GCC Listening Sessions Analysis

Engage GCC

October 23, 2025

GREATER CLEVELAND CONGREGATIONS

Listening Sessions Analysis
This Month Vs Last Month's EngageGCC

- **Last Month: A preview of the analysis of GCC's Listening Sessions was presented**

- **This Month: A more detailed analysis of GCC's Listening sessions is presented**

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GCC's Organizing Model Transforms Broad, Urgent Problems into Specific, Winnable Issues

- **Identify a Problem (Focus Area)**
- **Cut an Issue**
- **Develop a Campaign**

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Examples of Problems GCC Identified in the Past

- Jails overcrowded with inmates with mental health or addiction issues
- During pandemic, lack of access to testing and vaccines in urban areas
- Cuyahoga County sends more youth to adult prisons than the next four largest Ohio counties combined
- People are registered but not voting, signaling people do not believe voting makes a difference

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GCC Needs to Identify the Next Urgent Problem to Address

- The GCC Listening Sessions were designed to identify the next urgent problem
- Purpose was to draw from the lived experiences of our congregations (ground-up approach)

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GCC Designed a Questionnaire in March 2025 for Listening Sessions

- 17 congregations participated (almost half of GCC's congregations)
- Many used the GCC questionnaire
- Some had already conducted listening sessions in the past year
- Some used their own questionnaire template
- All had the common purpose of identifying an urgent problem

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Comments/Caveats

- **Listening Sessions were designed to identify a Problem – not dig deep on a specific Problem (e.g., Criminal Justice House Meetings in 2021).**
- **Listening Sessions are now 7 months in the past, and the environment is changing fast.**
- **GCC admits challenges this year have delayed leveraging the Listening Sessions.**
- **However, GCC believes Problems are enduring - there is opportunity to use the Listening Sessions to identify the next Problem or two that GCC addresses.**

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“Black” vs “White” Congregations Who Did the Listening Sessions

- GCC congregations who participated are classified as “Black” or “white”. “Black” means most of a congregation’s members are Black. “White” means most of a congregation’s members are white.

- 5 of the 17 congregations are Black and 12 are white. This mix of Black and white congregations is a good representation of all the GCC congregations.

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The Black congregations in alphabetical order are:

	Congregation	# Participating	Location
1)	Antioch Baptist Church	Not reported	City
2)	Imani United Church of Christ	54	Inner Ring Suburb
3)	Lee Heights Community Church	16	City
4)	Olivet Institutional Baptist Church	Not reported	City
5)	St John's AME	Not reported	City

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The white congregations in alphabetical order are:

Congregation	# Participating	Location
1) Beth El The Heights Synagogue	35	Inner Ring Suburb
2) B'nai Jeshurun Congregation	8	Outer Ring Suburb
3) Forest Hill Church, Presbyterian	15	Inner Ring Suburb
4) Kol HaLev, Reconstructionist	20	Outer Ring Suburb
5) Middleburg Heights Community Church	13	Outer Ring Suburb
6) Mishkan Or	75	Outer Ring Suburb
7) National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)	8	Outer Ring Suburb
8) Southwest Unitarian Universalist Church	16	Outer Ring Suburb
9) St. Paul's Episcopal Church	12	Inner Ring Suburb
10) Trinity Cathedral Episcopal Church	88	City
11) Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Cleveland	21	Inner Ring Suburb
12) West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church	21	Outer Ring Suburb

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Focus Areas Mentioned by Both Black and White Congregations

Congregations: T=Total; W=White; B=Black	T	W	B
Housing (affordability, homelessness, property taxes, gentrification)	12	7	5
Education (better schools, improve literacy, end vouchers)	9	6	3
Healthcare/Medicaid (access to healthcare, Medicaid budget cuts)	9	6	3
Outlets for Youth (youth activities, youth voting, mentors)	7	3	4
Seniors Services/Challenges (activities, aging in place, isolation)	7	4	3
Public Safety (police, security)	6	3	3

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Focus Areas Mentioned Totally or Mostly by White Congregations

Congregations: T=Total; W=White; B=Black	T	W	B
Food Insecurity	8	8	0
Voting (access, restrictions, get out the vote, anti-gerrymandering)	7	6	1
Environment (green space, bike lanes, composting, parks)	6	6	0
Help Poor with Services (apply for aid, jobs, resources)	5	4	1
Civic Actions (townhalls/protests/letters to politicians)	5	4	1
Immigration (refugees, asylum, rights)	5	4	1
Civil Discourse (civil discussions in public spaces)	5	5	0
LGBTQ Rights	5	5	0

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Conclusions

- **Criminal Justice areas are not ranked high by Black or white congregations, except for Public Safety. Perhaps the reason that criminal justice areas are not ranked high is because GCC is already addressing these areas.**

- **One area GCC is not addressing now - but has in the past - is Education.**

- **Most other top areas mentioned are being targeted by GCC. These areas are Housing, Healthcare, and Youth.**

- **An area that GCC is focusing on that is not mentioned much by Black congregations - is Voting. We may need to revisit our approach here.**

- **A few areas are only mentioned by white congregations (Food Insecurity, Environment, Civil Discussions, and LGBTQ rights).**

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Next Steps

- GCC will take this feedback from the Listening Sessions as input into identifying its next 1 or 2 Focus Areas.
- Future Listening Sessions may follow to add depth.
- From there GCC will cut an Issue
- Then GCC will develop the next 1 or 2 Campaigns.