

# Church of the Atonement

ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN

"By God's grace and for His glory, our mission is to bring people from unbelief to maturing, joyful faith in Jesus Christ."

## CHURCH PROFILE

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Washington Metropolitan Area  
10613 Georgia Avenue, Wheaton, Maryland 20902

[atonementlife.org](http://atonementlife.org)





## Director or Pastor of Next Gen Ministry

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A new and exciting season of ministry is taking shape at Church of the Atonement. After hiring a new senior pastor last year, we, like many churches, have undergone significant change during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of those changes included our Children's Ministry Director transitioning into a new season of ministry.

With this change, we've undergone a process of discernment and prayer about where God would lead our family ministries in this next season.

The result of this discernment is a new direction, a new position, and a new structure for our ministries. In reality, these new things are really just next steps that build on where we've been. We are excited to see how God continues to lead us in finding the person who will help lead our church to faithfully minister to children, youth and families.

As we pray for God's provision, we seek a director or pastor whose love for Jesus and for others is evident in their speech and relations and who exemplifies:

- A life that is Christ-centered and rooted in Scripture;
- Reformed theology and graciousness in presenting it;
- Commitment to personal development and self-care;
- Experience in communicating the Gospel and defending the Faith in ways that speak to our contemporary culture;
- Ability to lead and train others to lead;
- Faithfulness to teach, evangelize, and shepherd.



## A BRIEF HISTORY

### of Church of the Atonement

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A person can know a church by the commitments it keeps. Presbyterian Church of the Atonement was planted in 1947 in Wheaton, Maryland, as surrounding farmland was turned into housing for a booming post-war community. The motivation was missional, the result of a strategy to ring Washington, D.C. with evangelical Presbyterian Churches. Three core commitments were foundational to the church at that time and still are today: To the full authority of Scripture and to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to outreach at home and missions abroad, and to the community in which the church was planted.

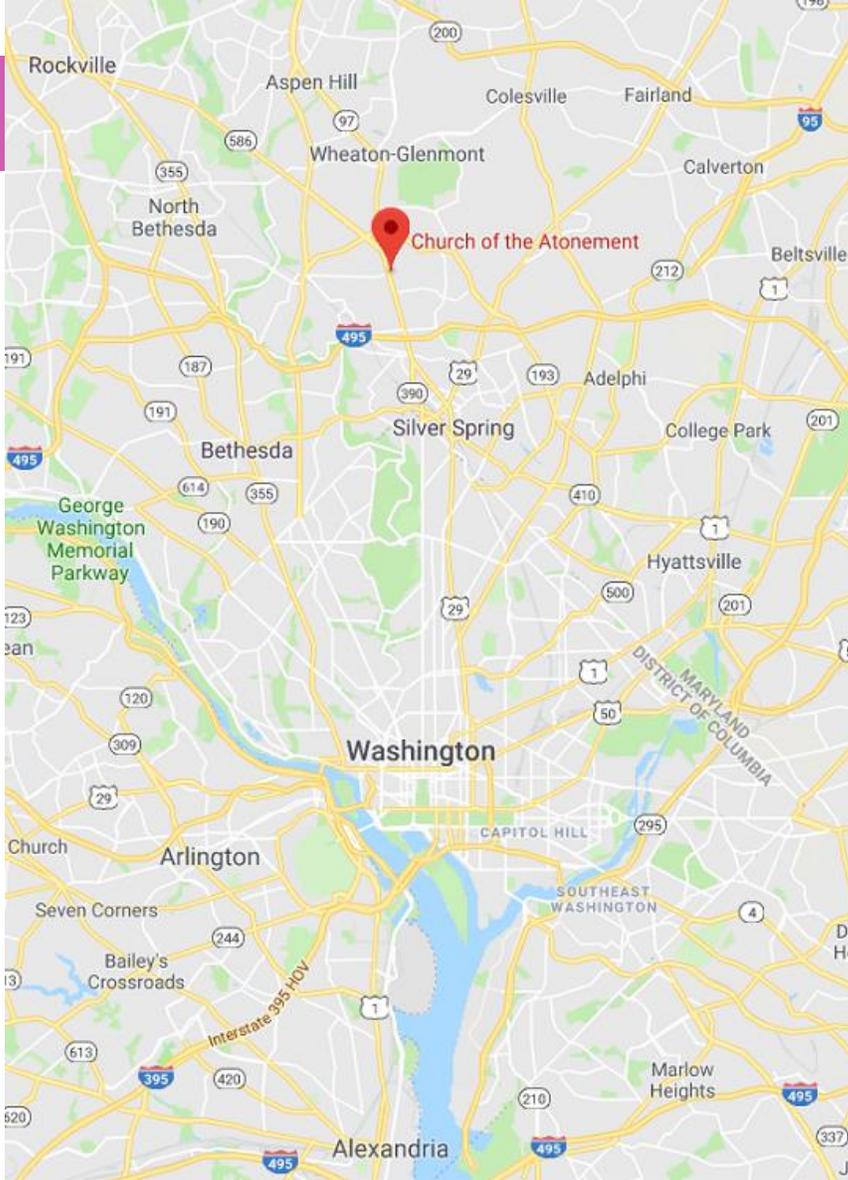
The church remains on the property where it first held services. Originally that meant farm land. Indicative of the commitments and growth of the church, as well as the gradual urbanization of the area, the campus has progressed from a farm house, to a small sanctuary (1949), an added Christian education building (1955), a larger sanctuary (1968), a major renovation to expand parking and upgrade the facilities (2010), and a new children's library and family welcome area,

