

# Reflect & Revive Team Findings Summary

## June 2023

### INTRODUCTION

At the May 2021 Congregation Meeting, Atonement began a journey to discern God's plans for us and make changes to support focused and robust mission and ministry. We engaged the Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) to educate and guide us on a process that would help us learn, plan, and try new things, even while continuing some of the current ways we serve the Lord.

This document describes the steps taken thus far in the journey, the KLC framework we are using, and briefly summarizes the thoughts shared by the congregation and the next few steps in the process.

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### HISTORY

Since its inception in 1951, the people of Atonement have seen numerous changes as we have worshipped and served the Lord. Many were small and made with little deliberation in the ordinary course of operating our church and school. Most of those decisions led to positive outcomes and those that did not were altered as required. This type of day-to-day decision-making is normal and appropriate. But sometimes, we need to step back and look at the bigger picture.

In 2020 the Congregation Council considered how Atonement might determine what God's will is for us in the coming years, and how we can provide an environment where everyone involved in our church and school is encouraged and supported to carry out ministry and mission. In May of 2021, the congregation approved \$20,000 to hire a consultant to assist us in that process. The Council spent several months soliciting and evaluating potential consultants, selected the Kansas Leadership Center (KLC), and created the Reflect & Revive Team (the Team).

Throughout 2022 and early 2023, all Team members attended a two-day course to learn the KLC framework (described later in this document) and then completed the foundational steps in the process:

- Reviewed the feedback from 98 respondents to a Congregational Vitality Survey and post-survey interviews KLC did with some Atonement members

- Led nine small-group discussions attended by 74 Atonement members
- Reported their findings from the survey, interviews, and small-group discussions to Council

The Team reported its findings and recommendations at the March 2023 Council Meeting and the Council began evaluating those recommendations for further action. Council subsequently held several special meetings for strategic conversations on implementing the priorities suggested by the Team. We will continue to move forward even as we are in the process of calling a new Senior Pastor.

## **FINDINGS SUMMARY**

The Team found that Atonement members are hopeful but also voiced some concerns about the future. The members were enthusiastic and energetic as they dreamed about God's plans for Atonement. All participants in the small-group discussions believed that Atonement has a continuing role in North County and that the school is an integral and essential part of Atonement's ongoing mission.

The most frequent theme is that Atonement members feel a need to reconnect with each other. Hosting events that foster fellowship, strengthening the relationship with the school, and offering less formal worship opportunities are all perceived as ways to encourage rebuilding relationships. That, in turn, will lead to greater engagement with each other and the community.

In addition, members support increasing opportunities for lay leadership, investigating ways to be more involved in our local community, and building on or initiating activities that are welcoming to all, especially to young families and young adults.

## **KLC FRAMEWORK**

The Kansas Leadership Center framework is based on enabling members of an organization to be effective leaders that follow specific principles and utilize proven competencies.

### **Principles**

- Leadership is an activity, not a position
- Anyone can lead, anytime, anywhere
- Leadership starts with you and must engage others
- Leadership is risky
- Leadership is about our toughest challenges

### **Competencies**

- Diagnose Situation
- Manage Self
- Energize Others
- Intervene Skillfully

To learn more, visit <https://kansasleadershipcenter.org/klc-framework/>.

### **SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Using the KLC framework, the R&R Team's small-group discussions were designed to hear all voices - even those that might not otherwise come forward. Except for college-age individuals (who are largely out-of-state), it successfully did so.

Participants included:

- members of all ages (from parents of young children through members in their 80s);
- those who have been Atonement members ranging from one year to multiple decades;
- life-long Atonement members and those who transferred to Atonement from other Lutheran congregations or denominations;
- all ethnicities represented by Atonement members;
- all genders represented by Atonement members;
- members that attend in-person worship nearly every weekend and those who attend in-person worship less regularly;
- those who have not attended in-person worship since COVID restrictions were implemented;
- every member of the Church Council and the School Board as of January 2023;
- several staff members; and
- one or more members in the following recognized groups or Teams: Adult Choir, Joyful Noiz, Seniors Alive, Bible and Breakfast, Men's Bible Study, Properties Team, Finance Team, Endowment Team, Men's Club, A.W.E., Sunday School Staff, Worship Assistants, and Bell Choir.

Now that the data has been gathered and evaluated, the next step is to start doing the work. Two key parts of the KLC framework relevant here are to:

1. Identify who should do the work. This could be Council, church or school staff, or members of the congregation.
2. Complete the work in a way that is energizing and not overwhelming.

The two priorities identified by the Team relate to rebuilding relationships. In June 2023, Council began taking action on activities toward that end (noted below with an asterisk). In coming months, Council will prayerfully consider the additional recommendations listed below as well as seek ideas from others to identify next steps.

#### a) Reconnect Members of the Congregation with Each Other

- \* Identify opportunities to build relationships among members with an initial focus

on social events. This could include establishing a “fun committee,” offering multi-generational activities, or formally establishing “small-group” circles.

- Continue current child-friendly activities without using the number of participants as a measure of success.
- Engage the younger age demographic in further discussion to better understand what works for them and encourage them to be leaders in creating and supporting appropriate programming.
- \* Be more welcoming to our members of color by offering greater visible diversity in artwork or publicly acknowledging events in African-American history (like Juneteenth).
- \* Establish a Worship Team to plan worship services and programming, in consultation with the pastor.
- Create a framework for facilitated small-group discussions (perhaps initially based on ELCA or CSS Statements and related study guides).

b) Reconnect Church & School as “One Atonement”

- Develop and implement a framework to blend church and school communications.
- Immediately implement ideas that are easy to adopt such as:
  - creating a new email distribution list that includes both church and school events;
  - publicize and encourage participation by members in school events, and vice versa; and
  - a church-sponsored social event to get to know school parents.
- Continue participating (or expanding participation) in certain community events (e.g., church participates in the Valley of the Flowers along with the school).
- Host further congregational discussions about the school’s role and adopt processes designed to create a single Atonement community of church and school.

Other themes identified by the Team will be addressed in the future, including:

- Acting on social issues that affect our members and North County neighbors
- Connecting more with the community
- Engaging more with all age ranges at Atonement
- Financing ministry and mission
- Increasing attendance and participation
- Enhancing the worship experience

It was evident in the small-group discussions that the congregation is excited and eager to move into the future. The Council asks for your suggestions, leadership, and participation as we continue to fulfill God’s mission for Atonement in North County.