

## **Creating a Religious Community Information Exchange (RCIE)**

A Religious Community Information Exchange (RCIE) encourages all interested congregations to discuss how to best respond with kindness to the needs and opportunities in their respective settings. The discussions are with government officials, allowing congregations to express their ideas and concerns and allowing government officials to update congregations on actions and plans that might be of interest to the congregations. Religious practices are not discussed at these meetings.

The first meeting of the exchange would be attended by representatives of government and leaders of the full array of faith leaders in the community. The meeting would begin and end with a moment of silence for each person to offer an opening blessing. The government representatives and each faith leader would speak for a few minutes about their perception of the value, goals, and operating rules for the Exchange. Then there could be small group discussions and reporting out. The primary purpose of this first meeting is to come to an understanding of the purpose and expectations for the Exchange.

A secondary purpose is to select the topics for the next meeting of the Exchange, which might meet three or four times a year. In many communities the unhoused is a priority. I am almost certain the next meeting will be on the unhoused, later topics might be addiction, affordable housing, families living on the margin, racism, foster children and parents who abuse or neglect their children, etc. For these subsequent meetings, congregation leaders will describe what their congregations are doing and so will the city (and possibly the county). After the sharing there will be a discussion about how the efforts align, overlap, might be coordinated, etc. Another potential benefit of the Exchange is that mutual respect could lead to conversations among congregations about coming together to make a unified statement about their shared concerns.