

Congregational Profile

For use among congregations of the
Southeastern District, Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

Section One

A Self Evaluation Tool for Congregations

Name of Congregation: *Hope Lutheran Church*

Address: *3525 Rogers Road*

City, State, Zip: *Wake Forest, NC 27587*

1. What is your understanding of the mission of the church?

The mission of Christ's Church on earth is to make disciples of all nations by "going", "baptizing" and "teaching" to obey all that Christ has commanded. This is done through witness by word and by service to others.

2. Why was your congregation founded? Why does it exist today?

Hope was founded to reach the people of Wake Forest, NC and surrounding areas with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The founding vision for the first mission in Wake Forest was

A mission **focused on outreach...**

- to the unchurched
- to new and existing Lutherans living in the area
- to disenfranchised and disenchanted formerly - church members

A place where people are **strengthened for ministry...**

- among family and friends
- within their vocation and daily life
- through service to community and church

A congregation that is **committed to excellence...**

- in building community and significant relationships
- in worship, music and proclamation of the Gospel
- in well-maintained facilities and equipment

Its mission is the same today and is expressed in Hope's mission statement, "The people of Hope Lutheran Church proclaim and live the Word and love of Christ".

3. Describe your commitment to the doctrine and practice of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

As with all congregations of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, the teaching and preaching of Hope is based on the Bible as God's inspired, infallible, inerrant Word. We accept the confessional writings contained in the Book of Concord as a correct exposition of the Christian faith.

4. What are the chief priorities in your present ministry?

We are focused on outreach to our community, family ministry, care for youth and children (we support a preschool/childcare), small group ministry, and excellence in worship, preaching and teaching. We have a significant mortgage to service, but we seek not to allow this to distract us from the ministry to which we are called.

5. Our congregation's strengths in ministry are . . .

Our worship, our small group ministry, our outreach to the community through social concerns, mission trips, our youth, child and family ministries, our preschool/childcare, robust music ministry and Stephen ministry.

6. Areas in our ministry needing improvement are . . .

Areas in ministry needing improvement and critical focus are being identified by leadership during a recent congregational Vision Casting as:

➤ **Improved Communication and Technology**

- Enhance digital and in-person communication to ensure clear, timely, and effective messaging for the congregation.
- Upgrade website, email, and social media platforms to provide accessible information on church events, ministries, and resources.
- Implement new technology to improve worship services, including better livestream capabilities, sound systems, and digital engagement tools.
- Strengthen internal communication among staff, volunteers, and ministry teams to improve efficiency and collaboration.

➤ **Expand Education to Include More Preschool Space and an Elementary School with Room for Future Growth**

- Increase preschool capacity to serve more families in the community, ensuring a strong faith-based early education program.
- Develop plans to establish an elementary school, providing a Christ-centered academic foundation for young students.
- Design facilities with flexibility for future expansion, allowing room for middle school and additional educational programs as needs grow.
- Partner with church leadership and the congregation to secure funding and resources for this expansion.

➤ **Small Group Ministry Expansion**

- Establish additional small groups that cater to different life stages, interests, and spiritual needs.
- Provide training for small group leaders to equip them with the tools and knowledge necessary for fostering strong, faith-based communities.
- Promote small groups as a vital aspect of discipleship, encouraging members to deepen their faith through fellowship and study.
- Create a structured system for launching and sustaining small groups, ensuring accountability and long-term success.

➤ **Villages – Creating Intergenerational Groups for Support and Fellowship**

- Form intergenerational “village” groups that bring together members of different ages and life experiences.
- Encourage these groups to support each other through prayer, service, and shared activities, strengthening relationships across generations.

- Provide guidance and resources to help village groups function effectively, fostering a culture of mutual care within the congregation.
 - Use village groups as a means to integrate new members into the church community, ensuring everyone feels connected and supported.
- **Mentoring – Strengthening Connections Between Members**
- Implement a mentoring program where new members are paired with seasoned members to help them integrate into the church community.
 - Provide structured opportunities for mentors and mentees to build relationships through regular meetings, shared worship, and service projects.
 - Develop a mentorship program for youth, encouraging and equipping young people to explore church work and vocational ministry.
 - Offer leadership training and guidance for mentors to ensure meaningful, faith-driven relationships that encourage spiritual growth.