adult library, and offices, and upgrades to classrooms and our Christian education wing (2018-ongoing).

In 1981, Atonement left the United Presbyterian Church in protest over a decision by its local presbytery to ordain a minister who denied the deity of Christ. The church affiliated with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church because of its longstanding history within American Presbyterianism and its confessional allegiance to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

In its 72-year history, Atonement has had five senior pastors: Rev. Eugene Allen (10 years), Rev. Stewart Rankin (25 years), Rev. Ashton "Tat" Stewart (12 years), Rev. Curtis "Curt" Young (25 years), and Rev. Ryan Mowen (1 year and counting).

# OUR LOCATION



Atonement is highly accessible and visible along a major artery just north of Washington, DC. The church building is in walking distance of the landmark “Wheaton Triangle,” where three major roads intersect with the Washington Metrorail system.

Wheaton and Silver Spring are the most diverse communities in Montgomery County, with over 40 percent of our population born overseas. Almost 70 percent of the population over the age of 25 has at least a bachelor’s degree; at the same time, 11 percent of the residents fall below the poverty line. About 114,000 people live within two miles of the church.

Montgomery County Public schools are among the best funded and best performing in the country. However, there can be significant disparity between schools, with high numbers of students who speak English as a second language and who receive subsidized lunches.

The Silver Spring and Wheaton areas are in the middle of urban economic expansion with apartments, townhouses, and offices under construction. Houses in older, established neighborhoods are in demand because of their location in the Washington, DC, area and access to transit.

Atonement needs to focus on outreach to and care of diverse communities in an increasingly urban environment.

In 1999, Atonement decided to remain in its location despite rising costs, increased regulation, diminished parking, and confined space. As other churches moved away from the city, Atonement undertook a major renovation to meet the challenges of effective ministry in the future. This was completed in 2010. Atonement has the largest attendance of an English-speaking church within our community.

Immediate Neighborhood: 114,827 population (2016)	
0.2%	American Indian and Alaska Native alone
10.7%	Asian alone
16.5%	Black or African American alone
30.0%	Hispanic
0.1%	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone
0.3%	Some other race alone
3.0%	Two or more races
39.2%	White alone



# THE CAMPUS



The Church of the Atonement has a 46,000 square foot facility with a renovated sanctuary that holds 400 people. The building also hosts an Iranian church, Community Bible Study (CBS), a Body & Soul fitness class, youth activities and meetings, and other events.

