Dr. Gregory led Shiloh to build the first Family Life Center of any Black church in America, that was a big, hairy and audacious goal. After the fire of 1991, rebuilding in Washington, DC and creating a structure that was one of the most beautiful in our Nation's Capital was a big, hairy and audacious goal, but we embraced the challenge and the building stands as a monument to Shiloh's faith.

In the era of the Civil Rights struggle, we believed the racially-heated climate in America was improving, slowly but surely; however, as an African American congregation in an increasingly racist environment, we now face challenges in our communities we have not seen in many years, namely, gentrification and displacement. We are witnessing also the roll back of hard earned liberties, the unapologetic denigrations of our people in sundry ways, including the first African American president being subject to the ludicrous accusation that he was not born in this country and white supremacists like David Duke, former Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan, being courted by politicians. These are but three examples of why we have adopted a big, hairy and audacious vision of being the voice of justice for the Black church in America. For too long, Black churches have been lulled to sleep by a prosperity gospel that has preached that the Gospel teaches that faith in God is a ticket to a problem-free life. Nothing could be further from the truth. Going back to the beginnings of Christianity, believers saw their primary responsibility as tearing down kingdoms of evil and standing with the poor, the marginalized and the disenfranchised, in the name of justice.

Our theme for this year will be *Understanding justice through the lens of Jesus*. Starting October 12, for six Thursdays, I will be teaching about the Biblical principle of theological justice. We have every expectation that all officers and leaders of our congregation will attend these sessions. The classes will be delivered as webinars so those who, for work or other extenuating circumstances, will be able to still participate, and review the sessions later and as often as necessary. This is going to be an exciting year of discovering and planning! I look forward to seeing how our corporate and cooperative plans will reveal how we unpack and unveil our big, hairy and audacious theme through our ministries!