Other areas identified by current pastoral staff are:

- Give serious consideration of branching out to become a multisite location, offering services to several locations with Hope Lutheran Church remaining as a central hub.
- Work toward giving the Saturday night worship service a “relaunch” to develop an increase in participation.
- Continue to take an incremental approach to improve many different areas with the church.

7. In what community outreach or service activities does your congregation participate?

Tri-Area Ministry, Adopt-a-Highway, Mission Trips, Brown Bag Ministry, Helping Hands, Live Nativity, Stitches of Hope, Church Net, Habitat for Humanity, Mobile Food Ministry, ESL (English as a Second Language), Disaster Relief, VBS, Angel Tree, Night to Shine, Stephen Ministry, FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes), Middle School Supply Drive

8. Briefly describe your congregational practice and/or preference toward the following:

a. *The Lutheran Hymnal / Lutheran Worship / Lutheran Book of Worship / Lutheran Service Book / Other*

Services on Sunday are blended and drawn from a variety of sources including *LSB*, *LW*, *LBW*, *Creative Communications for the Parish*, *With One Voice*, *One License* and *Lutheran Service Builder*. There is also a Saturday evening service that uses praise music led by a praise team and an abbreviated liturgy.

b. Pastoral services (weddings, funerals, visitation, etc.) to non-members, non-Lutherans or the unchurched.

Pastors serve others as the opportunity arises.

c. The Charismatic / Renewal Movement

This has not been an issue at Hope.

d. Woman suffrage/ service of women in the church

Women are encouraged to use their gifts in service to the Lord.

In our congregation women may serve as . . .

 X Board members/Ministry Leadership Team (MLT)

☒ Board/MLT Chair

☒ Lectors

☒ Ushers

☒ Communion Assistants

☒ Voters

☒ Other (Describe) - teachers

e. The place and participation of lay people in the life of the church. What is your understanding of the role of the laity in the congregation?

It is the role of the laity to carry out the ministry of the congregation through visitation, service, witness, support, and the use of each person's gifts and abilities as blessed by the Lord.

9. What is your understanding of the role of the ordained ministry in the church?

The pastor is to equip the saints. He does this through preaching, teaching, conducting the worship service, administration of the sacraments, leadership recruitment and training, casting a vision for the congregation, and giving counsel as he is gifted and the opportunities arise.

10. What are the advantages and disadvantages of multi-staff ministry? (Pastor - pastor, Pastor - DCE, Pastor - school staff, etc.)

Advantages consist of mutual support and encouragement, the enabling of each person to serve in the area of his or her strengths, and a lightening of the workload so that time is available for refreshment and renewal. Possible disadvantages are competition, jealousy, unequal workloads, and other evidence of our sinful nature. Hope has a strong history of effective team ministry, expecting a new pastor to be committed to developing and maintaining accountability, support and encouragement.

11. Describe your feelings about the church's involvement in social ministries in the community.

Out of love for our fellow man, and motivated by the love of Christ, we seek opportunities to serve the needs of others ministering to them physically, emotionally and spiritually, using these opportunities to give a witness of God's love through us to them and also finding opportunities to speak the Gospel as well.

12. Describe briefly your congregational practice or preference toward the following:

a. Writing of "own liturgies" or special services.

This is accepted, though most liturgies are drawn from existing Lutheran sources.

b. The frequency of the Lord's Supper

Lord's Supper is celebrated at every regular worship service.

c. The priority of the Lord's Supper in parish worship.

As can be seen from the frequency of celebration of Lord's Supper, it is one of two foci to the worship – the other being the reading and proclamation of the Word.

d. The use of common or individual cups.

Both common and individual cups are available in the celebration of Lord's Supper.

e. The use of lay people to assist in worship.

Laity are welcomed and encouraged to serve as greeters, ushers, lectors, communion assistants, acolytes, crucifers and musicians.

f. Do you have a Lutheran School or are you planning to start one? How do you understand the ministry of the Lutheran School?

