

Spotlight ON Service

MELVIN O. SHAW

Coralville attorney Melvin O. Shaw practices primarily in estate planning, probate and real estate, and when he's not busy serving clients, he is giving back to his community in a variety of ways, most significantly through his church. Shaw is a member of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church of Iowa City, serving as a Steward, Sunday School teacher, Men's Group Leader, and as the church treasurer and trustee.

"I am fulfilled spiritually and personally through my service to Bethel, whether it is through attendance at regular worship services, or through the giving of my time and talents," Shaw said.

Prior to 2005, Bethel had not been substantially renovated in more than 100 years. Most of the structural and interior repairs and modern upgrades were considerably costly for a small congregation of about 40 people. That's where Shaw came in. He and another member led a five-year, \$500,000 fundraising campaign to renovate and add on to the building. They obtained the needed capital and held their first service in the renovated facility on a Sunday morning in August 2010.

"Those five years were transformative for me personally and professionally. On that worship morning, I realized even more that there are times in our lives where we can and should work for someone or something where the benefit or purpose is so much greater than ourselves. In an era where more



Melvin O. Shaw

socialization is taking place virtually and where worship can be done via a smartphone app or online, it's important that we not forsake the fellowship of coming together, to work for the common good of mankind and kingdom-building," he said.

Shaw is also serving currently as president of the Board of Trustees of The Housing Fellowship (THF) in Iowa City, which is a non-profit community housing development program that provides permanent affordable rental housing at prices that are less than market-rate. THF was started approximately 30 years ago by a coalition of 18 Johnson County-area churches and other social agencies. The organization also provides first-time homebuying opportunities to people who qualify for assistance.

"I dedicate time to THF because I believe in its mission: To provide quality homes to people with limited incomes," Shaw said. "Over the years, I've been able to offer guidance to THF in real



The Housing Fellowship

Melvin O. Shaw, on the left, pictured during a check presentation to The Housing Fellowship, an organization for which he serves as president of the Board of Trustees.

estate litigation, homeowner's association issues, property acquisition, financing, zoning and a host of other issues."

In November 2019, Shaw was elected to the board for Inside Out Reentry Community, which serves individuals returning to the Johnson County area after incarceration. This organization focuses on life skills, employment readiness, housing, high school diploma tutoring and other services.

Shaw also serves on the ISBA Board of Governors, as a member-at-large for the ABA's General Practice Solo Division, on the Judicial Qualifications Commission and previously as president of the Johnson County Bar Association. These additional endeavors allow him to connect with other attorneys for the betterment of the profession and their communities.

"I believe that we are beginning to see the need for unity even more so as communities across the world begin to address the medical, social and other effects of the coronavirus. At times like these where there is an especially vulnerable population, lawyers should not be blind to the needs of the public-at-large. Because practicing law is a privilege, lawyers should support and propose practical solutions to societal problems that nonprofit agencies and organizations exist to ameliorate in some form. Attorneys have a form of specialized training that allows them to see, analyze and resolve problems. It seems appropriate that attorneys dedicate a portion of their time and talents for the greater public good."

The ISBA Public Relations Committee honors an Iowa attorney or group of attorneys each month in this special feature in *The Iowa Lawyer*. If you would like to nominate someone to be recognized for his or her work in the community, please contact: [Melissa Higgins, mhiggins@iowabar.org](mailto:Melissa.Higgins@iowabar.org).



Andrew B. Howie

APPELLATE LAWYER

- ▶ Fellow, American Academy of Appellate Lawyers
- ▶ Fellow, American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers

SHINDLER, ANDERSON,
GOPLERUD & WEESE, P.C.
515-223-4567
howie@sagwlaw.com
www.sagwlaw.com
Accepting Referrals