

Atonement Lutheran Church

Welcome Journey Conversations Survey Information

Thank you for taking the time to provide your position on the two questions in this survey. This will provide better clarity and direction for Atonement as our congregation discerns how best to more fully live into our public commitment as a Welcoming faith community.

Purpose of this Survey	We recognize that Atonement is a beautiful quilt of diverse perspectives and life experiences. The purpose of this survey is to help us better see and hear each other, so that we might more fully understand the shape of perspectives toward our Welcome Statement and the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) program. Our commitment for this process is to listen to each other, to recognize the journey of conversations thus far, and to ask for guidance from the Holy Spirit.
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Question 1

How do you feel about Atonement revising our Welcome Statement with the proposed changes, if you were asked to vote today?

Proposal to Revise the Welcome Statement	Why should we consider updating our Welcome Statement? Many people have learned by experience that they are not welcome in some faith communities, even in ones that say, “All are welcome.” The following proposed revision keeps with our history of authentic welcome, updated to extend a more current invitation to all, resonate with the community around us, and best convey the unique and diverse faith community we desire to be.
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Welcome Statement change proposal

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. [Strikethrough] indicates current text being removed. [Bold] indicates new text being added.
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Why are these changes important?	“You Are Welcome Here” 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” 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” 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 the commitment to full inclusion for LGBTQIA+, accepting everyone exactly as they are. “working for racial equity, justice, and peace” 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.” (Atonement Constitution: C4.03.f) Adding this phrase 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.
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Question 2 How do you feel about Atonement becoming a Reconciling in Christ partner congregation, if you were asked to vote today?

What is Reconciling in Christ?

The Reconciling in Christ (RIC) program equips Lutheran communities to proclaim and practice a public welcome to people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, mental abilities, physical abilities, races, ethnicities, and individuals who have felt excluded from the church.

The program is sponsored by ReconcilingWorks, an independent non-profit organization and a recognized partner ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), though it does not receive funding from any Lutheran denomination. ReconcilingWorks is funded by the generosity of individuals, faith communities, grants, and from curated resources and trainings.

Commitments to be a recognized Reconciling in Christ partner congregation

- 1. Clearly state a welcome to people of "all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions" or "LGBTQIA+" and names its commitment to "racial equity" or "anti-racism" in its Welcome Statement.
- 2. Be open to calling LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC (Black, Brown, Indigenous, Person of Color) Rostered Leaders.
- 3. Allow sanctuary/community space to be used for LGBTQIA+ weddings and blessings.
- 4. Make a meaningful contribution annually to support the national Reconciling in Christ (RIC) program.

For more information: <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/ric/becomeric/>

Commitments at Atonement

- Atonement may discern whether to revise our current Welcome Statement in order to better live out the first commitment.
- Atonement already lives out the second and third commitments.
- Atonement as an organization currently does not make a contribution to the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) program.

Atonement has a committed history of creating a community where all people can experience belonging, serve in leadership, and share fully in the life and ministry of the church. If called to also be a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation, it will help to better signal that commitment to those around us.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does ReconcilingWorks determine what happens at Atonement?

No, ReconcilingWorks serves as a resource for each faith group to choose how best to utilize, and they help to maintain the RIC network that allows congregations and faith groups to connect, partner, and share ministries.

Does a contribution to the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) program need to come from Atonement’s general fund benevolence budget?

No, each faith group decides how they want to make a contribution. Some churches designate a specific Sunday or noisy offering once a year as a way to collect gifts from members that are moved to give to ReconcilingWorks.

Can we revise our Welcome Statement and decide not to be a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) partner?

Yes, if there is support for updating our Welcome Statement, it can be a separate consideration. The ELCA has many churches that are not yet an RIC partner, and many may have Welcome Statements that meaningfully commit to accepting all.

However, our ELCA neighboring churches who are RIC partners have told us that the individuals they have welcomed in from the community around us, having felt excluded, intentionally sought out their church because the Reconciling in Christ symbol was a clear signal of safety for them. It shows that a congregation has gone through difficult conversations in making a continued commitment to living a journey of awareness and acceptance, affirming that God’s love & grace are for everyone. Not having a clear sign as to who is welcome is a signal of caution and risk for those whom we are seeking to invite.

Atonement Lutheran Church
Welcome Journey Conversations Survey

Instructions

This survey is available in both printed and digital formats. We ask each voting member of Atonement Lutheran Church to fill out only ONE SURVEY per person, either printed OR digital.

Link to digital survey:


<https://bit.ly/3KHvf2Q>

For each question, please select ONE response. If undecided, please write in your additional response.

Question 1

How do you feel about Atonement revising our Welcome Statement with the proposed changes, if you were asked to vote today?

☐

I would support the proposed changes to our Welcome Statement

☐

I would lean towards support for the proposed changes to our Welcome Statement

☐

I am undecided about the proposed changes to our Welcome Statement

☐

I would lean towards concern for the proposed changes to our Welcome Statement

☐

I would not support the proposed changes to our Welcome Statement

☐

I would neither support nor oppose the proposed changes to our Welcome Statement

(Optional)
If concerned or undecided,
I would appreciate more:

e.g. scriptural engagement... education... conversation...

Question 2

How do you feel about Atonement becoming a Reconciling in Christ partner congregation, if you were asked to vote today?

☐

I would support Atonement becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation

☐

I would lean towards support for Atonement becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation

☐

I am undecided about Atonement becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation

☐

I would lean towards concern for Atonement becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation

☐

I would not support Atonement becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation

☐

I would neither support nor oppose Atonement becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation

(Optional)
If concerned or undecided,
I would appreciate more:

e.g. scriptural engagement... education... conversation...

Additional

(Optional) For the questions above, if your preferred response was not listed, or if you have an additional response or request to share with the congregation to help us **better see and hear each other**, please include it here:

Your survey responses and feedback will be shared with the congregation as part of the Welcome Journey Conversations next steps.