We do have a full day preschool with state regulations. We are very supportive of Christian education and believe that children need to be taught the Christian faith as early as possible. It is Hope's Vision to start an elementary school, as well.

g. An interview by a calling congregation before a call is issued.

We will most likely utilize phone interviews and on-site interviews for those individuals being considered for the position of senior pastor.

h. First communion: Before or after confirmation

Communion is offered in the 5th grade after formal instruction. Confirmation instruction follows in the 6th & 7th grades.

i. What is your communion policy with regard to those who are not members of your congregation?

Our policy is published in our weekly worship folder, "As Lutheran Christians, we believe Christ's body and blood are truly present with the bread and wine, offering forgiveness of sins to all who believe in Jesus Christ. We ask those who commune to have this unity of faith in Christ and understanding of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Since the Scriptures teach that we are 'to examine ourselves before eating of the bread and drinking of the cup' (I Corinthians 11:28), if you are not certain of the meaning of Holy Communion or have not been baptized or instructed in the Christian faith, please speak to one of the Pastor(s) before communing."

j. Inter-Lutheran relationships

We partner with other Lutherans in a number of outreach ministries, but altar and pulpit fellowship are practiced only with other LCMS congregations.

k. Inter-Christian relationships

We partner with Christians of other denominations in a number of ministries.

13. What provision in time and finances do you make for the pastor's continuing education?

Hope encourages workers to participate in continuing education, providing funding for travel, conferences and continuing education in the annual operating budget.

14. How can the District / Synod assist you to have a more effective ministry?

Continued guidance in our future endeavors and financial support where appropriate, as well as continuing to provide leadership in our Vision Casting.

15. What strengths or ministries would you like to share with other congregations?

We can share our Small Group Ministry, Disaster Relief, VBS training, LERT (Lutheran Early Response Team), Habitat for Humanity and Mobile Food Ministry.

16. What provision for housing is offered to the pastor?

_____ Parsonage

__X__ Housing allowance

_____ Negotiable

17. Is there anything else in your present ministry that you would like to share that might be pertinent to a new pastor?

We require a pastor to be a strong spiritual leader with experience in shared administrative duties who is also a vision caster. He will need to teach and motivate us in responsible stewardship of all of God's gifts to us.

18. Use of this Self Evaluation Tool:

a. Who prepared the answers to this document?

Members of Hope's Sr Pastor Call Team in consultation of the Hope MLT, our Associate Pastor, and other ministry staff

b. Was the Mission and Ministry Facilitator consulted?

Yes, the LCMS Circuit Visitor, Pastor Mike Merker.

c. Was this information shared with and discussed by the congregation?

Yes, our call team has a page on our church website for all to review the document.

d. Was a congregational survey done? If so, attach results.

No survey was necessary.

e. Do you plan to share this information with the pastor you are calling?

Yes, we do plan to share this information.

Date completed: March 10, 2025

Demographics

1. **Your Mission and Ministry Facilitator can provide you with a sheet giving the statistics you have submitted over the past ten years. Please bring this sheet up to date and attach it to this document.**

If these figures are not available, please complete the following:

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2006</u>
Average attendance:	649	704	510
Baptized membership:	1863	1467	1031
Communicant membership:	1509	1025	724
Sunday school enrollment:	468	480	226
Bible Class enrollment:	297	250	169

2. **Your Mission and Ministry Facilitator can describe a community demographics survey available through the Lutheran Church Extension Fund. If you order that survey, please order an extra copy and have it sent to the facilitator.**

If you do not order the survey, please describe your community giving attention to . . .

Size of community: 3-mile radius – 62,820; 22,816 households

Economy: occupations in descending order are professional specialties (33.71%), Production and transportation (6.71%), office administration (7.65%), managerial executive (26.78%), sales (11.01%), construction (3.28%), remaining occupations are all 4% or less.

