

**HOPE Lutheran Church**  
**HOPE Journeys Forward**  
**A Brief History**

From late 2004 until mid-2005 a significant number of families with background in the Lutheran tradition began gathering in people's homes, in the former Trinity Episcopal Church, and eventually in the Thomas More Newman Chapel on the UW-RF campus. HOPE Lutheran became the formal name of the congregation describing itself as a diverse group of individuals seeking a place of worship that would provide a suitable environment for their beliefs and values.

In July 2005 members of this group met with Rev. Carm Aderman, Assistant to Robert Berg, the bishop of the Northwest Wisconsin Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Pastor Carm offered encouragement and advice and explained the procedure to be taken in forming a new congregation.

On June 2, 2006 HOPE Lutheran was approved as an ELCA congregation by the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin of the ELCA by a unanimous vote and a standing ovation.

The following October Pastor Jean Gfall accepted the call to be our first full-time pastor. She resigned in May 2009 and Mark Hendrickson served as HOPE's interim pastor

At the request of David Hallas, pastor of Augustana Lutheran Church, Cumberland, WI., each congregation of the NW Synod was invited to donate one copy of the Evangelical Lutheran Worship hymnal in support of HOPE. On March 3, 2007, 117 hymnals were dedicated, gifts from 63 congregations. Pastor Hallas and several members of Augustana participated in the dedication.

HOPE's Property Ministry began looking for a building to purchase in order to have a permanent worship space, to offer education and to carry on its ministry. Since an existing building was not available, it was decided to purchase property and build a Home for HOPE. In August of 2008, the congregation voted unanimously to approve the purchase of the recommended Sterling Ponds site, for a sum not to exceed \$430,000.

On May 23, 2010 the first worship service on the Sterling Ponds property was held. At this time, a Call Committee was installed and the task of finding a pastor for HOPE began. In June of 2011, HOPE Lutheran called Pastor Sandra Johnson. Pastor Sandy accepted our call and was installed June 26, 2011. She has been a blessing to HOPE, and we Go Forth in Joy.

Thanks to a very dedicated and knowledgeable Property Ministry, on April 12, 2010 HOPE purchased 8.3 acres along County Road U (now Huppert Street) near the Sterling Ponds subdivision. The purchase price was \$300,000. A seven-year loan, secured from the Mission Investment Fund (MIF) of the ELCA, designated that the first two years be interest-free while the remaining five be fixed at 2%. \$20,000 was paid down, leaving a \$280,000 debt with MIF

that was to mature in 2017. This loan, based on recommendations from the ELCA Stewardship Key Leaders, was concluded two years ahead of schedule because of the diligence and generosity of Hope members. The burning of the mortgage took place January 15, 2015.

## **A Home for HOPE**

*A field. A congregation. One is a home to plants and wildlife, and one is a home to faith and community. This congregation has been that faith home for many years, but HOPE has never had a place to call its own. This field can be our home. It is bare now, but it eagerly waits for new life to be grown there. New plants, new faith, new faces, new joys. Just as the field will give us a home, this congregation will bring new life to the field, to River Falls and to the world beyond. It will be a home for faith built upon thirsty soil. This field will grow in beauty and this congregation will grow in mission. All it needs is a little hope.* (Written by HOPE members Lindsay and Keith Getschel)

In 2014, a three-year fundraising campaign called “A Home for HOPE,” enabled us to commit to building a new church on our beautiful field at Sterling Ponds. Kick off for the \$300,000 campaign was September 14 of that year with Commitment Sunday being celebrated on October 10. Once again, HOPE’s generous congregation met the goal with pledges exceeding \$300,000. The anticipated building cost was estimated at \$1,200,000 with financing by the ELCA Mission Investment Fund. Eventually a loan for \$900,000 was approved and a construction budget of \$950,000 was initiated.

Meanwhile, the ever diligent Property Ministry had been working with the Peterson Design Studio to design an efficient plan in phases for our church building. Derrick Construction was selected as the general contractor. Groundbreaking occurred on September 29, 2015, and preparation for construction began immediately. The building was completed in February 2016 with much of the interior work done by HOPE’s volunteers. New friends were made and relationships strengthened while the group transformed cement floors and drywall into a beautiful sanctuary. Volunteers continue joyfully to share their landscaping, gardening and cement working skills as we beautify

The first gathering of the congregation in our new home was a Lenten soup supper and service on March 2, 2016, and the first Sunday morning worship service was March 6. The congregation celebrated a jubilant Easter with a record attendance of 198.

May 7, 2016 marked ten years since HOPE became a chartered congregation of the ELCA. Joyful worship, HOPE’s Got Talent and a potluck meal made for a wonderful gathering.

The dedication of HOPE Lutheran on June 26 will begin with a time of worship. Many members of the congregation will be a part of this service; musicians, readers, prayers, ushers and acolytes will all help make our time of worship a special celebration. Guests from the Mission Investment Fund, the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, Derrick Construction, Peterson Design and local friends and family are invited to make the celebration even more complete.

Following worship a time of food and fellowship is planned. A special meal served by the congregation will be accompanied by HOPE's Jazz trio. In the afternoon the Mission Ministry of HOPE will host an Open House from 1:00 – 3:00.

### **Gifts Abound**

Eidskog Lutheran's furnishings without purpose became HOPE Lutheran's treasures. Because Eidskog members ran an ad in *The Lutheran* (July 2015) saying their church was closing and listing items and because a member of HOPE Lutheran answered that ad, HOPE became the recipient of Eidskog's many generous gifts.

Eight members of HOPE attended the closing service of Eidskog Lutheran Church in October 2015. Some weeks later volunteers from HOPE went to Eidskog to pack and load all that was received onto a donated truck from Bettendorf Trucking to bring back to River Falls.

HOPE opened its doors for the first worship service in our new home on March 6, 2016 complete with furnishings in the sanctuary, the kitchen and the classrooms. Thanks be to God for the generous gifts Eidskog Lutheran shared so their ministries can continue through the furthering of ministries in which HOPE now participates.

### **Who We Are**

HOPE is a committed, active congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). We are in partnership with the ELCA and the synod via benevolence, prayer, and participation in national and synod programs. Since its formation, HOPE has been committed to maintaining its benevolence at 10%. HOPE participates in helping aid our companion synod in Malawi and remembers them in prayer. HOPE supports local, national and world mission ELCA programs that feed, educate, evangelize, and work for justice.

HOPE believes that we are called to serve others whose needs are greater than ours. Having been graced with gifts to share, we believe this service is the foundation of our mission. We believe that the act of sharing these gifts, in Christ's name, is the way to spread His message. These actions unite us in purpose, creating a community within the congregation. As a consequence, we are encouraged to see beyond ourselves, to address the truly in need, whether it be in the form of food, health, a home, prayer, peace, or justice.

HOPE's greatest asset is the people of the congregation. We are a diverse group, with high talent and skill levels, especially in music, teaching, leadership, education, and creativity. New ideas for furthering our mission are greeted with enthusiasm. We enjoy working and playing together and celebrating all that God has given us.

*HOPE is called by God to look beyond ourselves. We walk together in faith, treasuring all people and sharing with them the love, hope and acceptance that is in Christ.*