

A Brief History of Hope Lutheran Church 1996-2025



Hope Lutheran Church had its beginnings in May 1995 when the leadership of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Raleigh and Resurrection Lutheran Church in Cary partnered with the Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod to purchase the property of St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church in Wake Forest. Bible study and regular mission meetings continued through 1996 when Rev. Preston Wagner, Southeastern District Executive for Mission and Ministry, was called to be the Mission Developer.

Pastor Wagner began his ministry with the Wake Forest Lutheran Mission on October 1, 1996, and the first regular church service was held on December 8, 1996 with an opening worship attendance of 126. The Lutheran Mission shared the facilities with St. Catherine's for seven months, and then added parking and a playground, painting and improving the facilities for Hope's full-time use. Rev. Larry Lineberger began serving as part-time Assistant to the Pastor and has been an important influence in the life of Hope.

The Wake Forest Lutheran Mission organized and chartered on Pentecost Sunday, May 18, 1997, with the congregation members selecting the name "*Hope Lutheran Church.*" In August of 1997, the church began the ministry of Hope Lutheran Preschool with 48 students and six teachers, ably led by Regina Fisher who has served as Director since its beginning, children and families with morning and afternoon programming.

In 1997 when Hope's first full year of ministry ended, the congregation numbered 139 communicants and 206 baptized members, with an average worship attendance of 116. The congregation began offering two Sunday morning worship services in January of 1998 and the church continued to strengthen and grow its ministries and programs through Preschool, Sunday school and Bible classes, midweek children's and youth ministries, vacation Bible school, Stephen Ministry and other outreach activities.



As a result of Vision 2000 planning, the congregation selected a new site in Heritage, Wake Forest in January of 2001. The congregation held a Miracle Sunday, raising over \$70,000 for a down payment on the new site and began preliminary construction planning. A three-year capital fund campaign concluded in December 2001, entitled "*Forward in Faith*" with a goal of raising \$600,000 for construction and interest costs. The overall giving goal was exceeded, and the congregation was awarded the "*Antioch Reflection Award*" by the Lutheran Church Extension Fund.

Design began on the new facilities and groundbreaking was held on October 20, 2002. Due to delays in permits, site work didn't begin until December and actual construction began in January 2003. The preschool relocated to the new educational building in August 2003 and the church held its first activity in the new worship and fellowship center on November 16, 2003. The final service at the stone church at 701 South Main Street was held that morning with a worship attendance of 408.

The first worship service at 3525 Rogers Road was held on November 23, 2003, with worship attendance of 581. Hope's "new" 16,500 square facility provided a multipurpose worship and fellowship center that seated 300 worshippers with a foyer, kitchen, administrative offices and a youth center that provided a fellowship area and classrooms. The education building provided 8 classrooms designed for preschool and Christian education use. The 12.7-acre site included 140 parking spaces, a new children's playground and the master plan called for a future sanctuary, family life center and another educational building.



In 2005, ministry and facility growth needs became critical, and the congregation initiated a new visioning and planning process. In response to those priorities, Hope called Rev. Tab Cosgrove to serve as Assistant Pastor, focusing on Small Groups and Spiritual Growth. Two Directors of Christian Education were called in the following years with Krista Young and Beth Agner providing leadership to youth and children's ministries as the congregation focused on spiritual growth in all age groups. A Facilities Team and Campaign Leadership Team was established to develop a response to the need for "spacious facilities," resulting in the "Building Hope for Years to Come" expansion that is dedicated today.

Hope held its final worship services in the multi-purpose Worship Center on November 13 & 14, 2010, exactly seven years from the closing worship services in the stone chapel. The first services in the new sanctuary were held on November 20 & 21, 2010 with 1,068 worshippers in attendance! Only God knows what the next years of mission and ministry hold for the people of Hope, but as the congregation celebrated the dedication of the new facilities, there the members renewed a commitment to embrace their ministry and outreach in Wake Forest and surrounding communities with faith and trust, knowing that we are "Blessed...to be a Blessing!"



In June of 2012, Pastor Wagner retired as Senior Pastor and was named as Pastor *Emeritus*. Pastor Wayne Puls was called to serve as the new Senior Pastor with Pastor Tab Cosgrove continuing to serve as Associate Pastor. In 2013, Pastor Cosgrove accepted a call to St. John Lutheran Church in York, PA and Pastor Lew Upchurch was installed as Associate Pastor at Hope. In the years ahead, seminary Vicars assisted with ministry at Hope and several new Directors of Christian Education were installed as church leaders. Pastor Upchurch accepted a call to serve at Christ Lutheran Church in Costa Mesa, California in 2022, and Pastor Devin Murphy was called to serve as Associate Pastor at Hope in 2024. Pastor Wayne Puls accepted a call to Grace Lutheran Church in October 2024 and Regina Fisher; Hope's founding Preschool Director retired in 2025 with Angela Whitted installed as the new Preschool Director. Hope is now engaged in the process of calling a new Senior Pastor in 2025.

The challenges and opportunities at Hope are great, but the congregation has affirmed in faith learned that "hope does not disappoint us, for God has poured out the Holy Spirit upon us!" (Romans 5:5a) God is "up to something" here and you are invited to continue the journey of outreach and service! Hope remains a strong, healthy, vibrant ministry and members are committed to living out the congregation's mission to "proclaim and live the Word and love of Christ."

- Written by Rev. Preston E. Wagner