



Welcome Journey Conversations

In continuing the discussion about welcome, inclusion, racial equity, and social justice at Atonement – we plan to journey forward with a conversation in four parts, with two clear & purposeful goals, guiding us as our roadmap:

Primary Goal Keep the congregation whole.

Secondary Goal Find clarity as to our public commitment to living as a Welcoming faith community.

Our commitment for these conversations is not to have a predetermined outcome or destination in mind, or to use them to persuade each other in order to arrive at a unison, but to hear new information, and to help us more clearly see & hear each other's diverse perspectives that come from the beautiful quilt of experiences here at Atonement.

We invite you to ask questions, be curious, listen to each other, and have a dialogue about how we can journey together.

Part 1 ASK & DISCUSS

What is Reconciling in Christ?

When

Saturday, Sept 13, 6–7pm
in the Gathering Place

Sunday, Sept 14, 9:45–10:45am
in Charter Hall

About

Deacon David Behling, Program Coordinator from ReconcilingWorks, will come and share information about the Reconciling in Christ program, the journey of committing to living as a welcoming & affirming community, and be here to answer questions and concerns.

Purpose

To have an open discussion, allowing those who have never heard of Reconciling in Christ to know more, to clarify misperceptions, and to allow for conversation about concerns and oppositions.



Part 2 ASK & DISCUSS

What does welcoming & affirming mean to the community around us?

When

Sunday, Oct 5, 6–7pm

About

A forum with Senior Pastor Michael Peck from Holy Cross, Pastor Zac, and Pastor Jordan, (possibly others), to hear from voices in the community around us about what a public commitment represents to visitors & guests, as well as to our fellow ELCA Lutherans.

Purpose

To have a “Clunky Questions” forum, allowing for an open discussion about opportunities, concerns, perceptions, positive or negative impacts, focusing specifically on those around us from outside our church.



Part 3 GATHER RESPONSES

Help us to better see & hear each other.

When

Saturday, Oct 4 until
Sunday, Oct 19

About

Provide a survey question to the congregation asking their position on the Welcome Statement revision proposal (updating the commitment to ourselves and community), as well as a component of gauging support for the national Reconciling In Christ program (commitment or concern for Reconciling Works).

Purpose

To help Atonement clearly see who we are before proceeding with a vote or final conversation, the goal is not to try and convince of one position over the other, but to create respect and appreciation for where everyone is.

Part 4 REVIEW & DECIDE

Where do we go from here?

When

Sunday, Oct 26, 12pm
Reformation Sunday

About

Request a congregational meeting to review the survey results. Prior to conducting the survey, the possible outcomes with suggestions as to next steps will be communicated. If the results are above a 75% threshold of support, the recommendation to congregation will be to have a final open discussion, followed by a private vote on whether to adopt (1) the Welcome Statement revisions and (2) the Reconciling in Christ program.

Purpose

Create understanding of the spectrum of convictions & keep the congregation whole through that understanding.





Proposal to revise our Welcome Statement

As part of the Welcome Journey Conversations, an important step will be to reflect on our current Welcome Statement and discern if it still clearly communicates to others Atonement Lutheran Church's public commitment to living as a fully Welcoming faith community on a lifelong journey.


Why should we consider updating our Welcome Statement? Many LGBTQIA+, Black, Brown, Indigenous, and people of color have learned by experience that they are not welcome in some faith communities, even in ones that state, "All are welcome!" A general statement of welcome is often heard as meaning "everybody but me," so it can take a special effort to communicate an authentic welcome.

The following are a proposed set of revisions to our Welcome Statement suggested by the Council, that keeps the history of our authentic welcome with updates to extend a more current invitation to all. The intent is to best reflect Atonement Lutheran Church at this moment, resonate with community around us, and continue to convey the unique and diverse faith community we desire to be. In October, we will gather feedback from the congregation in a survey as Part 3 of our Welcome Journey Conversations.

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.

"You Are Welcome Here"

Why is this important?

The phrase "All Are Welcome" has been used at times by those extending a conditional welcome, implying individuals must change their identity to be accepted.

Changing from "All" to "You" creates a personal invitation. "You Are Welcome Here" captures the desire to be diverse, friendly, and inviting.

"physical and mental ability"

Why is this important?

Each of our bodies and minds contain a different range of abilities. Changing from "condition or capacity" to "ability" celebrates what makes us each unique.

"gender identity and expression"

Why is this important?

Stating "gender" alone does not make a clear commitment towards accepting that someone's experience and interaction with the world can be more complex than our sex assigned at birth.

Welcoming all gender identities and expressions names commitment to full inclusion for LGBTQIA+, accepting everyone exactly as they are.

"working for racial equity, justice, and peace"

Why is this important?

As an ELCA congregation, our constitution calls on us to "Respond to human need, **work for justice and peace**, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society." (C4.03.f)

"Working for racial equity, justice, and peace" states our commitment to the systematic fair treatment of all races, going beyond the absence of bias and discrimination by seeking to create a just and peaceful world.