The building has 13 education rooms, a chapel, a choir room, children's and adult libraries, a kitchen, and a hall for theater, teaching, fellowship and recreation.



# THE CHURCH

## The Body

### Meet Our Members, in Their *Own* Words

As part of our preparations to search for a senior pastor last year, the congregation was asked in a pair of town hall meetings to describe the church in their own words. Here is a summary of how they characterize Church of the Atonement.

Atonement's "commitment to scripture and Biblical teaching" is a defining characteristic of our church. We also share "commitment to the Reformed faith." The spiritual atmosphere of the church is extremely important to us. Atonement "is a caring and welcoming body of believers." "There is a feeling of family" and "an acceptance of all" despite being a congregation of varied faith and personal backgrounds. "We bear one another's burdens and it's not hard to find help when it is needed." This body of believers has "an accepting outlook toward people wherever they are in their walk with the Lord." The church is "open and inclusive." "Generational, ethnic and racial diversity" are celebrated. Leaders "identify strengths in others and listen to them." "Older, mature Christians mentor younger Christians." "Mentorship is provided across multiple generations."

The congregation is committed to providing "a welcoming atmosphere for newcomers" and "does a good job of integrating members" into the life of the church. "It's easy to become involved." The "worship atmosphere" is important and includes a "good integration of traditional and contemporary music." Many "talented musicians within our congregation" help to lead worship through "edifying, God-based music." Sunday school programs for all ages show "respect for God's Word" and evidence of "humility in teaching and learning." "Women are respected, and their talents are recognized and utilized." The church is "dedicated to the Wheaton community" and "has a commitment to outreach efforts."

The congregation embraces the challenges that lie ahead. These include "the growing political and societal resistance to Christ" and "governmental challenges to Christianity." Members are focused on "keeping young families connected and involved" and "capitalizing on the population growth in our area" by "attracting and keeping new members."

In addition to the town hall meetings our younger members were asked what they think of Atonement and the prospect of calling our next senior pastor. Our youth help round out the profile of our church with these comments. Atonement "is a church that teaches about Christ in a fun way." "We learn about the Bible and also have fun events." "We develop positive relationships while learning about Jesus." Youth members appreciate "events like Family Bible Camp," and "choir concerts allow us to express and spread our faith beyond the sanctuary." Others commented that "the fellowship of the congregation is a strength of our church," and "youth group is a way to connect to other people at church." "Keeping youth involved" and "maintaining a robust youth program" are important priorities.



## Church Membership

Currently our church membership is 285, of which approximately 240 are active. These 240 active members comprise approximately 144 family units. Our members represent more than 20 different nations of origin, although the majority are Caucasian. About 78% of our families live within a 20-minute driving radius of the church. Less than 15% of our new members join by transfer of membership.

Approximately 80% of our first-time adult visitors are unmarried or attend without their spouse. Church membership is presented and accepted as a significant spiritual commitment.

Our principal means of drawing newcomers includes the church's web site, personal invitation, prominent location, and reputation in the community.

When asked why they initially returned to Atonement, newcomers focused their answers on the worship service and the faithful preaching of scripture. When asked why they decided to make Atonement their church home, newcomers focused on how readily they felt accepted and welcomed into new friendships.



# Our Team

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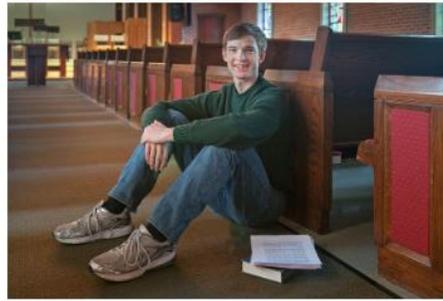
**Ryan Mowen**  
Senior Pastor



**Terence Little**  
Associate Pastor



**Amy Hackman**  
Care Coordinator



**Luke Link**  
Director of Music Ministries



**Cecile Ntumba**  
Events Coordinator



**James Olivari**  
Facilities Coordinator



**Seth Philbrick**  
Director of Atonement Youth Ministries



**Rick Plasterer**  
Librarian



**Jim Rohrer**  
Assimilation Coordinator



**Kristin Rundell**  
Coordinator, Children & Family Ministries



**Dale Voelker**  
Organist

## Challenges and Opportunities

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By the grace of God, Atonement has flourished for decades through faithful ministry, strong bonds of love, and willingness to meet the adaptive challenges before us. The principal internal challenge the church currently faces is related to transitions in staffing.

