

Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council

Minutes, General Meeting, March 2026

Present: 26 in the room, 17 online. A list of those who signed in appears at the end of the minutes.

The meeting opened with a moment of silent reflection and prayer.

President Kevin Folkman welcomed the group and thanked St. Margaret's for providing our space and Eastside Friends Meeting for providing lunch.

The President also acknowledged that we were on the Indigenous Land of Coast Salish peoples who have reserved treaty rights to this land, specifically the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe. We thank these caretakers of this land who have lived and continue to live here since time immemorial. He drew attention to resources on the indigenous people of the region that are available at eiscc.net.

Program

MAIN PRESENTATION: Permanent Supportive Housing. Ciarra (Kee-rah) Madden and Sarah Dickmeyer, [Plymouth Housing](#).

Plymouth Housing started in the 1970s as a volunteer effort from Plymouth Congregational Church in Seattle, to address the needs of homeless people on their doorstep. By 1980, it became a separate nonprofit organization, to serve formerly homeless adults who need comprehensive support to maintain housing stability.

Plymouth buildings house 1500 people currently, in 16 buildings in Seattle and two on the Eastside, one in Bellevue and one in Kirkland. Another is under construction in Redmond. Tenants have income of 0-30% of Area Median Income and are coming directly from homelessness. They sign leases and pay rent, at 30% of their income. The buildings provide a full range of services and a case manager that makes sure individual needs are met. Ninety-two percent live with at least one disability; 56% of the tenants are seniors; and 54% are people of color. They have an average income of \$8970 per year.

To help, you can...

- Follow Plymouth Housing on social media (@plymouthhousing)
- Sign up to receive emails (see the footer in PLYMOUTHHOUSING.ORG),
- Volunteer to support residents (PLYMOUTHHOUSING.ORG/VOLUNTEER),
- Make a monetary gift (PLYMOUTHHOUSING.ORG/DONATE), or
- Donate goods to the Plymouth Supply Center (PLYMOUTHHOUSING.ORG/PSC).

Plymouth Housing holds monthly office hours at the Together Center in Redmond, second Wednesdays from 11 am – 1 pm. They are happy to share information and answer questions there.

In the question-and-answer period at the EISCC meeting, Ciarra and Sarah noted that the need for permanent supportive housing is growing on the Eastside. Plymouth has the same challenges in finding staff that they have had for decades and that other service providers face: social service

jobs involve difficult, underfunded work. The individualized attention includes recognition of cultural differences. Plymouth Housing is excited about the new density bonuses enabled by HB1589, just signed by the Governor, which will make providing permanent supportive housing easier. Referral pathways vary building-by-building, depending on local restrictions. A first step is a housing assessment, which may refer people directly to housing or enroll them in the Coordinated Entry system.

SPOTLIGHT: One Parish One Prisoner. Candice Baughman and Austin Rehbein of [Underground Ministries](#) made the case for participation of faith communities in the One Parish One Prisoner program (OPOC). The program facilitates, trains, and supports teams of seven or so people in a faith community to get to know an incarcerated person who is close to release and to support them on re-entry through friendship. The program is about relationships, not resources.

Austin described her experience of participating in such a team. The center of the experience is building a relationship of trust, which brings mutual transformation. Before joining the team, she felt that her church experience provided safety and a comfort zone, but that she needed to step outside of it. As the team started its work, their conversations touched on addiction, anxiety, trauma – they stretched the team beyond safety into a zone of vulnerability. They tried, made mistakes, repaired, tried again. Austin had preached about transformation and resurrection. In OPOC, she experienced it directly. “That is what Underground Ministries is about,” she shared, “It brings whatever is dead in us back to life.”

Candice had experienced the program in her transition out of prison. She felt formerly incarcerated, came home through this program. In the program, seven people said yes to writing letters, the people who would greet her when she left prison. She got the opportunity to tell them about her goals, the person she wanted to be, sharing those with people who had not experienced her past. With the EISCC meeting, she shared a story about advice she received on encouraging her teenage son to go to school. Three years later, he is in ninth grade, going to school every day. Although the formal commitment in the program is to two years, the program creates friends for life.

Candice asked our faith communities to consider participating. She and Austin will come and visit, and they love to have coffee to talk it over. You can reach Candice [here](#).

Diane Richards shared that St. Margaret’s had just signed up to participate. They are finding OPOC a well-managed program, where they will learn a lot and build relationships.

Brief Reports

- **Treasurer** Warren Marquardson reported that the EISCC network has about \$10,000 in assets and the Congregations for Kids subagency about \$168,000. More details are posted monthly for the EISCC network and quarterly for Congregations for Kids at [eiscc.net](#).
- **Secretaries.** Susan Cozzens drew attention to the sign-up sheet at the welcome table for groups to provide lunch for EISCC general meetings. [Instructions](#) on what is involved are

available. To volunteer for your group to provide lunch, send an email to eastsideinterfaith@gmail.com, with LUNCH in the subject line. Volunteers for committee service are always welcome; the volunteer information form is available at [this link](#).

- **Eastside Human Services Forum.** Linda Hillesheim reported that the Forum has been combined with the Alliance of Eastside Agencies and in partnership with the Together Center to form the new East King County Human Services Collaborative. EISCC is expected to be an active member. Paul Lwali, the President of EHSF, added that the Collaborative is working on a statement of core values, to make sure that the work the three agencies have been doing for decades continues on the Eastside.
- **Congregations for Kids.** Sheila Backus shared that families in Bellevue School District continue to live in fear of raids and other circumstances that affect their daily lives. Gas and food costs are rising, and many families are afraid to go to food banks or medical appointments. The school district is providing families with information on their rights.

