

Atonement Council Minutes for November 20, 2025 at 7:00pm

Council Attendees (10/11)

Matt Badding	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, Mike Daley, Toni Pearson,
Traci Johnson (zoom), Pat Bjuland (zoom), Pastor Jordan (zoom)

OPENING

Opening Devotions – Genieve Brown

- Inspirational children's book: "What Do You Do with a Problem," written by Kobi Yamada, illustrated by Mae Besom, 2016.

Friendly Fellowship – Tim McCandless

- Everyone was invited to share which "this or that" best described each of us. The two questions were "Beach or Mountains" and "Salty or Sweet".

President's Direction – Cathy Dykman-Acinger

- Since our last meeting, some really big things have happened with our two recent Congregational Meetings (voting on Reconciling in Christ, as well as voting to move forward on a Campus Sustainment capital campaign and securing a construction loan), we are starting to Rise.
- Cathy is personally grateful to be in leadership at Atonement right now because it gives her the opportunity to get to meet all of us on the Atonement Council and Staff, went around and gave personal messages of appreciate for everyone.

REPORT ROUNDTABLE

October Minutes

- **MOTION #1:** (Angie Brickson moves, Lyn Bowers seconds)
Motion to approve the council meeting minutes from October 23, 2025, without corrections.
 - 9 voting members present: **all verbal Ayes, no Nays, Motion Carries**

October New Members

- **MOTION #2:** (Greg Moffitt moves, Tim McCandless seconds)
Motion to receive the 12 new members that joined Atonement on October 26, 2025.
 - 9 voting members present: **all verbal Ayes, no Nays, Motion Carries**
 - New Members: Rod & Joan Bellows, Curtis & Debbie DeWitt, Holden & Anika Hartley, Phyllis Hicks, Victoria Olson, Donna & David Seely, John & Tamera Skeans.

Pastor's Report – Pastor Zac

- Horizons Stewardship (1) – Next Level Generosity (NLG) Update:
 - » The NLG team has been meeting and making plans for the offering talks starting in the new year.
- Horizons Stewardship (2) – Strategy Planning Update:
 - » Focus continues to be on Sam & Emma, main movement so far has been on the new visitors, having designated people reach out and establishing positive connections.
 - » Have also started Pizza with the Pastors, as well as Atonement 101. Next steps will be focusing on how to keep Sam & Emma engaged beyond Sundays: service, fellowship, discipleship, etc.
- Horizons Stewardship (3) – Capital Campaign:
 - » First Impressions Gathering (FIG) meeting was last night (Wednesday, Oct 22) – Craig Finnestad, (pastor at The Water's Edge Church in Omaha, Nebraska and on the Horizons staff) said that it was the largest most well attended FIG meeting that he has been a part of. 30 minutes interviews with Craig will be in December, and surveys will go out to congregation also in December. Starting in the new year will be small gatherings, sermons, and build to May 17th.
- Pastor Zac has been in conversation with Interim Pastor Jalene Marple at Salem Lutheran Church
 - » Salem's Council has invited Atonement's Council to get together for an informal meeting, thinking about what could happen if both congregations could or might come together.
 - » They would love to get together & to meet each other, have a listening session – and just see where the conversation goes – what ideas & questions everyone would have, discuss opportunities and possibilities. Salem has 4 families that come to Atonement for confirmation.
 - » Plan will be to get together December 21st around dinnertime, 5pm-ish.

Ministry & Staff Reports

- Council Discussions:
 - » KFam: there was great energy with the kids' choir service that just happened. Upcoming is the kids Christmas Program, which will be December 14th.
 - » Boo's report had the evaluations from the Parenting Class, extremely positive results.
 - » Drew's report had positive numbers for YFam event attendance, highest PZ has seen.
 - » Lyn & Outreach are looking for opportunities to engage congregation and spend down the current surplus that has been building in the Outreach Ministry budget, currently at \$18,000.
- Read through each Staff Report's "*Requested Support from Council*", items of note:
 - » Please help greet people after and before worship. The connections are incredibly important.
 - » Continuing to work on process to create (and annually review) a charter document for each lay team committee.

