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By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

The Greater Cleveland Congregations (GCC) held its inaugural Founding Assembly on Monday, June 6, at the Masonic Temple located at 3615 Euclid Avenue.

Over two thousand people of all faiths came together to be a part of history.

The co-chairs for the event were the Rev. Jawanza Colvin, Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, Rev. Tracey Lind, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral and Rabbi Joshua Caruso,
Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple
. Music was provided by the Olivet Institutional Mass Choir who filled the stage, dressed in all black.

Nearly 40 synagogues, churches and mosques have joined in a coalition to form GCC . The mission of GCC is to work together to build power for social justice. GCC unites people across lines of race, class, religion and geography to promote public, private and civic-sector actions to strengthen and improve the quality of life of the Greater Cleveland community.

Rabbi Sharon Marcus from Park Synagogue, Pres. Shehadeh Adelkarim of the Islamic Center of Cleveland, and Rev. Gerald Cooper of the St. James A.M.E. Church gave the invocation.

Rev. Lind told why everyone was assembled, giving the point of time for a change. “Tonight, we come together as people of faith to share our
vision of a Greater Cleveland,” she told the crowd.

Rev. Lisa Hackney of St. Paul's Episcopal Church and Rev. Wayne Arnason from West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church called for the church representativesrs to come forth and share their church commitment to bring individuals to this historic event.

The attendees per church ranged from 2 members to over 400 members that the Olivet Institutional Baptist Church proudly praised God for.

During the event, various speakers like Cleveland Mayor Frank G. Jackson and Cuyahoga County Executive Ed FitzGerald made public commitment’s to be a prophetic civic-sector voice for achieving a more just, prosperous and peaceful community for all our citizens.

Jackson in his remarks said he was impressed by the coming together of so many diverse people, suburbanites, urbanites, Christians, Muslims and Jews and their willingness to roll up their sleeves for the good of the greater community.

“It is our intention to organize and campaign for good jobs, accessibility to health care, safe and productive schools for our children, just and fair treatment in our courts, prisons and re-entry programs, and a community taking immediate steps to alleviate hunger and improve our environment,” said Colvin.

The assembly was also seen as an invitation for congregations in the region to join GCC in their efforts. GCC extended an appeal to every community of faith sharing their belief to stand and work together in solidarity across the lines of differences that have historically kept us divided.

The Call to Action came from Rev. Colvin, “It’s time to strike another blow.”

He also addressed the audience by saying, “GCC, it’s time to strike another blow for every senior and churches assembled here tonight.”

Colvin brought a great round of applauds by talking about their labor is not in vain. “It’s time to strike another blow, a blow for freedom, opportunity and democracy. Knowing that it takes more than one blow to make a difference,” Colvin added.

The coalition has been meeting in large and small groups and organizing committees to gauge the most pressing problems in the community. GCC plans to initially focus on strategies to address five areas of concern: health care, education, jobs, criminal justice/re entry and sustainable food. The Rev. Otis Moss Jr., Olivet's pastor emeritus and Rabbi Richard Block, The Temple Tifereth Israel ended the assembly with prayer.

Issue Action Team Meetings will be held in June and Organizing Orientation Workshops will take place in July.

The churches involved are:

Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple

Antioch Baptist Church

Beth Israel - The West Temple

Bethany Baptist Church

Breakthrough Schools

Catholics for a Greater Cleveland

Christ Episcopal Church

ELCA Gift of God

ELCA North East Ohio Synod

Elizabeth Baptist Church

Cuyahoga Mission Area Council

Fairmount Presbyterian Church

First Baptist Church

First Unitarian Church

Friendly Inn

Hope Lutheran Church

Islamic Center of Cleveland

Kol Halev

Liberty Hill Baptist Church

Mt. Zion Congregational Church

Neighborhood Recovery Project

Olivet Institutional Baptist Church

Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church

Park Synagogue

Quinn Chapel AME Church

Shiloh Baptist Church

St. James AME Church

St. John AME Church

St. Paul AME Church

St. Paul Congregational Church

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

Suburban Temple Kol Ami

The Temple Tifereth Israel

Trinity Episcopal Cathedral

Unitarian Universalist Society of Cleveland

West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church