

Atonement Council Minutes for August 28, 2025 at 7:00pm

Council Attendees (11/11)

Matt Badding (zoom)	Lyn Bowers	Angie Brickson
Genevieve Brown	Cathy Dykman-Acinger	Tim McCandless
Greg Moffitt	Jeremy Otto	Neil Pfeiffer
Dave Stelzer	Laura Trentadue	

Other Attendees

Pastor Zac Sturm, Toni Pearson, Nathan Choate, Dave James, Pat Bjuland (zoom), Traci Johnson (zoom)

OPENING

Opening Devotions – Neil Pfeiffer

Friendly Fellowship – Jeremy Otto

- Everyone was invited to share their favorite card game and/or board game currently or growing up.

President's Direction – Cathy Dykman-Acinger

- Refresher of Atonement's Vision Statement: "God's Love, Our Foundation, Grow Deep, Reach Wide", we often forget the first part -- God's Love [is] Our Foundation.
- President's personal request for each of us for, for each of the five goals, for this next month:
 - **Be purpose driven** – Connect with "Our Foundation" (Christ's Love) each day by spending time in the Word through daily devotion, Bible study, prayer, etc.
 - **Building community** – Each week make a new connection with a visitor or a member.
 - **Enabling the Saints** – Connect with the Staff person or Ministry team that you are a liaison for, work towards the formation of a team for your area and getting people involved. Also, make sure to thank people for their efforts.
 - **Efficiency** – Please don't wait until the day before Council meeting to connect with your ministry area.
 - **It's about Joy** – We are surrounded by gifts from God in human form, the wonderful saints that we have here at Atonement: staff, members, dedicated ministry volunteers, visitors. Let's Choose joy and exude a positive spirit!

Monthly Ministry Highlight – Pastor Zac

Horizons Stewardship: Strategic Planning Workshop Recap and Next Steps

- Highlights from the work with Mark Meyer & Strategic Planning: Workshop was held Saturday, August 16th (6 hours) & Sunday, August 17th (5 hours). Workshop was just the kickoff. The full planning process is now in progress and continues over the next 6-12 months.
- PZ will be Zooming with Mark in September, and Mark will be back at Atonement in October.
- Some example early questions pulled out from the workshop:
 - » Are we more excited about our future or about our past?
 - » What status of Atonement do we want to leave behind – nourishing to us but not at functional capacity vs. incorporating change and bringing in new leaders?
 - » What can we do to welcome and minister effectively to people in the 25-45 age demographic?
- Currently 3 Priority Teams have started and are in progress:
 - » Next Level Generosity: (PZ, Toni, et al) How do we change our culture of giving? How do we use stories to connect members to our mission?
 - » Sunday Morning Experience Team: (PZ, Jim Peine, et al) What is Sunday like for visitors? Is it warm & inspirational? How we build instant connection with visitors?
 - » Communications/Identity Team: Who are we? (Nathan, Nikki Esser, et al) What makes us unique? What is our identity and our brand, how we best express it?

REPORT ROUNDTABLE

July Minutes

- **MOTION #1:** (Angie Brickson moves, Lyn Bowers seconds)
Motion to approve the council meeting minutes from July 24, 2025, without corrections.
 - 10 voting members present: **all verbal Ayes, no verbal Nays, Motion Carries**

Pastor's Report – Pastor Zac

- Will be pausing the Wednesday evening Bible Study Class for this school year and instead will use that time to focus on time that will be needed for Horizon's Stewardship, plus 1-on-1 visits helping to take on some of the Ros used to do. Wednesday noon Bible Study class will continue.

Ministry & Staff Reports

- Read through each Staff Report's "*Requested Support from Council*", items of note:
 - » Continue to check in with Pastor Jordan with how things are going as well as what is upcoming.
 - » Supporting Toni in her request to change her work schedule, switching Fridays to Sundays, and helping her find the best method to support transition of the Friday Al-Anon group to another day, another location, or best way.
 - » Continued prayers for Communication ministry, with openness to change & being receptive to the Horizons Strategic Planning ideas.
 - » Prayers for the students as they are starting the program year.

Treasurer's Report – Mike Daley

July 2025

Topline & Giving

- July ended \$38,000 better than budget, a surplus of \$41,000
- General Fund giving was \$10,000 better than budget
- Dedicated giving to Campus Sustainment was \$4,000
- July year-to-date total deficit is now –\$8,300, better from the budgeted deficit plan of –\$71,000

Balance Sheet

- Cash balances are:
 - \$187,000 in unrestricted cash (prior month: \$167,000)
 - \$211,000 in restricted cash (prior month: \$221,000)
 - \$399,000 total (prior month: \$388,000)
 - *Cash flow and Unrestricted Cash of \$187K remains concerning, as it includes advanced giving of \$106,000.*
- Advanced giving balance is \$106,000 (prior month: \$127,000)
- Campus Sustainment is at \$90,000 (prior month: \$101,000)

Budget

- Expenses were \$8,000 better than budget with the following line-item variances noted:
 - Better: Office \$1,000 ⇒ due to timing
 - Better: Payroll \$6,500 ⇒ vacant positions and lower hourly expense
 - Better: Property \$2,000 ⇒ due to lower HVAC expense
 - Better: Worship: \$1,300 ⇒ *Worship YTD is \$3,000 over budget, after including \$3,300 grant from the foundation*
 - Worse: Youth \$1,900 ⇒ primarily due to higher mission trip costs
 - Better: Benevolence \$1,000 ⇒ reduced per Council directive 4/24/25
- Year-to-date general expenses are \$20,000 better budget (prior month: \$33,000 better).
- Year-to-date general fund giving is \$1,000 better than budget (prior month: \$9,000 worse).
- Year-to-date Campus Sustainment: \$56,000 + \$50,000* (*\$12,500 transfer stopped 4/24/25)
 - Anticipated Campus Sustainment remaining to be given: \$59,000 (total planned is \$115,000)
- Year-to-date deficit actual is –\$8,300 (year-to-date deficit plan was –\$71,000).
- Year-to-date total variance is now \$62,000 better than budget (prior month: \$25,000 better).

