

NCCJ now “BRIDGES”

“National Conference of Christians and Jews” ... “The National Conference” ... “The National Conference for Community and Justice” ... or just “NCCJ.”

For the past sixty-two years an organization bearing one of the above names has worked tirelessly in our midst to overcome bias, bigotry and racism. It has brought people together to achieve inclusion, equity and justice for all. It has endeavored to piece together our diverse religious and cultural groups in the making of a whole community. Among its contributions, it has led our city’s efforts to improve police-citizen relations, to foster interfaith understanding, to empower diverse youth for social justice leadership, to repeal Article XII, and to found the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Throughout, it has been well governed by a board of directors made up of prominent local citizens.

Now, that *same organization* – the same people, the same purpose, the same programs – is assuming a new name. This name, prompted by a business decision to change national affiliations, is “BRIDGES for a Just Community,” to be commonly known as “BRIDGES.” More than any previous moniker, it speaks to our essential role as a builder of bridges – bridges of understanding that span the social distance between groups, connect them through education and shared experiences, and then join them together in the pursuit of a just community. Our new name also proudly reflects a distinctive feature of our local topography.

Significant to the re-launch of NCCJ as BRIDGES for a Just Community is that our local organization joined a majority of former NCCJ regional offices to co-found the National Federation for Just Communities Inc. The new NFJC will carry on the nationwide network of member communities and promote the sharing of programs and best practices among them.

Guiding the future work of BRIDGES is a dynamic three-year strategic plan that will promote “more focus, more reach, more impact.” Informed by the recent survey results of the organization’s *Greater Cincinnati Human Relations Indicator Report*, BRIDGES intends to expand its work to be more regional in scope and to emphasize social justice leadership as a consistent theme in all of its youth and adult programs.

Another constant in the long history of our organization has been citizen involvement. With never more than a small handful of professionals on staff, we have always relied upon dedicated volunteers and organizational partners to take our work out into the community. BRIDGES will continue to need the help and involvement of people of good will. Moreover, we are keeping our popular challenge derived from Mahatma Gandhi, “Be the Change.” If we as individuals truly want a more inclusive, equitable and just

community for all people, it must begin with us. In ways we can, all of us should try to be leaders for social progress... and be bridge-builders!

To learn more about BRIDGES and how you can get involved, I urge you to visit our website at www.bridgescincinnati.org. Thank you.

*Robert C. "Chip" Harrod
Executive Director
BRIDGES for a Just Community*