

Sonoma Valley Interfaith
Wednesday, September 27th, 2023 / 12 pm–1 pm

<https://www.sonomavalleyinterfaithma.org>
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Present: Steve Finley, Manette Fairmont, Jason Mayer, Curran Reichert, and Donna Thomas.

12:00 pm

- **Welcome/Opening Blessing** - Steve opens with a discussion on forgiveness.
- suggestions from the group in response to the general population increasing interest in faith and community to have an “interfaith table” at events in Sonoma and in the plaza to offer blessings and information on various churches in town (city approval may be needed for plaza events). Suggestions for doing a Church Walk allowing people to visit various church services to find one that fits for them.

12:20 pm

- **Checking in with everyone** -
 - Jason of Sonoma Collective shares that they are going to begin weekly services at the end of October. They are excited for the consistency and growth.
 - Scott Pryor of the Church of the Nazarene has retired and moved to Oregon. They will be searching for his replacement.
 - Lisa Cole is beginning her service at Trinity Episcopal. Information will be sent introducing her and she looks forward to joining our October meeting and hopefully the radio rotation on Tuesdays.
 - Nicole Trotter of St. Andrew Presbyterian is taking a medical leave of absence. Deacon Ken Blackwood will be subbing.
 - Save the date for Thursday, November 2nd at 6pm First Congregational Church and Shir Shalom will be doing a Service of Lament and Sound Healing. More information will be shared soon.
- **More news** -
 - Our annual Sonoma Valley Thanksgiving Eve service will be held on Wednesday, November 22nd at 6:30pm. Matt will head the planning committee and the service will be held here in the shared sanctuary of First Congregational Church and Shir Shalom. We will check in with him since he is absent today. Steve will send Curran the program outline of events to help planning. If you would like to help Matt or offer a reading, song, or prayer please email Matt at matthewalexanderpearson@gmail.com

- In addition to our KSVY Tuesday morning 9am Interfaith spot we now have an Interfaith Radio hour on KSVY Thursdays @3pm. If you would like to get deeper into a topic with Rabbi Steve let him know rabbisteve.shirshalom@gmail.com
- December 14th will be the Sonoma Interfaith Community Menorah Lighting in front of 252 W. Spain St. This year we will be doing the lighting on the final night of Hanukkah instead of the first night so we can enjoy the giant Menorah in full lighting and welcome in the season of Christmas.
- December 21st will be the Winter Solstice Service at First Congregational Church. More information to come.

12:40pm

- **Guest - Anne Ching, SVUSD Trustee and Board Member**

Anne has attended SVUSD board meetings for over 20 years since her own kids were in preschool here.

-Some stats: we have a lot of high needs kids in our district, 2/3 of our students are Latino, 30% are English language learners, 15.2% are Special Education students, which is higher than the state average for CA schools. In 2022 only 40% of our 3rd grade students were reading at grade level. A new reading curriculum (Wonders) has now been adopted as it has a large Spanish component.

-Our district is a high poverty district with over 60% of our families at a socio-economic disadvantage. It doesn't represent the "image" of our community. The median annual income of our families living in Fetters and Agua Caliente is less than \$30,000. We have a crisis of declining student enrollment as families in need of public education can no longer afford to live in Sonoma and are moving out of the valley.

-We have acute mental health issues on all campuses. There have been over one thousand drop in visits at the High School Wellness Center where each student can feel supported and be evaluated and offered assistance. Middle Schools are seeing increases in suicide ideology. Social media and device usage is in the lead for influencing the student mental health crisis. Schools are being expected to solve the problem and they have tried to limit use of personal cell phones and other devices during school hours but parents expect their children to have their phones accessible all day. Parent education is needed. Parents are at a loss as to how to help their children, it feels like they have given up although they need to be the leading part of the solutions. What can we do? Is there a way for our congregations to offer parent education and teacher support? Who will do this? We need to lead the discussions with the mental health piece and suicide prevention offering a community of support for anyone who needs it.

-What's going well? We have strong financials for student spending. We are at Basic Aid Level which allows us to keep our tax revenue and we have good resources. The district has invested a significant amount of money in mental health by adding psychologists at every school, hiring more social workers, adding the two Wellness Centers including one at the High School, improving HVAC, plumbing and other infrastructure at many schools.

- We have hired a very competent superintendent, Jeanette Rodriguez-Chien, who had been deputy superintendent for the San Diego County Office of Education since July 2020. She oversaw school districts large and small and has models of what success looks like for districts like ours. She is a driven leader and thus far staff are stable and want to work with her. See the IT article [here](#).
- If anyone wants to reach out to Anne with any questions or suggestions please email her at aching.trustee@sonomaschools.org

- **Closing** - Curran offers a closing blessing.
- **Next meeting:** Wednesday, October 25th, 12pm-1pm, our guest will be Eric Gonzalez of the Boys & Girls Club of Sonoma Valley and we will review our Thanksgiving service program and plans.
- **KSVY - Please mark your date on your calendar.** If you are not available on your assigned date please find someone on the list to trade with. The studio is located at 680 W. Napa Street Sonoma. The call in number is 707-933-9133. The information is on their website www.ksvy.org

October 3	Dave Gould	dgould837@gmail.com
October 10	Steve Finley	rabbisteve.shirshalom@gmail.com
October 17	Matt Pearson	matthewalexanderpearson@gmail.com
October 24	Pam Nadeau	singingdogs@vom.com
October 31	Manette Fairmont	manetteart@aol.com