

Sonoma Valley Interfaith Ministerial Association

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Wednesday, September 26, 2018

First Congregational Church of Sonoma

Present: Steve Finley, Margaret Hage and Susie Perry (representing Sonoma Valley Community Church), Donna Thomas, Matt Mattzela, Rich Gantenbein, Curran Reichert, Lisa Biersch Cole, Jacey Pickens-Jones.

Guests: Socorro Shiels, Sonoma Valley Schools Superintendent.

Welcome and Call to Order - Susie offered we open with gratitude for Sonoma. Rich reminds us that time to be alone is important. We need to be conscious and still long enough to hear the word of God. Steve offered the Sukkah hut out front as a place to stop by to take a break.

Checking In With Non Profits -

- F.I.S.H. - Steve handed out a copy of the recent newsletter, see your email for a copy.
- City Council - Peader passed on information: meetings are the 1st and 3rd Monday at 6pm, there is a Public Forum opportunity at each meeting with 2 minutes allowed to speak on any topic of concern to a resident. They continue to discuss Moratorium on new tasting rooms on the plaza. There is Cannabis deliveries by licensed businesses outside the city for medical marijuana, as of now no dispensaries are allowed in city limits. There are three council seats up for election: Mayor Agrimoti and Rachel Hundley are each seeking a second term for their seats, and Gary Edwards will not seek re-election. For more information visit the website [here](#).
- SVUSD - See Socorro Shiels
- Health Center - Rich reports that the Sonoma Valley Hospital OB/GYN department is now shut down and most patients will be referred to Petaluma Valley Hospital. Also, there appears to be more non-citizen parents of citizen children who are fearful of taking their children to the Health Center to receive care because of their own status. [Here](#) is an article from earlier this year describing this state wide issue.
- S.O.S. - Curran reports that the Winter Shelter is fully funded for this year. Susan Gorin will begin assembling the task force to assess needs related to homelessness in the valley. Please consider inviting S.O.S. director Kathy King to one of your services to discuss their upcoming needs.
- Sustainable Sonoma - Curran reports that they are beginning to collate information from the listening circles they held in the community. They would like to have a member of our association attend their monthly meetings and we would like this to be a revolving seat., the time and location change and are posted on their site [here](#). Jacey has volunteered to attend the next meeting on October 18th and will report to us at our next meeting. A copy of their recent newsletter has been emailed to you.

Thanksgiving - We will be holding the Interfaith Thanksgiving service from 10:00am -11:00am Thanksgiving morning at the Hanna Boys Center, exact location to come. Thank you Nick for arranging this. Jacey will be offering the main sermon. We need additional volunteers to be part of Jacey's team, including music and song selection. Please contact Jacey to help out at 724-840-3589.

Guest Speaker - Socorro Shiels, School District Superintendent

- Opening statement: "Thank you for inviting me as I believe that we share common values with faith communities when it comes to our students and children." She's spending this year immersing herself in the valley and the schools to assess needs. It is important that schools and community continue to have the conversation about what the best community looks like and how we all can contribute.
- Our graduation rate in the valley is high compared to the county as a whole. In Sonoma we have a large percentage of students who get to go to preschool which helps in the long run.
- A large majority of our students are Latino and most of that group are English Language Learners. We will be focusing on the instructional needs in Pre-K to grade 3 to improving reading skills.
- Free and reduced lunch and breakfast are offered to all low income students.
- Socorro comments she sees a lack of voice for the Sonoma Valley in relation to the county. The Springs seems to be the most under-resourced area in the entire county.
- We need to look at fund distribution to schools, equity in philosophy differs from equity in practice. Should we distribute funds differently, for example, Dunbar raises different funds than Prestwood. Not all schools can raise equal amounts from their families.
- Last year a group of Seniors at the high school were asked to participate in some research, they voiced the clear divide between Latino groups and others at the high school. They are friendly but there is a definite grouping on both sides in sports, clubs and classes. The community we want to see and do see will be reflected in the community we see within our schools. When the community is separated the schools will be separated.
- The district and the schools can only move forward as strongly as the community will push it. We need to broaden the conversations with the community and the school board as well as our students. One of Socorro's goals is to create a student voice as well as to break the myths that Latino's don't care as much about education or that the increased enrollment in Latino students means the curriculum is "dumbed down".
- Rich asked what her strategic plan looked like, Socorro says they will be sorting out the visions of what the listening circles will look like, and the first step will be putting together a long term strategy for community conversations.
- Curran feels there is inadequate trauma support for children in schools, with concerns over limited counselors available. The county Mental Health Department is currently going through restructuring so Socorro met with Brian at the Hanna Institute regarding how to support students/families and

how train teachers in trauma support and what long term resources are available for families. Curran asked that the board lean on the faith leaders to share with our congregations what all needs are.

- Socorro encouraged involvement in the high school senior projects to get a view of how good our kids are turning out as they leave the district.
- Rich encouraged members and their congregations to go see and support high school sports.
- Lisa referenced the Alameda Education Foundation and how their mission is to be a liaison between the schools and the community. It's not an "us vs. them" issue. They look at the district as a whole and not just individual schools. Lisa also reminds us to bless our teachers and school staff during our services.
- Donna supports a wider conversation with the district and the entire community.
- In closing, Socorro says we need to have healthy families and healthy children to have healthy schools, there will be some difficult conversations to be had but it is possible to see change if we can get the community to come together as a whole. She will send updates and newsletters as the year progresses. We hope to have her return in a year to report on changes and updates.

Good and Welfare -

- There will be no radio show Oct. 9th. KSVY will be replaying the taped shows from the fire last year with discussions in-between the tapes. Jacey reports Sonoma United Methodist church is offering drop in prayer stations October 9th for anyone who needs it that day.
- Jacey is asking for our prayers and good thoughts for her spouse, Emily, one of our members as well, as she will be meeting with a specialist for difficult and chronic back pain.
- Curran thanks Lisa for pulling together the Sonoma Prayer Fridays, more info [here](#).
- Trinity Episcopal is having a neighborhood Trick or Treat on Halloween to invite neighbors, members and non members, into the church and have some fun.
- Lisa also reports that The Sun has said they would consider adding a Faith or Religion column, conversation is ongoing.
- Curran and Steve will co-officiate the All Souls Remembrance Service, November 1st, 7pm at First Congregational Church of Sonoma.
- Steve reports that the Thursday radio show will be updating the weekly themes soon. Any ideas for topics are welcome, please email Steve.
- Peadar has been appointed our ambassador for community and association outreach.

Our next meeting is Wednesday, October 24th, 12:15pm sharp - Please send a representative if you are unable to attend. Guest speakers: Susan Murray and Bonnie Joy Kaslan of Cancer Support Sonoma.

Meeting Adjourned - 1:33pm