

THE GCC CONNECTOR

JUNE 2012

BUILDING CONNECTIONS. INFORMING OUR WORK.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY GCC!!!

It's been one year since our founding assembly. We've accomplished quite a bit, and we keep growing stronger!

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:

- Antioch Baptist Church
- Beth Israel- the West Temple
- Bethany Baptist Church
- Catholics for a Greater Cleveland
- Cleveland Jewish Federation
- Christ Episcopal Church
- Community of St. Peter's Cuyahoga Mission Area Council
- ELCA Gift of God
- ELCA Synod
- Elizabeth Baptist Church
- Euclid Ave. UCC
- Fairmount Presbyterian Church
- Fairmount Temple
- First Baptist Church
- First Unitarian
- Friendly Inn
- Islamic Center of Cleveland
- Jewish Secular Community
- Kol Halev
- Liberty Hill Baptist Church
- Mt. Zion UCC
- Olivet Institutional Baptist Church
- Park Synagogue
- Pilgrim UCC
- Progressive Action Council/ Caring Communities
- Shiloh Baptist Church
- St. James AME
- St. John AME
- St. Malachi
- St. Paul AME Church
- St. Paul Episcopal Church
- St. Paul UCC
- St. Thomas Episcopal Church
- Suburban Temple Kol Ami
- Temple Emanu El
- Tifereth Israel
- Trinity Cathedral
- UU Society of Cleveland
- West Shore UU

STRATEGY TEAM REPORT

GCC's strategy team, our governing board, voted unanimously this month to build our organizational power this summer and fall by implementing a non-partisan voter registration and mobilization initiative in neighborhoods around our congregations with histories of low voter participation. This effort may be tied to our work on behalf of a potential levy for CMSD – a decision that we will make after we have sufficient information from CMSD on the content of the levy and sufficient consultation with CMSD parents. This voter work will tie into all of our issue areas by enhancing our ability to negotiate for the types of positive change we want to see.

All voter work conducted under the auspices of GCC will be strictly non-partisan. We cannot and will not speak about any candidate or party on the ballot. We will keep the focus on issues and on the importance of voting to build community power for change. We will kick off this initiative at a Delegate Assembly on **Tuesday, July 10 at 7 pm** (location TBD). This Delegate Assembly will include a training on non-partisan voter registration, and we will lay out a series of opportunities for further training and action throughout the summer and fall. We will integrate this work with our existing organizing in schools and public housing that will continue to build a constituency for our issue priorities.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Greater Cleveland Congregations is a new coalition of religious congregations and community organizations who are working together to make our region a more just and prosperous place. If you are interested in supporting or joining Greater Cleveland Congregations, please contact us.



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GCC CORE TEAM SPOTLIGHT

Like we always say....all organizing is re-organizing! The core team at The Temple Tifereth Israel has embraced and practiced this motto for the past few months. First, the congregation listened to deep concerns from congregants regarding early childhood education and provided an excellent panel discussion for GCC members. Next, the group restructured their core team to work together collectively and not separately to enhance their internal communication. Now, the team has taken an additional step by reaching out to Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple to have a "Best Practices" conversation on core team development within GCC. Rabbi Caruso and Christine Weiss explained key strategies that worked best to engage their core team members and congregation. The meeting helped re-energize Tifereth's core team leaders and issues. The group committed to having more individual meetings with their congregants and others in GCC. Keep up the good work!



A spark has been ignited with many of our congregations, and among them is Olivet Institutional Baptist Church. Members of Olivet have been tutoring children in Bolton Elementary school and see GCC parent organizing as a way to build strong relationships with the parents and school. They are excited about being involved in direct action in their community. We are looking forward to great things coming from this new partnership!

ACTION TEAM UPDATES

EDUCATION TEAM:

Thank you to the hundreds of GCC leaders who wrote letters and made calls into Columbus in support of Mayor Jackson's education reform plan. We expect that legislation to pass within days. This is a huge victory for Cleveland students, but we have a lot more work to do.

