

## Sonoma Valley Interfaith Ministerial Association

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Wednesday, February 27, 2019

First Congregational Church of Sonoma

**Present:** Steve Finley, Donna Thomas, Rich Gantenbein, Curran Reichert, Jim Thomas, John Bonnoitt (St. Francis Solano), Peadar Dalton, Kathryn Stark, Margaret Hage, Jacey Pickens-Jones, Emily Pickens-Jones, Larry Frakes.

**Guests:** District Superintendent Socorro Shiels

**Welcome and Call to Order** - Peadar opened with a reflection on peace and awareness.

### Checking In With Non Profits -

- F.I.S.H. - Sandy Piotter will be our guest in March, newsletter to be forwarded to you soon.
- City Council - The mayor will be our guest at the April meeting. Peadar reports that the council will be focusing on adding an additional 1% to the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) to help fund affordable housing, a dispensary for medicinal needs and fair minimum wage of \$15 for Sonoma Valley workers. For more info. check [here](#)
- S.O.S. - Curran reports that S.O.S. is part of a joint application for funds being considered between Share, Vintage House and S.O.S. so let's pray for that approval. The winter shelter at Alliance Church will close on March 31st. Please join their board, staff and friends as we all welcome our homeless on the last night of the shelter. Give thanks to Sonoma Alliance Church for their efforts. A candlelight ceremony will begin at 7pm at the church, 125 E. Watmaugh Rd. Please RSVP to [sos151events@gmail.com](mailto:sos151events@gmail.com) or 707-939-6777. For ongoing needs at S.O.S. contact them [here](#).
- SVU School District - Emily will now be our contact for the district. Socorro is here today.
- Sustainable Sonoma - Jacey will be attending the next meeting, or will reach out for someone to fill in if she is out of town.

### Discussion -

- Annual Dues: Steve is now officially on the SVIMA bank account which currently has a balance of \$630.80. Please bring your \$10 annual member due to the April meeting.
- Steve began paying Tricia for attending meetings, doing minutes, website, radio show items at \$20/hr for 3-4 hours total each month, approximately \$80/month. A motion was brought to have the association group share in the costs to pay her. Discussion followed regarding the legalities and ethics of how to do that. We are not an official non-profit so can't have an employee without strings attached. Rich suggested Shir Shalom add the hours to her contract with them and SVIMA members who can afford to do so donate to Shir Shalom to help cover the cost. Discussion to be continued.
- Good Friday Service April 19th. First Methodist Church will be having one of their own and has agreed to invite the community but would like others to organize, it will be Methodist based. We will bring it up at the March meeting and ask for members to help plan.
- Passover Seder at Shir Shalom, you are invited to attend, please contact Steve. More to come.
- CROP does anyone have information on this event? Steve or Curran to reach out to John Donnelly.

- Sunday, April 28th is Hospice's Service of Remembrance hosted by Congregation Shir Shalom in their sanctuary from 4-6pm. Please consider attending. Kathryn will bring flyers to March meeting.
- Jacey and Emily discussed the current issue happening with the United Methodist Church, one of the few global churches left. The top policymaking body of the church recently voted to reinforce the traditional plan and it's ban on same-sex marriage and LGBT clergy stating it is incompatible with Christian teaching. This is a very difficult and distressing time for Jacey and Emily who are entering into an unknown outcome for them and their church. All, clergy and your communities, are encouraged, if you feel moved, to attend their services this Sunday in support of them. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out to them.
- Jim thanks everyone who has sent thoughts and prayers and has supported him while he is receiving ongoing medical treatments. He is doing well.

### **Guest - Socorro Shiels**

-Six months into her position Socorro has been listening to the community and is grateful to be involved with our group. She notes there is much division in the community where we live, work and go to school. She is focusing on building relationships within the community to close this division. She and the district are working with the Health Center to coordinate a Spring Fling where families, community resource groups and PTOs can come together to benefit the community as a whole, including games and information/support access. We might consider being involved or attending.

-The district will begin addressing resource distribution. Conversations need to had about where and how to distribute money. There is an inequality in fundraising and some school communities have the ability and resources to raise more than other schools. She encourages us to have the conversations with our congregations about inclusivity and the current inequalities within our valley. Rich agrees that discussing the inequities and racism in this valley is a difficult topic to approach and the economic implications for a strategic plan will be important.

-Curran offered Socorro our association as a discussion group in any way that we can help. Curran also suggested we choose one weekend where we all discuss with our congregations this topic, knowing that community wide we will be delivering the same messages.

-Curran asked how the district is handling gun violence topic. Socorro says the priority is to focus on more mental health support for students and families which often leads to these issues. The question of where to send a family in need for mental support or resources is one that can't be answered well at the moment. They are working on how to get more training for teachers and other staff who work with kids and their families. She and the district have a great relationship with the chief of police.

-Peadar asked how the current relationship is between administrators and staff. Socorro says they are all emotionally taxed but all want to move forward for the sake of the kids. The current tension point is the teacher salary negotiations. Socorro says the only way for schools to get major funding increases is through bond measures which will most likely be proposed in the next 2-3 years but before doing so the district needs to show the community some progress with it's current state.

-Socorro indicated they are working on bringing PTOs from each school together once a year to share ideas and compare data. They are also figuring out how to work better or more efficiently with the Education Foundation. Jim indicated that he is on the board at Woodland Star and most of their support comes from alumni donations.

-Please let Socorro know of any events you think would be beneficial for her to attend or be aware of within your communities and congregations.

**Things to consider -**

- We should invite someone from La Luz to be a guest.
- Steve will not be attending our next meeting in March, he will be in Israel. Our ambassador Peadar Dalton will lead. Sandy Piotter from F.I.S.H. will be here as a guest for a quick update.
- Mayor Harrington will be the guest at our April meeting

**Our next meeting is Wednesday, March 27th, 12:15pm sharp - Please send a representative if you are unable to attend. Our guest will be Sandy Piotter from F.I.S.H.**

**Meeting Adjourned - 1:35pm**