Announcements

Events

- Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council is offering information **“For Faith Communities: If ICE comes to Your House.”** The session is offered by Khizer Seriff of Essential First and is based on training Essentials First provided to all their staff. It will be held online at noon on March 30. Registration is required at [this link](#). Faith communities, service agencies, and small businesses are welcome.
- Nourishing Networks is having its biennial **Workshop** on March 21 at the Together Center. Full information is available at [Nourishing Networks](#).
- Michele Vossler from St. Andrews asked us to share information about a fun, free event on May 2 for **Kafika House in Tanzania**, with Tanzanian donuts, lunch, and beverages. Kafika House provides life-changing services for children who are isolated, shunned, and malnourished because they have a disability. The event will be at Saint Andrews Lutheran Church in Bellevue. Register [here](#).
- Lois Brandt, who leads the Newport Presbyterian Safe Parking Program, invited any **safe parking program** to join the quarterly meetings held to share best practices. Contact her at lois@loisbrandt.com for time and place.
- Adam Dibba invited us to join **Africa Day, May 29**, at the Together Center in Redmond. Volunteers are needed to help with the event. Contact Africans on the Eastside [here](#).
- Elizabeth Maupin called attention to the **No Kings March on May 28**. See [this link](#) for the Kirkland event.
- Aldersgate Methodist Church is having its annual **Eggstravaganza** on Saturday, April 4th, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM, with games, treats, and a big Easter egg hunt at 14230 SE Newport Way, Bellevue, WA 98006. Aldersgate is an inclusive congregation; everyone is welcome.

Advocacy

- Pastor Kelly Spencer of Newport Presbyterian Church asked us to **speak up about our support for an expansion of their safe parking program**, under discussion with the City of Bellevue. The negative voices are being raised more loudly than the positive ones. Our reaching out to the Bellevue City Council, individually and collectively, would be very helpful. Pastor Kelly also answered questions about the program, which would, with the Bellevue City expansion, serve a maximum of 20 women with children who live in their cars (not RVs). We were urged not to believe the reports online about larger sizes.
- Eastside Friends Meeting has started an **Advocacy Team under the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)**, the Quaker federal lobby organization. This team works specifically with members of the U.S. Congress who represent the Eastside. FCNL has 135 teams like this, across every state and the District of Columbia, to work together on specific issues, both international and domestic. More information on the program is available at [this link](#). Contact Susan Cozzens ([scozzens at live.com](mailto:scozzens@live.com)) if you want to work with the Eastside Seattle team.

Needs and Opportunities

- Pride Across the Bridge is seeking a resource and partnership lead for the Rainbow Resilience Network, which provides customized care packages for 2SLGBTQ+ folks. This hybrid volunteer role includes managing care package requests; coordinating with the Care Package Coordinator; building and maintaining community partnerships; tracking donated items and available resources; and ensuring timely support reaches those who need it. Contact naomi.volunteer@prideacrossthebridge.org to learn more.
- Linda Hillesheim requested contributions to the **Little Free Pantry at Unity of Bellevue**.
- Nicky Sheriff reiterated the call from Essentials First for people **with sewing expertise** to teach immigrants this set of skills. Volunteer at essentialsfirst.org.

Thanks went to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which brings semi-truck loads of food to our area several times a year, each with 40,000 pounds of food, as part of the America 250 initiative.

The meeting closed with a time of worshipful silence.

DISCLAIMER: Any statements or recommendations made by presenters or in announcements at EISCC meetings are those of the individual or the organization they represent and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council.



Signed-In

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Agduyeng	Yvonne	Redmond UMC
Agassiz	Sarah	Unity of Bellevue
Arndt	Sarah	North Urban Human Services Alliance
Backus	Shauna	Congregations for Kids
Barry	Tricia	Kidvantage
Baughman	Candice	One Parish One Prisoner
Bien	Alaric	City of Redmond Human Services
Brandt	Lois	Newport Presbyterian Safe Parking
Burrus	Sue	Eastside Friends Meeting
Cavazos	Madeline	King County/ Balducci office
Cozzens	Susan	Eastside Friends Meeting & EISCC Board
Dibba	Adam	Africans on the Eastside
Dickmeyer	Sarah	Plymouth Housing
Fitzgerald	Amy	Lifewire
Folkman	Kevin	LDS & EISCC Board
Folkman	Katie	LDS
Harris	Jean	Aldersgate UMC
Haudenschild	Lynne	Unity of Bellevue
Hillesheim	Linda	Unity of Bellevue & EISCC Board
Jacobs	Nancy	Congregations for Kids
Kalisa	Isabelle	Hero House
Kidd-Miller	Joyce	Baha'is of King County North & EISCC Board
Lovings	Chris	WA Department of Commerce

Lwali	Paul	Friends of Youth
Mabbott	Art	All Saints Episcopal
Marquardson	Warren	LDS & EISCC
Maupin	Elizabeth	Issaquah Sammamish Interfaith Coalition
Mbaye	Amina	Essentials First
O'Hare	Pauline	First Congregational & EISCC Board
Perry	Charles	Unity of Bellevue
Phelps	Ellen Weiss	Temple B'nai Torah & EISCC Board
Rehbein	Austin	Underground Ministries
Richards	Diane	St. Margaret's
Rivera	Guillermo	guillermo@eastsideforall.org
Sheriff	Nicky	MCRC Muslim Community Resource Center
Spencer	Kelly	Newport Presbyterian
Sterling	Susan	Unity of Bellevue
Szabo	Dick	St Andrew's Lutheran Church
Tasy	Beverly	Saint Margaret's
Vermouth	Marc	The Sophia Way
Vossler	Michele	St. Andrews Lutheran
Waddell	Tammy	Nourishing Networks
Weisel	Nancy	Cross of Christ