Racial composition: 67.60% white; 16.56% black; 7.69% Hispanic; 3.19% Asian; 4.96% Other

Growth projections: Population is projected to grow to 69,968 by 2029; income projected to grow for households to \$1641.625 by 2029 and per capita income to \$58,593.

General description: average household income \$137,865; per capita income \$50,072; below poverty level 2.6%

Average age 38.84; major age segment 35-54 (27.82%), next group 5-17 (18.95%), 65 and over (14.57%)

Major demographic segment: New Suburbia Families (72.79%), next Prime Middle America (27.21%)

The following mood and values indicators are strong, high or important to very strong, very high or very important: Drive for affluence, devotion to family, commitment to career, concern for

environment, practice of altruism and giving, importance of religious faith, entertainment activities, desire to broaden horizons, pursuit of personal growth and sense of wellbeing. The following community inclination indicators are present: somewhat global, somewhat traditional, very sociable, somewhat indulgent, somewhat spontaneous, somewhat carefree, moderate fulfillment, moderate affluence, high concern toward others, and moderate inclination toward following versus leading. The asset to debt ratio is roughly 29.7%

Of families 80.86% are married and 19.14% are single parent families. There are only 0.1% non-family households.

26.16% of adults are never married, 59.72% are married, 7.1% are divorced, 2.26% are separated and 4.10% are widowed.

3.26% of adults 25 years old and older have not completed high school, 34.20% have a college degree.

29.1% of households give \$200 or more annually to religious organizations. Charitable giving for all causes is well above the state average.

Adult religious practices are conservative evangelical Christian (54.32%), consider myself a spiritual person (51.05%). It is important to attend religious services (18.85%), my faith is really important to me (33.94%), enjoy watching religious TV programs (16.63%)

Does your congregation reflect the general population of the community? Explain:

The congregation does not fully reflect the ethnic diversity of the community, but otherwise it is fairly representative of the community.

What percentage of your membership lives within two miles of the church?

Estimated about 5-10%

Financial Information

1. Please provide a copy of your current budget and the latest financial report.

Please see the attached budget report. It reflects 2024 actual budget and 2025 proposed budget.

2. What did you pay your last pastor?

Total salary and housing pay of \$126,697 with an additional \$5,400 automobile allowance.

3. What do you plan to pay your next pastor? Give a figure or a range.

Our plan is to offer salary and housing pay consistent with the SED guidelines based on experience.

Salary: *TBD*

Housing: *TBD*

4. Do you offer Concordia Plans Benefits? Describe coverage

We offer the following Concordia Plan benefits: Retirement, Life, Disability, Survivor, Accident and Health insurance. The Concordia Health plan offered is Healthy MeC (\$600 deductible). The health insurance premium is covered at 100% for the individual and dependents.

5. Compare your compensation figures with the SED guidelines in the call manual. If your figures fall short, do you think this will impact your ability to call a pastor?

Our Senior Pastor pay for 2024 was budgeted for \$126,697. District guidelines for a Senior Pastor with his experience was \$122,389. Our compensation is well within the guidelines and should not affect our ability to call a pastor.

6. When was the last time you had an organized stewardship campaign directed primarily towards financial commitment? What kind of program did you use?

The last stewardship campaign was in 2022, the Silver Mission Fund. This fund celebrated the 25th Anniversary of Hope. The objective was to complete several projects on the church property and establish a dedicated fund for future building needs (i.e. replacement of air conditioners and major maintenance).

No fund-raising tools were used in this campaign.

Missional Information

1. **If possible, attach a missional history of the congregation -- not just dates and names, but the story of significant attempts at mission and outreach.**

Hope Lutheran church was begun as a mission of the Southeastern District – LCMS and was chartered in 1996. Since that time there has been consistent growth in membership, worship attendance and member contributions. The congregation has partnered with other congregations of circuit 13 to plant Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Clayton, NC and Jordan Lutheran Church in Apex, NC. The congregation contributes a significant percentage of member gifts to mission and ministry beyond the congregation and has as part of its vision the role of being a parent congregation to a mission congregation in the surrounding area.

2. **If you have one, attach a copy of your mission statement or vision statement.**

The mission of Hope Lutheran Church is “The people of Hope Lutheran Church proclaim and live the Word and love of Christ”.

