



The Lutheran Church of the Atonement

2019 Survey Summary

2019 Strategic Process Survey Results

Thank you to all who participated in the Strategic Process Team's survey.

The results of the survey are helping us as we determine the direction of The Lutheran Church of the Atonement as we head into the future. Below is a summary of the results. In some cases, we summarized in other cases, we pulled in some of the direct quotes. **We Still Want to Hear From You!** The SP team will be hosting 3 open forums where we invite you to come to go further in your response and to ask us questions. The 3 forums are:

November 17, between worship services. The location will be announced that morning.

November 21, Two sessions: 2:00 pm and 6:30 pm. Both will be in the family room.

We hope to see you at one of the forums. Please feel free to speak with Pastor Dan if you cannot attend one of these forums but have more input.

On Behalf of the Strategic Process Team

Blessings,

Pastor Dan Johnson

Below are summaries of individual questions. Overall several themes stood out.

- 1) Relationships matter. In multiple questions, the use of relationships and people came through time and time again.
- 2) Worship Matters. Worship and the sermons were a common thread for people feeling connected — many positive comments about the sermons and worship. However, there were several responses asking for a change in worship.
- 3) The community around us was brought up many times, and people want us to be better engaged in and with the community around us.
- 4) School. The school is a reoccurring response. Many people sited the school as a reason for their connection to the church or lifted it in other ways. There was also a hope for the continuation of the school.
- 5) Finances. Several people pointed to the financial situation of the church, and many of those mentioned hope for the stability of the church finances as we move forward.

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Question 1-What are the top reasons you decided to become part of Atonement?

The main response was people joined because of other people. Family, Friends, relationships. People were common answers. The School was also mentioned frequently.

"I was looking for a church. My in laws were members here." "Friendly people Christ centered"

"close to where I lived, parents did go there and enjoyed the people I knew that went there."

"I feel comfortable here and appreciate the people," "Sunday services and opportunities Atonement provides for helping others."

"I was looking for a church that had a doctrine I could stand behind and a church my husband and I could agree upon given our different denominational backgrounds."

"child was attending the school and liked the pastor"

"I had family members who were members of Atonement and I also wanted to start my small children in Sunday School and eventually school."

"We liked the people that were friendly and that wouldn't turn away when approached because we weren't part of the "in crowd"."

"Fellowship, family and faith" "It supports Lutheran education at the elementary and high school level."

Question 2-What at Atonement feeds your faith

There is a main focus on worship, pastors, music, and sermons, followed by fellowship, ministry, and Bible study.

47 out of 63 mentioned Worship, sermons, pastors and or music.

Many participants listed more than one reason.

23 mentioned Fellowship (caring people and relationships fall in this group)

16 mentioned ministry

9 mentioned Bible study

"A great community of people, the meaningful and relevant sermons, and the inspirational music."

"Pastor Mueller's messages delivered in his sermons, The care the congregation gives to it's elder members"

"Relationships, preaching, music, opportunities for service"

"Worship, music, friendly and welcoming faces." "Singing at Worship. Prayer vigils."

"The pastors, people, and there belief and how they help and reach out to others,"

"Pastor's message. That's about it."

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"The passion of the pastoral staff. The incredible support of the parish nurses." "When Sermons Connect w/ real things that happen in the World"

"I love to see church members come together for a greater purpose" "The teaching and preaching of God's Word. And the friendly people we share the faith. Also my worshipping in reverence and meditation."

"The Atonement family and community; the activities the ladies group's put on, and especially the youth program."

"The people. The church is big enough to blend in but small enough to be close knit."

Question 3: Excited/deepest connection

Most mentioned is experiencing the deepest connection when being involved...

Being active (or remembering when they were active and involved)

When they had kids in school...being a jumping-off point for participation.

Service Sunday, Prayer Vigil

Baptisms, weddings, funerals, Festival and holiday services

Pastoral care, pastors, parish nurses

Working together and doing new things

Women's group

Old favorite hymns & contemporary services

"The fellowship of the old couples club, the spirit and fellowship of our first revival."

"I enjoy the personal discussions with people who share their faith journey and encourage others."

"Christmas Eve service (we attend 4:00 pm) It means so much; it means the real Christmas."

"Over the years the preaching of the Gospel has been a highlight. Expanding ministry some years ago when we decided to go to three pastors was a hopeful time. Fellowship has been a constant."

"Worship, communion, sharing the peace in our services, especially sharing this connection with the youngest and oldest members and all in between...the communion of the saints."

"The Easter Vigil is especially meaningful to me along with the other Holy Week service at Atonement."

"The incredible support of the parish nurse and pastoral staff. I truly don't know how I would have gotten through my grandmother's failing health without their incredible support."

Question 4-Has anything recently changed?

Life continues, and things change. We categorized responses into type of change-

Personal, Atonement and ELCA.

Changes at Atonement-29

Personal changes-20

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ELCA-2 (one was from the 1970s)

No or N/A-19

One person responded Yes with no further explanation.