One critical transition we are facing is in our Children and Youth ministry staff. In July 2020, our beloved Children's ministry director of nine years resigned to follow a call into a new season of ministry. Recently, our Youth ministry director of 9 years has expressed a call into full-time pastoral ministry. These transitions, along with COVID-19, have brought us an opportunity to reflect, discern, and set a new course for our children and youth ministries.

The direction we feel God leading us is to unite our children and youth ministries with shared leadership and a shared vision. The Bible clearly places the responsibility of nurturing faith to children with the parents. But many times, parents aren't equipped and disciplined to do this. Further, many of our families have children in both programs simultaneously, which can present a challenge to families.

If parents are the people God intends to shape and encourage their kids' spiritual lives, the Church's responsibility is to partner with parents for this work. We see the important of investing in our parents, grandparents, and our kids. This will take strategic vision and a team of staff who know how to train and equip people for ministry.



# Faith

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Atonement holds to the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). It is taught in introductory fashion in every new member course, and its importance is underscored in officer training courses. Members are not required to subscribe to the WCF but to uphold the church's commitment to teach it. The Elders are free to accept some reservations or exceptions to the WCF among church officers, but all preaching and teaching are consistent with the Confession.

The WCF is the foundation for discipleship at Atonement, not a litmus test for spirituality. The leadership of the church is clear that Scripture is absolutely primary and the focus of preaching.

Our adult Sunday school classes cover books of the Bible, theology, apologetics, marriage, and other special topics. All classes are taught through the lens of Reformed theology.



# Worship

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Atonement has one Sunday morning worship service (9:30 AM) with Sunday school classes for all ages (11:00 AM).

Currently, the Lord's Supper is served once a month as a high point in worship. On those days, sermons conclude in a way that segues to the Lord's Table and the grace of God in Christ.

The music is blended in style and includes songs written or arranged by members. A dozen instrumentalists may be involved in a service, from drums and electric bass to the restored Steinway piano and renovated pipe organ.

Congregational singing is led by a small vocal ensemble. Atonement has four choirs (adult, children, youth, and bells), an instrumental ensemble, and a band that regularly participate.

The integration of music and word elements in worship is coordinated through weekly collaborative meetings involving the pastors and director of music ministries.

# Organization and Budget

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Atonement has three classes of church officers: elders, deacons and trustees. Every year the church elects four ruling elders for a four-year term, so there may be sixteen altogether. The congregation also elects six deacons for a three-year term, so there may be eighteen altogether. Two trustees are elected annually to a three-year term, so there may be six altogether.

The elders are responsible for the governance of the church and the ministries of the word and worship. The deacons are responsible for the ministry of mercy and those works necessary to support the ministries of the word including the serving of communion along with the elders. Each group is organized into task-oriented ministry teams or committees. The ministry teams under the elders include: Adult Ministries, Atonement Arts Ministry, Youth & Family Ministries, Children & Family Ministries, Global Missions, and Worship & Music.

The committees under the deacons include: AV, Inside Maintenance, Kitchen, Mercy, Outside Maintenance, Property (rental house), Safety & Security, and Space Utilization. Two committees, Finance and Memorials, are joint Elder/Deacon committees.

The trustees represent the church in legal and contractual matters and maintain important papers. Only elders and deacons are ordained.

The office of elder is open to men only. The offices of deacon and trustee, as well as team leaders and committee chairmanships, are open to women and men. The 2019 budget projects general fund income of \$866,000, investment and rental income of \$35,000, and designated giving to missionaries, which in 2018 was close to \$150,000. Support for missionaries comes from our general fund in addition to designated giving and comprises roughly 25% of all giving.

