

**Welcome:** Rev. Robert Dye, MARCC President, Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Greater Cincinnati

**Prayer:** The Right Reverend Thomas Breidenthal, Bishop, Diocese of Southern Ohio (Episcopal)

**Minutes:** Delegates Council Minutes of 11 March 2020 – Accepted and approved.

**Agenda:** Delegates Council Agenda for 13 May 2020 – Accepted and approved.

**Today's Attendance: 28**

**AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES, USA, Miami Association: *Absent***

**ARCHDIOCESE:** Susan Binder, Mary Ann Bressler, Bob Ehram, Louise Lears, Karen Martin, David Weber, Connie Widmer

**BAPTIST MINISTERS CONFERENCE: *Absent.***

**CINCINNATI ISLAMIC COMMUNITY CENTER:** Tyrone Jackson

**DISCIPLES OF CHRIST:** Thomas Barnes, David Tietsort

**DIOCESE OF SOUTHERN OHIO (EPISCOPAL):** Bishop Thomas Breidenthal, Ariel Miller

**FRIENDS RELIGIOUS SOCIETY (Quakers):** Doug Burks, Carol Burks, J.P. Lund

**INTERDENOMINATIONAL MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE:** Robert Dye

**JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL:** Justin Kirschner

**MARCC:** Margaret Fox, Alice Skirtz, Angela Wright

**PRESBYTERY OF CINCINNATI:** Patricia Brown

**UNITED METHODIST ORV DIST:** Mary Beth Owens, Jan Seymour

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST/SONKA:** Mimi Chamberlin

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST COUNCIL:** Carol Fencl, Alice Schneider, Dan Schneider

**VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA: *Absent***

**Guests:** Susan Schiller, *Bethany House Services*

**Please place your cellphones on silent before each meeting begins.  
Thank you.**

**OPENING PRAYER – Bishop Thomas Breidenthal:** It is good to be with you all, however virtually. I will recite Psalm 126. This speaks of a combined uncertainty and hope as we claim as followers of the Divine.

*‘When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream; then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy. Then they said among the nations, ‘the Lord has done great things for them’. The Lord has done great things for us and we are glad indeed. Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the water courses of the south. They that sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. Those that go out weeping, carrying the precious seed, will doubtless come again with rejoicing, shouldering their harvest.’ As people of faith, we are called to also be people of hope. A passage in I Peter says to be prepared to defend the hope that is in you (I Peter 3:15). I tend to think of hope as a consequence of faith, but it has struck me in these times of uncertainty in our society, sometimes it is the other way around, faith being the product of hope because we don’t have genuine hope unless we are in touch with the things we hunger for, care about, and wish to*

commit our lives to. It is possible to have days of weak faith and have strong hope if we have the courage to be in touch with what really matters to us, risking the pain, fear, and worry that may go with it. We must know what things we hope to gain.

**Prayer:** *‘May we can use this time of uncertainty and anxiety as a time to be more in touch with what really matters.’*

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## **MARCC Updates – Margaret A. Fox, Executive Director**

**Issue 7.** We don’t have confirmation that Issue 7 passed. They are still counting ballots. Two days ago, there were 600 votes down from being passed. It could still go either way. We endorsed it collectively as our council and we hope it passes because we need a stronger transit system.

**Emergency Grant Funding.** For the past eight weeks, there have been many layoffs, furloughs, and cuts in the budget of our local government. Our governor and the federal government stepped in and some of those initiatives have been put into action, but the funding piece has yet to be released. The Emergency Grant Funding from the federal government to our shelters to compensate them for the money being spent because of COVID-19 because of regulations of social distancing. The homeless in shelters have been temporarily placed in hotels. The city has not received this money yet. In the meantime, United Way and The Greater Cincinnati Foundation has pooled together their resources, raising enough money to provide for 2 ½ weeks for hotel costs. The county process for receiving federal money has gone smoothly. That money for housing goes to Strategies for the Homeless. The city is having trouble developing a process for the money they are to receive from the government. MARCC, with many other organizations, have signed a joint letter with the shelters, to get the city on board to spend that money on the shelters that have already been approved. This is still a work in process.

**Eviction Prevention.** MARCC with Affordable Housing Advocates and other organizations, are asking that the COVID money go toward the prevention of evictions. This is one area where tenants, housing advocates, and landlords can agree that the compensation should go to landlords directly so tenants won’t owe back rent after what we hope will be a moratorium on evictions. Currently HUD has called a moratorium on evictions for their public housing. We are now working towards private landlords doing the same. MARCC sent a letter to Governor DeWine asking for these things. In the meantime, the federal government is getting that same kind of request across the country to prevent foreclosures and evictions on apartment living.

