

2015: YEAR IN REVIEW

COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO



CRLMC SPONSORED EVENTS

- **SELMA @ PICKWICK THEATER, March 12, 2015** - During the 50th anniversary of the historic "Bloody Sunday," in which men and women attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery on behalf of Voting Rights, the Council invited guests to view the movie SELMA and meet some first-hand witnesses of the event. The viewing took place at the beautiful Pickwick Theater, Park Ridge.
- **END OF LIFE INTERFAITH DISCUSSION, March 19, 2015** - Life Matters Media and the Council teamed up to host an Interfaith discussion of religious and moral principles regarding end of life from six different faith traditions. The event was hosted by Northwestern University.
- **INTERRELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP AWARDS, June 11, 2015** - The second annual Interreligious Leadership Awards this year honored four individuals: Talat Othman, Pastor Chris Harris, Rabbi Michael Seigel, and Father John Kalomas representing the Greek Orthodox community of St. Andrew's. These awards are a way for the Council, which this year celebrated its 30th anniversary of work and presence in Illinois, to recognize and give thanks for particular individuals, programs, or organizations that embody the Council's own purpose of promoting religious harmony for the sake of the common good. Cook County's Board President Toni Preckwinkle and Cook County's State's Attorney Anita Alvarez were present at the celebration, among others.
- **PRAYERS FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION, July 31, 2015** - The Council hosted another "Prayers for Peace" service in Daley Plaza. With all of the violence and tragedy in our world, the service was an opportunity for people of all faith communities to come together and offer up prayers for greater peace and love in our world. Especially moving was the presence of young people of different faith traditions.
- **FESTIVAL OF FAITHS, September 20, 2015** - The Council held a "Celebration of the New Year – A Festival of Faiths." The event highlighted how different faith communities celebrate the New Year. Six faith communities (Buddhism, Catholic Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Orthodox Christianity and Zoroastrianism) explained their celebration and provided music that reflected their observance. First copies of the 2016 InterFaith Calendar were available at the event.
- **INTERFAITH THANKSGIVING SERVICE, November 25, 2015** - Like every year, members of many different faith communities will gather at the Chicago Temple to give thanks in their different traditions. Donations collected will be used to buy holiday meals to those in need.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

- **Thank you to** our Treasurer Gary Blakely and Fiscal Officer Joyce O'Connor who have kept up with the increased Council activities.
- **Thank you to** former intern Sean Ruane who helped the Council be actively present in social media.
- **Welcome** to our new intern Bob Seiberlich.
- **The communications firm of Kurth Lampe** continues to assist us in the marketing of the InterFaith Calendar.
- **The Membership Committee** is working on reactivating current and former members, while recommending a few new ones.
- **The InterFaith Calendar was made available in mid September. A digital edition** is being planned for 2017 thanks to the generous help from the Greek Orthodox Metropolis.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

- **VIOLENCE AND GUN CONTROL** – Given the almost 20% increase in homicide and shootings, each CRLMC member increased their community outreach and educational efforts to their congregations. Working closely with the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence (ICHV) we monitor pending legislation at the Illinois General Assembly and pass it on to our members for their information and action.
- **STATE BUDGET CRISIS** - Religious communities are being increasingly turned to for all types of economic and human services. Those most affected by the continuing State of Illinois Budget Crisis are the most vulnerable citizens of our state. The Council wrote a letter to the Governor and State Legislators, begging them to not let their differences in political and economic values excuse or justify their obligations as elected leaders. We have asked our membership to be in touch with their legislators to ask them to please solve this issue.
- **CHICAGO SUSTAINABILITY INTERFAITH PARTNERSHIP (CSIP)** - Building on the water fee exemption for religious institutions and other not-profits, CSIP is designed to assist faith-based organizations to save resources and money through energy conservation by reducing consumption of gas, electricity and water and is collaborating with the Council in reaching the affected communities.
- **CHICAGO COMMUNITY TRUST'S ON THE TABLE** - Community wide conversations were held over a meal on Tuesday, May 12, 2015 to discuss ways to make our neighborhoods, suburbs, metropolitan area stronger, safer and more dynamic.
- **ORAL HISTORY: FAITH ACTIVISTS AT THE 1968 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION** - Partnering with Columbia College Chicago Oral History Department, CRLMC staff identified 10 religiously motivated activists who took part in protest activities surrounding the Convention. The interviews were held in April 2015 and included three Council members. Stan Davis was also part of a panel at the International Oral History Association's Annual meeting in Tampa, Florida. You can listen to the interviews at: <http://digitalcommons.colum.edu/chicago1968>
- **IOCC BOOK DISTRIBUTION** - Once again, the International Orthodox Christian Charities and the Council of Religious Leaders co-sponsored a distribution of 3,000 to 5,000 brand new text books to school children of religious schools, charter schools, tutoring programs and after school programs at the Romanian Orthodox Cathedral during the month of August.

GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Staff and members are involved with the following public sector advisory groups:

- **CITY OF CHICAGO MAYOR'S OFFICE** - The CRLMC regularly receives information and notifications and attends meetings as requested. The information is then passed on to our members.
- **COOK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (DHSEM)**
- **COOK COUNTY SHERIFF'S ADVISORY COUNCIL**
- **COOK COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY ADVISORY COUNCIL**

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Former Council member Francis Cardinal George died on April 17. He was an active member of the Council and he was devoted to interreligious cooperation to serve the greater good of our community. He received the first Interreligious Leadership Award in 2014. He will be greatly missed.

A special thank you goes to the 2014-2015 Council Officers whose term is now coming to an end: President Rabbi **Michael Balinsky**, Vice President Bishop **Wayne Miller**, Treasurer Mr. **Gary Blakely** and Secretary Mr. **E. Garnet Fay**. They have served the Council with passion and dedication. New Officers will be elected at the November Annual Retreat.

Thank you also to long-time members and friends who are leaving the Council: Bob Reynolds who is retiring as Executive Presbyter and who served the Council as Treasurer for six years; **Gary Blakely** who was the President, Chicago Illinois Stake in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and has now been reassigned by his Church and **Fr. Aren Jebejian** who left Chicago to become the Pastor of St. John's Armenian Church of Greater Detroit.

Welcome to new members James E. Holbrook, President of the Wilmette Illinois Stake in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Rev. Dr. **Deborah A. Rundlett**, Transitional Executive Presbyter at the Presbytery of Chicago. We look forward to you being part of this body!

