

EISCC Meeting Minutes  
9 January 2024

Meeting commenced at noon at St. Margarets Episcopal Church in the Factoria neighborhood of Bellevue.

Prayer by Elizabeth Maupin

Introduction of attendees and announcements.

An announcement was made that the King Country Regional Homelessness Authority ([kcrha.org](http://kcrha.org)) needs volunteers this month to conduct interviews to estimate the homeless population locally. Training is available and training provided.

Terry Kylo, executive director of Paths to Understanding, gave us a quick overview of their program titled Bridging Bias and Building Understanding through Interfaith Peacemaking. Their organization focuses on fighting the dehumanization of minority and religious groups. He pointed out that since the October 7 attack by Hamas on Israel, there have been over 2000 incidents of hate speech or acts directed primarily at Jewish and Islamic organizations and persons. He was asking for religious groups to take a public stance against hate speech.

The main presentation was a panel discussion regarding using lived experience to understand the problems of homelessness and better serve unhoused individuals. The first speaker was Lena Bernal with NAMI, the National Association for Mental Illness. Homeless when she came to the Seattle area, she lived as a single mom with her children, and suffered the trauma associated with her circumstances, She now works as a housing advocate for NAMI on the Eastside.

Lisa was followed by Colleen Howe (I probably did not get her name correctly, my apologies), who works for Friends of Youth Eastside. Her history is that of a single mom with an absent father of her child, trying to navigate the issues of homelessness and a previous felony conviction that left her without resources. She was fortunate to get connected with Mamma's Hands and their House of Hope project for six months, enabling her to get herself grounded and into employment and permanent housing.

Joe Ingram previously was homeless for an extensive period of time, and eventually got help from a committed worker with the VA, and now works for the Interfaith Task Force for Homelessness advocating for unhoused individuals. He recounted his own journey through mental illness and the trauma of homelessness, and how that enable shim to better relate to the individuals he works with.

Allen Bolen from Porchlight arrived in Seattle in 2011 and ended up spending 18 months living in a tent in Seattle. He pointed out that he, like many homeless people, vies himself as an "adult child." He expressed that people see the homeless and other

disadvantaged individuals as stereotypes and pretend not to see the people as real individuals. All the presenters shared a common feeling that the homeless want to be recognized for themselves and need help to get over the sense of trauma and guilt they feel about their situations.