

# **METROPOLITAN AREA RELIGIOUS COALITION OF CINCINNATI DIRECTOR'S REPORT on 2004 in 2005**

## **I. JUDICATORIES' SHARED PLANNING CONFERENCE: *for 2004***

MARCC often ends up doing things differently than we had intended, but it still helps -- in order to understand what we did in 2004 -- to go back and remember what we stared out to do in 2004.

JUDICATORIES SHARED PLANNING CONFERENCE (13 November 2003), hosted by Montgomery Community Baptist Church, considered six possible priority concerns and agreed to work together in 2004 on Affordable Housing and Police/Community Relations.

## **II. JUDICATORIES WORKED TOGETHER: in 2004**

For the Judicatories who work together through MARCC to shape social policy decisions in metropolitan Cincinnati, it has been an eventful year.

#1 AFFORDABLE HOUSING was a new priority Concern for 2004. ("Affordable Housing" -- based on the understanding that no one should have to pay more than 30% of their income for decent housing -- has become a more useful term than the loaded language of "low-income housing.")

- The people who participated in the Affordable housing concern group at Planning Conference continued to meet afterwards as MARCC's Affordable Housing Task Force, and decided what MARCC needed to learn, who we needed to learn from (at Delegates Council and Executive Board), and what MARCC could do this year.
- The Task Force met with other concerned groups and helped organize & incorporate them together into AHA (Affordable Housing Advocates).
- Working with AHA, MARCC was able to get the City to commit to more Affordable Housing in their federally-required 5-year Comprehensive Plan.
- Working with AHA, MARCC also helped the City and CMHA (successfully), and the county (unsuccessfully), adopt the Housing Advisory Committee report that they developed jointly, coming out of the English Woods impasse, as ways they could work together to increase & improve Affordable Housing.
- MARCC has continued to follow closely the City's efforts to respond creatively with the \$3.95-million HUD has ordered the City to repay for failing to keep affordable housing in Huntington Meadows for the required five years.
- When the Mayor & City Manager removed the 1.5% (\$4.8-million) of the 2005 City Budget usually committed to Human Services, MARCC and many other organizations convinced City Council to restore almost half of the funds. MARCC and other organizations are continuing, through "The 1.5% Coalition", to seek ways to restore the Human Services funding and process.

#2 COMMUNITY/POLICE RELATIONS continued as one of MARCC's two priority concerns for the fourth year since the 2000 Planning Conference made it a top concern for 2001.

- Collaborative/DOJ (United States Department of Justice) Agreements. MARCC has continued to support & interpret these as the last, best hope for improving community/police relations in Cincinnati. We have
  - heard from the attorneys and the Independent Monitor,
  - mailed out the Independent Monitor's quarterly Reports,
  - mailed out information about Cincinnati Police Training Center's training events for neighborhood CPOP (Community Problem Oriented Policing) teams,
  - encouraged the Mayor to continue the DOJ Memorandum of Agreement,
  - followed closely the Plaintiff's and Monitor's complaints leading to the Conciliator's ruling that the City has materially Breached the Collaborative Agreement, and encouraged the City to accept this ruling. (Executive Board will continue to stay with this.)
- Police Recruiting & Selection Group. For three years MARCC has convened a group of City Departments (Police, Human Resources, & law) and concerned group to improve the City's recruiting & selection process and increase Black, women, and socially-concerned Police Officers. During that time we have gotten a full-time Recruiting Unit, multiple Written exams, a television recruiting ad, and helped the City continue to find ways to meet Consent Decree goals. We have now postponed further meetings of this Group until January 2006.
- MARCC has gotten the City to conduct a national search for civilian Police Training Academy Director ("Manager".)

PUBLIC EDUCATION. Coming out of our efforts to help pass a 2002 and 2003 Cincinnati School Bond Issue, in which we pointed out the opportunity to increase Black & women contractors & workers, MARCC was concerned about some Board members, the business community, and some clergy groups opposing Cincinnati's badly-needed 2004 School Renewal Levy. MARCC

- met intensively with individual Board members and business leaders to find common ground for putting the Renewal on the November 2004 ballot.
- explained the need for a Renewal levy many in meetings & mailings,
- met intensively with clergy and Board leaders, and almost got agreement for additional Construction Supplier Diversity Staff to increase & improve Black & women contractors & workers.
- in October, Judicatories could not achieve consensus, but CPS's Renewal Levy passed in November. MARCC Executive Board will continue to press for needed Construction Supplier Diversity Staff.
- remembering how our 2003 Annual Meeting met in the old Rockdale Academy, we decided to go back to the new Rockdale Academy for our 2005 Annual Meeting.

HUMAN RIGHTS. MARCC knew that Judicatories could not agree whether to repeal the Cincinnati City Charter provision that has prohibited City Council from passing any ordinance to protect gay & lesbian Cincinnatians. In the past few years, MARCC newsletters have pointed out that most of the National Denominations of which our member judicatories are a part

- have problems with marriage or ordination of their gay & lesbian members, but
- are very clear about protecting the basic human rights of gay & lesbian citizens.

In October our Judicatories could not achieve consensus, but in November Cincinnati voters passed Issue 3, which returns Cincinnati to the earlier, non-protective, status quo.