Treasurer's Report – Mike Daley & Tim McCandless

October 2025

Topline & Giving

- October ended \$9,000 better than budget, with a surplus of \$1,000
- General Fund giving was \$15,000 below budget
- Dedicated giving to Campus Sustainment was \$8,000
- October year-to-date total **surplus** now \$14,442; better from budgeted deficit plan of -\$109,312

Balance Sheet

- Cash balances are:
 - \$147,000 in unrestricted cash (prior month: \$167,000)
 - \$189,000 in restricted cash (prior month: \$182,000)
 - \$336,000 total (prior month: \$350,000)
 - \$105K free cash balance: *Unrestricted Cash of \$147K remains concerning, as it includes advanced giving of \$42,000.*
- Advanced giving balance is \$42,000 (prior month: \$64,000)
- Campus Sustainment is at \$65,000 (prior month: \$57,000)

Budget

- Expenses were \$12,000 better than budget with the following line-item variances noted:
 - Better: Payroll \$5,500 ⇒ vacant positions and lower hourly expense
 - Better: Property \$5,500 ⇒ due to timing
 - Worse: Utilities \$2,500 ⇒ higher KS Gas and higher water bills
 - Worse: Worship: \$1,000 ⇒ Worship YTD remains in-line with budget
 - Better: KFam & YFam \$1,000 ⇒ due to timing
 - Better: Benevolence \$1,000 ⇒ reduced per Council directive 5/22/25
 - Better: all other categories \$1,000
- Year-to-date general expenses are \$21,000 better budget (prior month: \$9,000 better).
- Year-to-date general fund giving is \$25,000 better than budget (prior month: \$41,000 better).
- Year-to-date Campus Sustainment: \$77,600 + \$50,000* (*\$12,500 transfer stopped 4/24/25)
 - Anticipated Campus Sustainment remaining to be given: \$46,000 (total planned is \$115,000)
- Year-to-date surplus actual is \$14,442 (year-to-date deficit plan was -\$109,312).
- Year-to-date total variance is now \$124,000 better than budget (prior month: \$115,000 better).

End of Year Budget Adjustment Proposals

- Based on the past months being ahead of budget, due to the increased awareness of our needs, we have the potential of ending the year with a surplus above plan, which could potentially allow us to true-up specific line items that Council reduced at May Council Meeting (5/22/2025) in order to shore up the General Fund shortfall experienced during the first 4 months of the year.

- First item discussed to true-up was the amount that was originally planned to be transferred to Campus Sustainment from the General Fund: \$12,500 per month at 8 months = \$100,000.
- Second item discussed to true-up was to give the missing difference from the original commitment to Central States Synod, which was originally budgeted at \$4,925 per month, but was reduced \$4,425 (less \$500) per month starting in May, which for 8 months would be \$4000.
- **MOTION #3:** (Jeremy Otto moves, Lyn Bowers seconds)

Motion is for the opportunity at 2025 year-end to fund Campus Sustainment and reconcile the expense reduction action directed by Council in May 2025. It is agreed that based on the results of December giving and the judgement of the Treasurer, if the General Fund financial balance at year's end is at a surplus, to transfer surplus monies to Campus Sustainment up to a maximum of the original budgeted amount of \$100,000.00 prior to closing 2025 records, booking the expense in December 2025 and moving the monies in January 2026.

 - 9 voting members present: **all verbal Ayes, no Nays, Motion Carries**
- **MOTION #4:** (Matt Badding moves, Tim McCandless seconds)

Motion is for the opportunity to reconcile the benevolence expense reduction action directed by Council in May 2025, specifically the original commitment to Central States Synod for 2025. It is agreed that prior to the end of year 2025, give to the Central States Synod the amount of \$4000.00, which will make up for the reduction of \$500 per month for a period of eight (8) months.

