



Here is a summary of 2021 highlights from the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago (CRLMC).

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Interfaith Celebration

As 2021 began, CRLMC opened the City of Chicago's 35th Annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Interfaith Celebration with a prayer calling for the elimination of racism. The virtual program featured a welcome message from Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and a keynote address from Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms. The program also celebrated the Lawndale Christian Health Center, The Chicago Community Trust, and YWCA Metropolitan Chicago as Chicago Community Healer honorees.

COVID-19 Response

In the first half of 2021, the Council worked with public and private health officials to support testing and vaccination efforts for COVID-19. CRLMC helped coordinate on-site testing at local faith institutions in Chicago. The Council hosted an informational vaccination webinar with Cook County for area congregations, and CRLMC disseminated vaccination information in partnership with the City of Chicago and Cook County. In June 2021, the Council issued a formal statement urging every eligible person to get vaccinated.

This fall, Mayor Lightfoot requested a meeting with the Council to discuss responses to the pandemic. And recently CRLMC received a grant from the Health First Collaborative to vaccinate 1,000 people through local congregations in undervaccinated areas of Chicago. Twenty congregations are participating in this effort.

City of Chicago Police Reform

Last year the Chicago Police Department asked the Council to assist with the 2018 federal consent decree. CRLMC gathered and submitted testimony from religious communities and in 2021 reviewed and revised a new CPD policy on Religious Interactions – the first of its kind in the nation. CRLMC will work with the department to develop supporting curriculum and training for the policy.

The Council also was invited in 2021 to update CPD training videos on religious sensitivity and to participate in the revision of the department's hate crimes policy and associated training. At a meeting with the Council in March, Chicago Police Superintendent Brown asked CRLMC to continue offering guidance with police policies and the consent decree; provide safety and security awareness against terrorism and other threats; and assist with building community trust.

Annual Awards Reception

Since 2014, CRLMC has recognized individuals and organizations in both public and private sectors that promote interreligious harmony and the public good either independently or in concert with the Council's activities.

On November 4, the Council held a virtual awards reception at which it presented the 2021 Community Excellence Awards to Dr. Allison Arwady & Chicago Department of Public Health, and to Housing Forward, which is dedicated to ending homelessness in west suburban Cook County. The honorees were selected for their extraordinary contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic.



InterFaith Calendar™

Since 2014, the Council has produced the InterFaith Calendar™ which features a listing and explanation of religious observances as well as the basic beliefs, practices, religious writings, art, and demographics for 17 different faith communities. In December, the Council will release the *2022 Calendar*. Orders can be placed at <https://www.crlmc.org/interfaithcalendar.html>

In 2021, the Council also introduced the InterFaith Calendar App for iPhone and Android. The app brings together the dates and descriptions of observances for 17 religious communities and includes descriptions of each religious tradition prepared by the believers themselves. It is available for download at <https://www.crlmc.org/interfaithcalapp.html>



Interfaith Thanksgiving Observance

In November, members of many different faith communities gathered at the First United Methodist Church in the Chicago Temple to offer words of welcome and thanks from their different traditions. This marked the resumption of the in-person Observance which was suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic. Funds were collected and distributed among different faith-based charitable organizations in Chicago to provide holiday meals for those in need.

Media Engagement

In 2021 CRLMC convened two webinars for local religious leaders. On February 16, the Council hosted an Update on the COVID-19 Vaccination Program in Cook County with Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle and Cook County Health & Hospital Systems CEO Israel Rocha. On February 19 the Council working with Rutgers Miller Center for Community Protection and Resilience, hosted an instructional webinar on how to apply for up to \$100,000 in DHS grant funds to help secure local congregations with the critical importance of cybersecurity for congregations.

Since 2019 the Council has partnered with Greater Chicago Broadcast Ministries to produce episodes for Sanctuary, a weekly public interest program broadcast on Sunday mornings. Hosted by the Council, four episodes in 2021 focused on:

- A training program for faith-based community facilitators to identify needs and assets and to promote participation in health research in underserved communities of color;
- How faith traditions respond to grief and how faith can help people cope personally and provide guidance in supporting others;
- How different faith communities support the mental health of their members and their leaders in the face of everyday and extraordinary events; and
- New initiatives of the Chicago Police Department to strengthen communication and interactions with Chicago faith communities.

For more information visit <https://www.crlmc.org/sanctuary.html>.