



A History of Community of Hope Lutheran Church

Community of Hope, a mission congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, received its first life giving breaths in late 2000 and early 2001. During that time period three congregations independently began engaging in internal dialogue about the possibility of planting a new congregation in Rosemount, MN, a community just south of St. Paul, MN and on the edge of suburban expansion.

In May of 2001 a meeting of congregations was convened to begin exploring the possibility of a church plant in Rosemount. Those Congregations included: Prince of Peace, Burnsville; Hosanna!, Lakeville; Easter Lutheran, Eagan; Shepherd of the Valley, Apple Valley.

The initial gathering was remarkably positive with all present committing to combine resources, set aside any plans their individual congregations had about planting a church in Rosemount, and work together to develop a strong, highly evangelical congregation in the Rosemount area. Each congregation agreed to contribute financial resources, in-kind resources and people to the planting process. They were joined by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Division for Outreach and the St. Paul Area Synod in supporting Community of Hope.

By August 2001 there were six potential names that had been submitted for consideration to be the Mission Developer for the Rosemount church plant. The Planting Team also agreed on a mission statement that would drive their work.

Mission Statement for the Rosemount New Church Initiative: *to develop a progressive, evangelical, community-leading, Christian ministry of word and sacrament, prayer and service, grounded in grace and the Lutheran heritage.*

As conversation began to focus on candidates, Pastor Per Nilsen was asked if he would be interested in being the Mission Developer for the Church plant in Rosemount. Per was serving Prince of Peace, Burnsville at the time and lived in Rosemount. After some consideration and prayer Per agreed to be the Mission Developer for Community of Hope Lutheran Church, Rosemount, MN.

Per began full time work as Mission Developer of Community of Hope on January 1, 2002. There was a rapid timeline established. Community of Hope held its first ALPHA (a course in the basics of the Christian faith) course beginning January 13th, 2002 and began worshipping as a congregation on February 3rd, 2002. Two other staff people joined Per in the initial efforts. Sharon Rick began working ½ time as Administrative Assistant and Prayer Minister. Paul Dean was Community of Hope's first worship leader. Paul concluded his time with Community of Hope in April of 2002, and Dave Olson stepped in to facilitate our Worship and Tech Teams.

Community of Hope established its ALPHA course and worship environment at the Rosemount Middle School, Corner of Hwy 3 and 143rd St. W in Rosemount. Community of Hope's first ALPHA course ministered to 70 people and its first worship service, Sunday, February 3rd, 10:30am, drew 400. Community of Hope began a Children's Church program in Early March, 2002 and facilitated that program for 3yr through 5th graders through mid-May. There were approximately 40 children in attendance.

After the first worship service Community of Hope's worship attendance stabilized near 200, hitting a monthly average in May of 230 and continuing throughout the summer of averaging over 200 per week.

The primary mechanism for drawing new people to Community of Hope is word of mouth and personal invite. Though we have done some publicity in local newspapers, and numerous community outreach projects, Community of Hope has placed its emphasis on equipping those who are presently worshipping with us with the tools to share their faith with others. In addition sermon downloads from our web-site, and cable-broadcasts of our worship services have provided technological outreach tools to enhance ministry.

Now, 6 years into ministry, Community of Hope has grown to a worshipping population of nearly 700/week. March of 2005 opened a new era for our ministry as we move into our Worship Center on the corner of 145th and Biscayne Ave. in Rosemount, MN. We continue to provide avid support for seminary students, focused leadership training, outreach ministries at the local Family Resource Center and in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis, and opportunities for discipleship growth in the areas of prayer, Bible Study, missions, healing ministries, worship and music leadership, men's and women's ministries and small groups.

The vision which continues to drive us is "...bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to 1,000,000 unchurched people every 20 years."

To that vision, trusting in the grace, mercy and power of Jesus Christ, we will hold true.

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