**Emergency Rental Assistance & Rental Market Stabilization Act.** A new bill is being introduced by Senator Sherrod Brown in the Senate, and Congresswoman Maxine Waters and Benny Hecht in the House named ‘The Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act of 2020.’ MARCC has sent its letter to Senator Brown and Senator Rob Portman. There has been a request from a variety of groups that Portman co-sponsor this bill. This is a ground swell from local municipalities, rural areas and up. It looks hopeful. Some of that money, if we can get a commitment from the governor to announce this, maybe without a formal agreement, private landlords will honor that at least through the month of May and longer.

For immigrants, there has been a certain percentage of rental eviction money set aside for the three major organizations helping with rental assistance – St. Vincent DePaul, Legal Aid Society, and Community Action Agency (CAA). All non-profits that are serving populations in need and acting as go-betweens for access to that money, like Catholic Charities. Immigration status will not be asked. It is strictly based on what the need is.

**MARCC ID Card.** We are working towards scheduling a June ID drive. Part of the complication, in our Latino community, the largest infection rate of the COVID is in Price Hill where a substantial Guatemala presence is. MARCC has been involved in trying to shape the use of the card for housing and emergency food and shelter program funding, which is to come through in July. MARCC and its partners feel if it is good enough for law enforcement, it should be good enough for Emergency Food and Shelter Program Funding. This seems to be a need for communities outside of Cincinnati, e.g. The Willows in Springdale. These are some of the ways MARCC is doing work.

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## **TODAY’S PRESENTATION:**

**‘IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EMERGENCY HOUSING SERVICES’  
Susan Schiller, CEO, Bethany House Services / The Family Shelter Partnership**

*(for bio information, please refer to attached handout)*

**Ms. Susan Schiller.** Thank you so much for the opportunity to be here and to be able to share about Bethany House and who we are. I read your tagline, ‘to forgo the luxury of separate ways when a common path can be found.’ That underscores what Bethany House does along with the other shelters.

**Our Vision & Mission.** Bethany House Services (BHS) empowers homeless and at-risk families with solutions to achieve housing stability and long-term self-sufficiency. We’ve been doing this for 37 years. Our vision is to live in a community where all families have a place to call home and no one spends a night without shelter. I know you and the work you do, and that you are very aware of the problems in our community, be it lack of affordable housing, health issues, single mother’s challenges of raising their children alone. These things contribute to when our moms find themselves without a home and nowhere to turn. **Our children are the unseen faces of homelessness.** Most people in our community don’t realize this. They think of the guy on the street corner, holding a sign. You will never see a mom and her children out like that because the authorities to protect them will take her children away citing it as neglecting to provide a home. **Our families are the unseen homeless.** Our mission is to empower homeless and at-risk families with the solutions to achieve housing stability and long-term self-sufficiency.

**Our Programs & Services.** We shelter over 50% of the homeless families and 62% of homeless children in our community providing housing, education, and assistance to homeless families in the Greater Cincinnati area, including Northern Kentucky and Southeastern Indiana. Holistic services – including emergency shelter (which we’re most known for), housing, shelter diversion, aftercare. The problems of homelessness can’t be solved in the 30/60 days a person or family is in a shelter. As members of the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless, the local Continuum of Care, and the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, we provide both direct services and advocates for systemic change for homeless individuals. We pride ourselves on the wrap-around services – life skill classes, counseling, case management, employment services, children’s services. Our children services have been expanded significantly over the past four years. It is critical to focus on these children. If we don’t, they could be in the cycle of being back in a shelter once they reach adulthood. If we can’t, all we’re doing is getting these children ready to go to Lighthouse then onto Shelterhouse. We are hoping with the CARES Act funding we can get more housing money.

#### **Shelters in Cincinnati.**

Single Men – Shelterhouse Barron Center, City Gospel Mission

Single Women – Shelterhouse Hatton Center

Teens/Youth – Lighthouse Sheakley Center, Mecum House

Family Shelter Partnership – These include:

- Bethany House
- The Salvation Army
- Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN)
- YWCA – they take care of all our domestic violence victims and their families. Many of the mothers we support in our shelters have been prior victims of domestic violence.

**Community Challenge.** 1,400+ families experience homelessness in Cincinnati each year; 56% of those people do not receive services. We are only able to provide either shelter or housing (a shelter diversion) for 44% of the families. One of our biggest fears is that the demand will increase significantly because of the economic downturn, and unemployment caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

**The Family Shelter Partnership & Its History.** We are a partnership of the four emergency shelters dedicated to homeless families in Hamilton County. We are – Bethany House Services, Interfaith Hospitality Network, The Salvation Army, and the YWCA. When we began in 2000, there were 6 shelters, and these included The Chabad House and Mercy Health St. John. We were originally formed to administer a grant from Hamilton County for direct client services with JFS being very involved. The goal was to improve the case management system across the family shelters to create best practices across all the family shelters. Bethany House Services provided fiscal oversight and leadership of the program.