Horizons Stewardship Report – Pastor Zac

- Recap of Strategic Planning with Mark Meyer covered in Monthly Ministry Highlight.
- Horizons completed the Next Level Generosity Discovery Report, Dustin Cooper presented to the Executive Committee, was very comprehensive and guidance for Atonement is very encouraging. Next Level Generosity (NLG) team is currently being formed and will get the presentation next so they can start deciding how best to implement suggestions.

Operations & Properties Report – Toni Pearson & Dave Stelzer

- Campus Sustainment Fund balance as of July month-end was \$90,000. Suggestion for Council to start to consider exploring a special appeal, or loan/line-of-credit for upcoming major repairs.
- The Building Automation System was just completed this afternoon (August 28th) and Toni now has control over the new system, and we'll have to pay bill soon.
- For our future planning: the air conditioner for the Sanctuary has an extremely high likelihood of not working next summer. It is currently leaking, only half is functional and most likely will not make it another summer. It needs to be specially ordered 3-6 months in advance to be manufactured, so a decision and funding will need to be in place by November.
- The lower-level Sunday School area does not have functioning air conditioning or heat, but less of an immediate fix needed due to being below ground level.
- Two A/C units in the Narthex are also needing to be replaced. Bids need to be reacquired; tariffs have made prices go up dramatically.
- Small elevator getting brakes repaired, hoping that makes it functional again, required to be operational by building code.

Initiatives

- Reconciling In Christ & Welcome: Neil Pfeiffer and Angie Brickson presented the proposal Welcome Journey Conversations plan with two goals (1) "keep the congregation whole" and (2) "clarity as to our public commitment to living as a Welcoming faith community".
- The proposed Welcome Journey consists of four parts:
 - » Part 1: *"What is Reconciling in Christ?"* a forum with Deacon David Behling to help answer questions and address any concerns about the national program and ReconcilingWorks as a partner ministry to the ELCA.
 - » Part 2: *"What does welcoming & affirming mean to the community around us?"* a forum focused on hearing outside voices from community ELCA churches, with Pastor Michael Peck from Holy Cross and potentially other guests.
 - » Part 3: *"Help us to better see & hear each other."* a one question survey to the congregation asking their position on a proposed revision to the Welcome Statement, affirming commitment to ourselves and community, as well a component of gauging support for the Reconciling In Christ program, affirming commitment to ReconcilingWorks.
 - » Part 4: *"Where do we go from here?"* a congregational meeting to review the survey results, create understanding of the spectrum of convictions, and decide on next steps. If the results are above a threshold of support the congregation may choose to vote on adopting (1) the Welcome Statement revisions and (2) the Reconciling in Christ program.

- The proposed revisions to Atonement's Welcome Statement are as follows:
(KEY: Removals are indicated with ~~Strikethrough~~; Additions are indicated with **Bold Text**.)

All **You** Are Welcome **Here**

Atonement Lutheran Church believes that all people are created by God and share the same need for forgiveness, hope and healing. Even on issues where it is difficult to reach a consensus, Atonement desires to reflect the love of Jesus with a welcoming spirit. Moving beyond the common distinctions of race, national origin, age, ~~gender, physical, mental and emotional condition or capacity,~~ **physical and mental ability**, political perspective, personal history, marital status, sexual orientation, **gender identity and expression**, economic or social situation, we seek to invite and welcome all people to experience God's love and grace.

Atonement strives to proclaim the Good News through worship and daily life, and to make disciples of all by nurturing faith. All people in a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ are encouraged to let God's Spirit deepen their relationship. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to grow spiritually through worship, prayer, Bible study, fellowship and service as we participate fully in the life of this congregation.

Atonement endeavors to serve God through the discovery and use of spiritual gifts and to share God's mercy and hope to a world in need, **working for racial equity, justice, and peace**. Our intention is to be ambassadors of Christ's love in the world. The life-giving work of Christ is accomplished as we discover and use the gifts that God has given us in our daily life and work.

- The Council considered the following two motions for the Welcome Journey Conversations:
 - » **MOTION #2:** (Lyn Bowers moves, Tim McCandless seconds)
Motion to approve the proposal revisions to Atonement's Welcome Statement as the version to put before the congregation for feedback as part of the Welcome Journey Conversations.
 - 10 voting members present: **all verbal Ayes, no verbal Nays, Motion Carries**
 - » **MOTION #3:** (Lyn Bowers moves, Laura Trentadue & Jeremy Otto seconds)
Motion to approve the proposal Welcome Journey Conversations plan as presented with 4 parts to help the congregation arrive at clarity as to Atonement's public commitment to living as a Welcoming faith community.
 - 10 voting members present: **all verbal Ayes, no verbal Nays, Motion Carries**

Up Next & Open Discussion

- Organizing & Orienting the Next Level Generosity (NLG) team, Pastor Zac & Dustin Cooper working with Keith Mundy & Dennis Allerheiligen to lead the team.
- Next Council Meeting there is a date conflict.
 - » Vocal agreement to move date a week earlier to Thursday, September 18, 2025 at 7:00pm.

CLOSING

Closing Song

- **The Servant Song** sung by David Haas, lyrics by Richard Gillard
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gia8mhVhWBk>

Adjourn at 9:10pm

Recorded by: Neil Pfeiffer

Submitted for council review: 09/16/2025

Approved: 09/18/2025