 - 9 voting members present: **all verbal Ayes, no Nays, Motion Carries**

Operations & Properties Report – Toni Pearson & Dave Stelzer

- Campus Sustainment Fund balance as of October month-end was \$65,000.
- Patrick, with the help of Traci's nimble fingers, were able to replace the lightbulbs over the mirror in the women's restroom, which has been burnt out for perhaps 20-ish years or so.
- Sewer gas smell was contracted to be fixed by working on the rusted sump-pump damper, that work has not been completed yet, so Toni is working on getting someone else to do the work.
- The heating/cooling system for the sloping hallway has quit and is dead. There is concern pipes could freeze if not functioning and replaced. It was shutdown to prevent it from giving off CO2 into the church. Toni has an initial bid to replace the high efficiency heat-pump-style unit at around \$11,205 from an Atonement-established vendor. The current unit is 28 years old, outliving its original contracted service life of 8-18 years.
- **MOTION #5:** (Jeremy Otto moves, Greg Moffitt seconds)

Motion is for Toni Pearson, Director of Operations, to replace the F-03 HVAC Unit that services the sloping east hallway for approximately \$11,000 to be paid out of Campus Sustainment.

 - 9 voting members present: **all verbal Ayes, no Nays, Motion Carries**

UP NEXT & OPEN DISCUSSION

Reflections on Welcome Journey & RIC – Neil Pfeiffer, Angie Brickson, & Council

- Council discussed their impressions and reflections on the Welcome Journey process, and the survey and vote for Reconciling in Christ at the congregational meeting.
 - » There were many individuals and couples that expressed positive feedback towards the process and how it was centered on being respectful and inclusive of all perspectives.
 - » Unfortunately, we have heard that 2 members have chosen to leave Atonement, the door remains open for them to return, and we pray they find a new church home they will love.
 - » Council had positive discussions as to the large number of people who participated, more than typical for when recent pastors have been called. Plus, there were members present for the Congregational Meeting to participate in the Conversation that haven't been active and at Atonement in a long time.
- The verified results of the Congregational Vote from October 26, 2025:
 - » 204 members signed in to the meeting, and 203 ballots were received and counted.
 - » For motion #1, **Motion to Amend Continuing Resolution [C8.01.A13] Statement of Welcome and Affirmation of the Atonement Lutheran Church Constitution**, the results were:
 - Yes (181) 89.2%
 - No (17) 8.4%
 - Abstain (5) 2.4%
 - » For motion #2, **Motion to Become a Reconciling in Christ Congregation**, the results were:
 - Yes (163) 80.3%
 - No (32) 15.7%
 - Abstain (8) 4%

2026 Budget Draft Review – Mike Daley & Council

- The number of pledge responses for 2026 so far is higher than typical for this time of year, and the amount per pledge card commitment is higher as well. This positive sign gives Mike the confidence that we can raise the next year's topline budget amount over the past 2 years, increasing it by 4%.
 - » Some of the line-item increases include one-time budget costsof \$32K for Stewardship earmarked for Horizons Stewardship, plus restoring funding for KFam VBS.
 - » The overall total payroll and salary is lower for this next year due to the reduction of one staff person, though the individual salaries have increased and benefit costs have notably increased.
 - » There is still a little bit of room for increases in staff costs again for the next year or so.
- Council consensus was to keep the commitment to Central States Synod flat with the 2025 amount.
- Council members are encouraged to continue to work with your staff members and committee leads to finalize their requests for a final budget.

Mission Investment Fund Loan Update – Mike Daley

- Mike has been in communication with MIF, he has received their initial pricing with interest rate, which was higher than he expected and higher than the initial rate a year ago. He'll continue to evaluate the terms, the rate, and working to determine how to finalize with MIF or path to explore getting terms from other lenders. He'll keep the Council and Executive Committee informed.

December Council Meeting

- Cathy will host at her house on December 18th; we'll move the start time up to 6:30pm.

CLOSING

Closing Prayer

- **For Everyone Born**, First-Plymouth Church Lincoln Nebraska (FirstPVideos), 2013
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmUlJvzRaI4>

Adjourn at 9:20pm

Recorded by: Neil Pfeiffer

Submitted for council review: 12/16/2025

Approved: 12/18/2025