**Collaboration and COVID-19.** Money always seems to be a collaborator. The grant from HUD was over \$323k annually helping to fund our case manager salaries. We've tried many innovative approaches over the years to address family homelessness. A level of collaboration has significantly increased since 2015. Along with FHP and 60 other agencies it is a community-wide plan. Our collaboration went to a whole new level when the health crisis COVID-19 started in mid-March, doing the FHP phone calls 7 days/week, all working on the same issue: how do you tell a person to stay at home for safety when they don't have a home? How do you maintain social distancing when living in very close quarters? All 4 agencies have congregant shelters. At Bethany House's largest shelter, we had 40 moms and kids sharing bedrooms, bathrooms, and dining rooms. The first two weeks we were meeting daily, then to 5 morning a week. This week, we've cut back to 2 mornings a week. We have the homeless service providers meeting daily at 4:30pm to address the various problems. It has been a marvelous effort of all the people working in the homeless sector to address the needs. I'm hoping when we come out of this the collaborations, partnerships, and friendships will continue. We're trying to stay ahead and foresee what's next. We must make COVID-19 an opportunity. We must use this to shine a spotlight on our city's most vulnerable people. We already know about the inequities and people are paying attention that had not before. We are hoping this will allow us to make significant progress.

**Who We Serve?** Some of these stats are unique to Bethany House, yet most apply to all the family shelters: We serve approximately 800 families annually including 1,600 children; 95% of our families are led by a single mom, 29-30 years old with 2-3 children; 70% of family members are children – most under age 6. Our society has the wrong image; 100% of our families live in extreme poverty; 13% white; 83% African American; 4% multiple races

Why do people become homeless? No more than \$400 in savings. One uncertain life event can spiral a family into homelessness; lack of affordable housing, low paying jobs that don't meet the needs of life; generational poverty, lack of education/skills, unemployment, mental health issues, physical health issues, cognitive disabilities, and all the challenges of raising children alone. Children bear the brunt of homelessness – they are sick twice as often, hungry twice as often, change schools 3-4 times per year, twice as likely to repeat a grade, twice the rate of learning disabilities, score significantly lower in reading, spelling, and math. By the time homeless children are 8 years old, one in three has a major mental disorder. These are some of the impacts on our children.

**Where Are Our Shelters.** We have seven facilities – three in Fairmount, two apartment buildings in Westwood, and one in College Hill used to belong to Mercy Health/St. John's shelter operations. Nineteen families live in those three apartment buildings. The seventh shelter was added in Bond Hill 2018 because there was a significant increase in homeless families that we were paying to temporarily put them in hotels, but we could no longer afford to do that. These are overflow beds and we struggle every year to close that deficit.

**Bethany House Services Current Challenge: Decentralized & Aging Facilities.** We currently have 7 facilities – 5 shelters and 2 administrative. Our shelters are at maximum capacity. Three shelters are less effective in this 'apartment style'. We are not able to provide to families in apartment buildings the same level of supervision, safety, and support. Three buildings in Fairmount are 110+ years old and are a nightmare to maintain, not to mention being very expensive to do so. Moving staff and supplies between shelters is time-consuming and costly. No 'flex' space for peak times. Decentralized model limits programming.

**Bethany's Future.** We are building a new family shelter and comprehensive services center designed to help our families and children experiencing homelessness achieve housing stability and long-term self-sufficiency. We made unbelievable progress in an aggressive timeline to get out of these buildings, then COVID-19 hit. In this building, we will combine all 7 of our facilities. It will be a communal-style, trauma-informed design, on-site services, counseling, and healthcare. The biggest gamechanger for our families is that we'll have this onsite medical and mental health support, employment services, and onsite programming for all our children; 24/7 safety, security and support for all families; classrooms for adult education; children's indoor and outdoor play areas; flexible space for 'overflow' to meet the needs of peak times. They'll be able to walk down the hall to access all these services. This design will help us limit the amount of stay for our families and allow us to serve more families and create more positive outcomes, increasing the number of families reaching long-term stability, improve educational and long-term outcomes for our children, and reduce the generational cycle of homelessness in our community.

## **How You Can Help**

[Bethanyhouseservices.org/volunteer-opportunities/info@bhsinc.org](https://bethanyhouseservices.org/volunteer-opportunities/info@bhsinc.org)

513.921.1131

Host a breakfast or dinner  
Provide childcare  
Donation drives  
Host a fundraiser  
Attend a fundraiser  
Office assistance

Young Professionals Group  
Speakers Bureau  
Mailings  
Adopt-A-Room/Adopt-A-Family  
Spread the word we have homeless families

**‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ Matthew 25:40**

Thank you to everyone today. Tell someone about homeless families and homeless children in our community and we’ve got to do something about this. The biggest problem we face is not funding, it’s awareness. I believe if everyone were aware, we’d have the willpower, support, and determination to change it.