GCC has established partnerships with seven CMSD schools to help organize School Parent Organizations, increase parental involvement, and build a city-wide parent voice for ongoing reform and accountability in the school system. The following schools are working with GCC so far: Anton Grdina Elementary, Bolton Elementary, Carl and Louis Stokes Elementary Academy, Case Elementary, Marion Sterling, Martin Luther King High, and Miles Park Elementary. If you would like to help out with the parent organizing effort or would like to facilitate an introduction to another school with which your congregation has a relationship, please contact **Khalilah (khalilah.worley@greaterclevelandcongregations.org)**. We are also continuing to look at ways GCC can work to expand access to early childhood education throughout Cuyahoga County. If you are interested in this issue, please contact **Rabbi Stacy Schlein: sschlein@titi.org**.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE TEAM:

The GCC Criminal Justice team is celebrating the passage of SB 337, state legislation that removes many significant barriers and collateral sanctions for ex-offenders seeking employment. Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple member Christine Weiss represented GCC in several meetings in Columbus advancing this bill, and Antioch Baptist Church member Bishara Addision played a key role in advocating for several important provisions through her work at Towards Employment. We are glad that the legislation was able to pass without much of a push, but there are several important issues in its implementation around which we may organize. The team is also looking at a variety of other issues related to re-entry and is in a process of discerning whether there is a viable campaign around the death penalty. Please contact Ari (ari.lipman@greaterclevelandcongregations.org) for information about upcoming meetings.

JOBS TEAM:

GCC's Jobs team is ready to launch our "Job Hunters" initiative. This is a group designed to tap the social capital, expertise, and job leads inside of GCC congregations to help job seekers find employment. The group is open to all who are seeking employment, no matter their stage in life. It will meet on Tuesdays at 7 pm and Thursdays at 8 am at Trinity Cathedral (2230 Euclid Ave.), starting on **June 26/28**. If you are interested in either attending as a job hunter or as a volunteer, please contact **Khalilah** (khalilah.worley@greaterclevelandcongregations.org). We will have a training for volunteers on **Tuesday, June 19, 7 pm at Antioch Baptist Church**.

HEALTH CARE TEAM:

The Health Care team is continuing to engage members of our congregations who have contact with the mental health system in Cuyahoga County. We are working towards a research panel on this subject towards the end of July. Please contact Ari (ari.lipman@greaterclevelandcongregations.org) for information about upcoming meetings.

GCC LEADER SPOTLIGHT



Michael Fordham is a member of Bethany Baptist Church and the Family Involvement Administrator at West Side Ecumenical Ministry. Michael has a strong passion for education and also has strong connections in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. For many years Michael served as a Parent/Family Liaison for several Cleveland schools in various communities. Although he no longer works for the district, he is still involved with many of the schools he previously worked with. Recently, Michael gave the keynote address at Michael R. White Elementary, one of his former schools. Parents, staff and the principal at Michael R. White thanked Michael for his continuous dedication to their school. Michael is currently working with Greater Cleveland Congregations to increase our relationship with schools and parents in CMSD. His vision is to see more parents actively working together to truly make a change in education.

PARENT ORGANIZING

On May 23rd parents from Bolton Elementary had their first house meeting with Greater Cleveland Congregations. Bolton Elementary is one of seven schools currently partnering with Greater Cleveland Congregations on parent organizing and engagement. Principal Sandra Brinson welcomed the meeting and looks forward to increasing parent engagement for the next school year. The School Parent Organization's president, Antoinette Carroll reached out to parents as the first step to build support and leadership. One of the group's major concerns was the decline in parent participation. They agreed to work over the summer to meet parents one-on-one to increase participation and relationships. On June 13th the group will have their first individual meeting training. We are excited about this partnership and the great work and commitment of these parents!



GCC WELCOMES OUR NEW MEMBERS!
Community of St. Peter's
Progressive Action Council/Caring Communities
Jewish Secular Community