"My kids have grown up into teens/young adults and my roles have changed."

"When my husband died the church and members really cared for me."

"I wish there were Elders checking on people. For example, when people are missing for a while. It feels like there are a lot of empty pews. Since I don't know the reasons I am guessing people feel like no one cares if they are there or not. So sad."

"Yes, the lay and pastoral leadership has chosen not to develop changes in our worship and ministry to reflect the change in our community and culture."

"I'm getting too old to be completely involved"

"I sense a change and fear a conflict with a separation by age and generations at Atonement. I wish for older folks to be excited about support for interests and needs of children, young families, youth, middle aged and all members. Reciprocally, I really wish I could sense a respect and understanding by younger members for the older folks who have been a part of this church family for many years. I am hurt by this and sense a real divide in our congregation."

"We moved 45 minutes away. We asked the children if they wanted to find a closer church, and they emphatically said no. We are sad that the children/families attending the school are not participating in the church and the school does not hold them accountable for their service to the church."

Question 5- What adds value to Atonement?

When it comes to what is valued at the church, the top answers are the people of Atonement (Said in many different ways), The Pastors, and the school. Over a third of the responses mentioned the people. There was a call to make better use of the school to help connect people.

"The army of volunteers"

"The people and friends"

"Music, Fellowship, Love of God, congregation members and children, school and staff Pastors their is not one thing that is the most value to Atonement."

"When you need help there is always somebody willing to help or pray for you & your family & friends."

"The people in the Pews."

"Feeling at home & comfortable here, knowing there are people there to love & be loved by. There are those who are genuinely care."

"It is the people-the family of Atonement-that keeps me here along with caring clergy, meaningful worship and the good news of our life in Christ. Plus the music...let's hear it for sharing our faith and love in liturgy, hymns and the joy of music."

"Our sense of community."

"Friends"

"The people, of course."

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"The school provides a Christian setting for an education and brings younger families into contact with our Atonement family. We need to somehow improve our evangelism toward that group."

"The only thing we have that could add value is the school."

"Educating children who otherwise wouldn't be exposed to the gospel for they are our future."

Question 6- What is your hope for the future of Atonement?

People had their hopes for the future of the church. Finances and worship came up multiple times. With worship staying traditional and trying new things came up. The school was mentioned several times. Reflecting our community "with a rainbow of members in the pews" was mentioned. Sadly, the idea of survival was mentioned many times.

"That it finds a way to continue sharing the gospel with its community."

"Continue serving the Lord for many decades to come by being an inviting church to all. that Atonement finds a way to not only welcome be members but also keep a connection with long-time members"

"That the church/school remain viable during this time of changing demographics."

"That it can grow back to where it use to be. That the young people who have children in our school can bring our church back. With their love and support and prayers they can do this for Atonement."

"That we will grow and be relevant to our community"

"To continue as a growing and prospering church where we will all stay children of God and help the community as we continue even more involved"

"That we embrace all our members with acceptance and value their worth, gifts and talents"

"Attendance will grow a bit and school will survive"

"To have different kind of services rather than the same thing every week"

"Fiscal responsibility."

"to make the changes necessary, learn accountability and survive"

"That we become a church that uses the power of prayer as if we believe God is able to hear us. That we become a missional church. Spreading the good news of Christ throughout our neighborhoods for those who need to hear of Christ salvation. Not to be self-centered, but that we look outward. That we continue to love each other and our neighbors."

"That the church and school attracts new students and members and be a welcoming, encouraging community."

"that it gets stays and not closes we all need churches and faith"

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"Atonement should be fiscally responsible and true to our Lutheran heritage without exclusivity".

"I hope that wisdom will prevail as we change and grow for the future of Atonement and that we can plan to reach out to the community as well as tend our flock. That is all part of what makes a Christian community true and strong."

"We have a beautiful church and school. My hope is that we continue to grow in faith and share our faith with others in both church and school. Our new principal, Mr. B., is doing wonders in school."

"That we would embrace the school, provide true alternative worship to those that are not as "traditional", and focus on providing examples and education to our community.

"Financially stable and growing attendance."

"That we can continue to serve our savior, our school children, congregation members and the community."

"Membership to better reflect the demographics of the community. Staff also.

"That Atonement continues as a church and doesn't close down because of finances same thing as the school."

"A gallery of Joyful people praising God in many ways. A respectful Joy and gladness. A rainbow of loved ones in our pews. Future Pastors who fit the needs of our congregation and our neighborhood."

Conclusion:

The congregation truly does care about Atonement. Many of the respondents have been members for over 15 years. The answers covered a wide range of topics, and on many issues, there are people on both sides of the issue. In summary, I feel that the congregation values relationships with each other. And Worship and the messages given in the worship service are important. But there is starting to be a call for different worship styles.

The congregation wants to remain relevant to the community and wants to both be a part of the community and to serve the community.