VISION

We see Hope Lutheran Church as a vibrant, dynamic and mission focused congregation, directing its resources strategically to extend the Kingdom of God in people’s lives and in the community.

Vibrant and dynamic... Inspiring and energetic leaders, excellent preaching and teaching, small groups flourishing

Mission-Focused... Intentionally keeping our eyes always outward, looking for ways to further the Kingdom as individuals in our community

Directing its resources in strategic ways ... Making unified choices focused on developing people rather than simply providing programs

Extend the Kingdom of God in people’s lives... Intentional spiritual development, discipleship, mentoring and coaching

Extend the Kingdom of God in the community... Directly support mission partnerships locally and internationally and through the District and Synod

CRITICAL TARGETS AND CONGREGATIONAL GOALS

➤ **Improved Communication and Technology**

- Enhance digital and in-person communication to ensure clear, timely, and effective messaging for the congregation.
- Upgrade website, email, and social media platforms to provide accessible information on church events, ministries, and resources.
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 - Provide structured opportunities for mentors and mentees to build relationships through regular meetings, shared worship, and service projects.
 - Develop a mentorship program for youth, encouraging and equipping young people to explore church work and vocational ministry.
 - Offer leadership training and guidance for mentors to ensure meaningful, faith-driven relationships that encourage spiritual growth.

3. If you have a list of your core values, please attach.

Word and Sacrament

We believe that the Holy Spirit works powerfully through faithful proclamation of the Word and administration of the Sacraments, recognizing Word and Sacrament as the means of grace that God uses to change people’s lives and lead them to faith and service.

Worship

We affirm worship that is faithful to God’s Word, seeking to provide a praise-filled, vibrant and relevant worship experience that reflects the best liturgical traditions of the church, and which incorporates a variety of worship and music styles.

Outreach Focused

We value outreach at Hope, seeking to provide a welcoming, grace-based, Gospel-driven ministry that is committed to reaching out beyond ourselves, desiring others to experience a personal and meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Excellence

We are committed to excellence, believing that God is worthy of the very best we can offer, demonstrating competence and creativity in all that we do, holding one another accountable to the highest standards of ministry when it comes to leadership, outreach, fellowship, stewardship, worship, education and service.

Caring

We understand the value and worth of every person's life journey in a sinful and fallen world, striving to provide a nurturing Christian community where people receive encouragement and growth, help and hope as they struggle with the challenges and concerns of life.

4. What are the role expectations of the pastor?

These are defined in the Senior Pastor Position Description:

- a. Leadership, Mission and Vision - keeping a broad missional perspective while interacting with leaders, staff and the congregation in articulating a clear vision and direction that is responsive to God's call.
- b. Creating a spirit of team ministry among staff; holding staff accountable to the mission, vision and values of Hope Lutheran Church.
- c. Empowering, equipping and enabling greater ownership of ministry activities by staff, lay leaders and ministry teams; freeing people to serve, not micro-managing their ministries.
- d. Shaping and sharing the mission, vision and values within the overall congregation by serving as the primary public proclaimer and teacher of the Word, sustaining and growing the climate and spirit which makes Hope unique.
- e. Providing and coordinating appropriate pastoral care in crisis situations while continuing to shepherd others who provide care and compassion to members in times of need.
- f. Administering the daily affairs of the congregation with the assistance of appropriate administrative and support staff.

5. How does the congregation understand the role of the following for its ministry:

a. The leadership

The Ministry Leadership Team (MLT) is charged with policy decisions and holding the senior pastor accountable to fulfilling the ministry plan of the congregation.

b. The staff (paid or volunteer)

The staff of the congregation is responsible to the senior pastor for the fulfillment of their several responsibilities which can be summed up as management of the ministry of the congregation.

c. The membership of the congregation for its ministry?

Members of the congregation are servants of Christ and carry out ministry in their daily lives (vocation) through discipleship, service, outreach, stewardship, fellowship, education, and worship.