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## Q&A

**Ariel Miller, Diocese of Southern Ohio (Episcopal)**

**Q: I’d like to know more about the money that is to come through the city. Is that through the CARES Act or some other funding stream? Why is it not reaching the shelters?**

**A:** I’ll give you what I’ve been told, but I have a similar question. This is HUD working on lightning speed. March 27<sup>th</sup> was the first phase of the CARES Act passing. The Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) has still not come into the county nor into the city. However, the county has been more proactive. The family shelters received money from the United Way and Greater Cincinnati Foundation. That allowed us to pull the trigger and move all our families out of congregate shelters into extended stay hotels. We don’t know what we would’ve done if that money had not come in. Within 24-hours, we had \$155k in our bank account. It came to Bethany House, but we disperse it out. Everyone handed in their bills and we pay them. The county was advancing money through indigent care dollars. The county has yet to receive the ESG dollars, but they have received other care dollars and will be advancing that money to the shelters. The city has not decided who they’ll give the money to for its distribution, then there is the dilemma of the human services funding that was being handled by United Way, but they didn’t want to do this any longer. This leaves it up in the air. We haven’t had the opportunity to send human services applications in this year. There are so many issues going on with the city. All our shelters get human services dollars for shelter operations, but we’re not getting the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter payment, leaving us short of \$102k. We have been told directly on Friday if there will be human services funding for the next fiscal year in the city which begins September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. It’s a combination of all these different issues. It’s troubling we’re not making much progress with the city.

**Tyrone Jackson, Cincinnati Islamic Community Center**

**Q: Is it possible to get access to this PowerPoint presentation?**

**A: (Fox)** Ms. Schiller has given us permission to send it out after today’s meeting. All the delegates will receive a link to it to share.

**Carol Fencl, Unitarian Universalist**

**Q: Can you talk a bit more about what your housing services are able to do at this point?**

**A:** I think all of us have worked harder than we ever have. In a period of 4 days, we emptied out all congregate shelters across all our agencies into extended stay hotels, and we are still providing all the normal services we always do – case management, life skills classes. The model is different than it has been in the past – each agency is feeding people differently. Our volunteer coordinator is picking up food at Kroger. We don’t disclose the location of the hotels because of the domestic violence victims that are there. Our people are getting all the basics – safety, bedding, food, shelter. Since mid-March, Bethany House alone have exited 38 families out of the shelter. We’re still working the program and getting people into permanent housing. All our housing programs, although they’re not doing face to face or home visits, they are continuing to work with all their clients. It’s been an adjustment for everyone, but we haven’t missed much of a beat. We even had Easter egg hunts for the children in our parking lot. Education for the kids has suffered the most. It took us over a month to get laptops, tablets, and internet access. Our kids who are already behind didn’t have the tools at the beginning. In the last few weeks, people have stepped up with support, thank God for that. Our moms don’t have the time and many cases the ability to sit and work with the kids. I am very concerned about the long-term impact on their education in

addition to being homeless. **Q: Are they able to do the television programs other schools are trying to do?** We have made them aware of that and shared the information, but in close quarters and being with their children 24/7 is not an easy and conducive situation to learning.

**Mimi Chamberlin, United Church of Christ**

**Q: Are the stimulus payments having any effect? Are the people getting those?**

**A:** Some of our families are getting the stimulus checks and are immediately leaving the shelter. But to receive those, they must have an address and many of our families don't. typically, they've been doubled up with a family member or friends for 3-12 months, so they've had multiple addresses.

**Justin Kirschner, Jewish Community Relations Council**

**Q: Where will the new facility be located you are looking to construct?**

**A:** It will be on the grounds of where the old St. Aloysius on Reading Road in Bond Hill, just north of the Norwood Lateral. We purchased 2.63 acres on the north/west side of their property. Two Bond Hill group homes are currently there will be torn down which were already vacant when we purchased the property. When we begin our capital campaign, that's where we'll build in 2021.

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### **REMINDERS**

**17 May, Sunday, Spring Concert, Festival of Faiths, 4pm,** Please register online at [www.cincifestivaloffaiths.org](http://www.cincifestivaloffaiths.org)

**10 June, Wednesday, MARCC Delegates Council Meeting, 12 Noon-1:15pm,** St. Peter in Chains cathedral, Synod Room, 325 W. Eighth Street, across from City Hall

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