**III.**  
**ANNUAL MEETING: in 2004**

At MARCC 36<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION (5 February 2004) in the Provincial House of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, representatives of our 16 member Judicatories heard the City Manager on the City's commitment to the Collaborative Agreements, shared at table, received reports, adopted a budget, and elected officers for 2004.

President	Mr. William Woods (Diocese of Southern Ohio)
Vice President	Mr. Anees Fardàn (Islamic Center)
Vice President	Ms. Arlene Katz (JCRC)
Secretary	Bishop Maurice Jackson (IMA)
Treasurer	Mr. Alan Chandler (Miami Association)

**IV.**  
**DELEGATES COUNCIL: in 2004**

Judicatories sent Delegations to our monthly DELEGATES COUNCIL, who

- learn (about Concerns on which they may need to vote), and
- vote (as a Delegation) on major involvements (by consensus).

Delegates Council met 12 times in 2004 (including the MARCC Annual Meeting and Judicatories' Shared Planning Conference, which replace the February and November Delegates Council meetings.)

January	Community/Police Relations	July	Affordable Housing
February	ANNUAL MEETING	August	Community/Police Relations
March	Community/Police Relations	September	Public Education & Jobs
April	Affordable Housing	October	Public Education, Human Rights
May	Public Education & Jobs	November	PLANNING CONFERENCE
June	Affordable Housing	December	Public Education

**V.**  
**EXECUTIVE BOARD: in 2004**

Judicatories each sent a representative to a weekly meeting in which they and MARCC's elected officers

- (together) advise & oversee staff, learn from outside leaders, shape recommendations to Delegates Council, and decide how to act on agreed-upon Concerns, and
- (individually) bring advice from their Judicatories, take information to their Judicatories and recruit for Coalition meetings.

Tight (1-hour), weekly EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS (45 in 2004) enable MARCC to learn ahead of time, make needed decisions quickly, and maintain Judicatory accountability. Surprisingly, they are often fun, too.

**VI.**  
**JUDICATORIES SHARED PLANNING CONFERENCE: in 2004, for 2005**

Judicatories sent Delegations to their Shared Planning Conference (11 November 2004) hosted on a cold, rainy night by a warm & dry First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati. Judicatories considered five possible Concerns, and agreed that their priority Concerns for 2005 would be

- YOUTH and VIOLENCE (new, a continuation, from another perspective, of Community/Police Relations), and
- AFFORDABLE HOUSING (a continuation of last year's Concern)

MARCC's Affordable Housing Task Force, having accomplished a lot in the year when the City had to submit its 5-year Comprehensive Plan. Based on their experience, a Youth and Violence Task Force has formed to decide what MARCC needs to learn, who we can best learn from, and what we could do in 2005. These Task Forces have proved a helpful innovation and return to MARCC's beginnings.

**VII.**  
**MARCC NOMINATING COMMITTEE: for 2005**

Judicatories each sent a representative to the MARCC NOMINATING COMMITTEE for 2005 (8 December 2004), who

- (each) reported who will represent their Judicatory on MARCC's Executive Board in 2005, and
- (together) nominated a slate of Officers to serve in 2005.

MARCC's Nominating Committee for 2005 included Archdiocese (Connie Widmer & Tony Stieritz), Cincinnati Conference ELCA (Natalie Morton), Islamic Center (Asad Sulaimaan), Diocese of Southern Ohio (Marilyn Logan), Disciples (Heather Schimmel), IMA (Dwight Wilkins), Friends (Frank Huss), and SWONEKY Division (Kellus Vanover). Their Chair (MARCC Past President James Salinger) will report to MARCC's 8 February 2005 Annual Meeting.

**VIII.**  
**OTHER MEETINGS**

In our 24<sup>th</sup> annual NEW CLERGY ORIENTATION (which we began with Danny Ransohoff) MARCC introduced to clergy who had come during the past year to the metropolitan Cincinnati in which they had come to serve, through

- a van tour of geographical & historical sites that have shaped Cincinnati (29 September 2004), and
- discussions with political & institution leader who will be shaping Cincinnati (6 October 2004).

MARCC continues to convene other information-swapping, non-decision-making meetings of concerned leaders

- JUDICATORY STAFF (monthly)
- DOWNTOWN CLERGY (three times a year)
- JUDICATORY LEADERS (twice a month)

In 2004, along with our work on our two priority Concerns, MARCC

- interpreted the wider community and its institutions to member Judicatories and their congregations,
- sent newsletters & information about our shared concerns to member Judicatories and their congregations
- interpreted the religious community, its Judicatories and their concerns, to other civic institutions,
- convened and attended meetings with other community groups & leaders who shared our 2004 Concerns,
- provided mailing lists & labels to non-profit, other groups who want to communicate to our member Judicatories and their congregations,
- and hopefully, while we were working on all of the above, helped to raise the level of civic discourse in metropolitan Cincinnati.

## **IX. IN CONCLUSION**

Years of experience, relationships, and communication have increased MARCC's opportunities to influence community decisionmaking.

2004 has been an intense and tantalizing year, and we have made a difference. But the price we have paid for more opportunities for doing good has been our neglect of the Judicatory representation & funding that make it possible for a Coalition of Judicatories to continue to serve God's metropolis.

In 2005, MARCC will need to do less work out there in the short-term, in order to do more rebuilding in here for the long haul.

-- Duane Holm  
January 2005