6. What percentage of the congregation's budget supports ministry to its own members and what percentage is used for missions, evangelism, outreach and ministries beyond its own membership? How does this relate to the stated mission and vision of the congregation?

The current position is that 9% of regular/pledged offerings, plate offerings and special service offerings are given to the SED/LCMS and 1% is given in support of a local, LCMS Mission start. This does not include other special and designated "beyond our walls" giving and inward ministry of 2.6% excluding staff salary/benefits. The spending plan of the congregation is consistent with its mission statement and values.

7. How many small groups meet regularly that provide opportunities for support and relationship building (not committees or boards, but things like prayer groups and fellowship groups)? How many different members of the congregations are involved in these groups? What process is in place to promote the formation of new small groups?

Staff members work with established groups. Hope's small group ministry has 29 total small groups that meet regularly incorporating approximately 350 people, some being involved in multiple small groups. The staff of Hope works with members to facilitate the formation of new small groups based on the suggested needs from the congregation, including new members.

8. How many of the activities, programs and ministries of the congregation open to anyone? How many require that one be a member to participate? How are members encouraged to invite non-members to participate and how often do they extend invitations to friends, neighbors and associates? How many guests attend service weekly on average? How many return within a month? What kind of follow-up is used for guests and for repeat guests?

A majority of programs and activities are open to both members and non-members other than the governance positions in the congregation and in some other areas including teaching and worship service-related positions. Outside outreach is encouraged, especially in the children's ministry. Members are encouraged to invite non-members to participate as is appropriate. Hope typically has 20-30 visitors on a consistent basis with approximately 25% of those returning within a month. Both members and visitors are encouraged to register electronically. The current follow-up protocol is someone will call the visitor if the visitor has attended on multiple occasions with will ultimately lead to a contact by a minister to offer a personal invitation. Visitor follow-up is an evolving process. Utilization of a new computer system will yield a better system of visitor tracking and follow-up.

9. In the social ministry programs and activities of the congregation how is there an intentional effort made to share the Gospel with the recipients if the congregation's

ministry and how are relationships built between members of the congregation and the recipients? If it is not being done, what can be done to make this happen?

Hope is committed to service/outreach ministry; relationships are encouraged to be built, and the Gospel message is administered by living and proclaiming the Word that conveys the Gospel of our Lord.

- 10. Where and when are hosts (greeters) introducing guests (visitors) to others both before and after the service and how long are they also active at the “coffee hour”? What percentage of the members understands and exercises their role to greet and meet with those they do not know and seek to build relationships with one another? What training and reminders are given to hosts and members in the pew to assist in welcoming guests?**

There are greeters positioned at the entrances to the worship area. Members are encouraged to speak to those whom they do not know (which include both guests and members). A good number of worshippers do this, but it is difficult to determine a percentage. We also have a greeting at the beginning of the service and sharing of the Peace during the service, and there is a “coffee hour” following each service where worshippers mingle and converse.

- 11. What kind of intentional efforts are made to assimilate new members and regular non-member attendees to make them feel needed and appreciated, using their gifts, talents and abilities in ministry, rather than trying to fit them into pre-defined roles within the congregation?**

With the help of the new church software, Realm, we hope to connect existing members and new members.

- 12. How many adult baptisms (conversions) has your congregation had on average for the past five years?**

Although it is rare at Hope to have an adult baptism, we do occasionally have one.

- 13. What kind of life changes are taking place in the members of the congregation as a result of their participation in Word and Sacrament?**

Individuals are becoming active in worship, service and outreach. They participate in small group ministry and in bible study and prayer.

- 14. What intentional efforts are being made to grow the kingdom? What is being done to encourage members to regularly pray for their witness and for the conversion of those around them?**

Each week there is an item in the worship bulletin encouraging prayer for those who do not know Jesus as their Savior. Through the children and youth ministry, youth are encouraged to consider full time church work/ministry, which Hope has an above average track record.

- 15. What is the vision for a growing, living congregation, sharing the Word of Life, reaping a harvest? Explain how this is taking place.**

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Extend the Kingdom of God in the community... Directly support mission partnerships locally and internationally and through the District and Synod