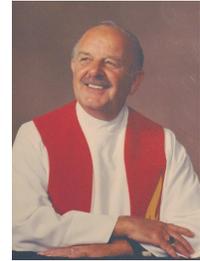


## A Brief History of Hope Lutheran Church, Virginia Beach

In the mid-1970s, a small group of Lutherans who belonged to other LCMS congregations but lived in Virginia Beach and Chesapeake saw the need to establish a congregation in the rapidly growing area of Kempsville. Working with the Department of Missions of the Southeastern District, the Reverend Paul Kettner, a mission developer from Cincinnati, Ohio, was called. Installed at Trinity, Norfolk in February 1976, Pastor Kettner began work in the area. The first worship service was held in the auditorium of Fairfield Elementary School a month later.

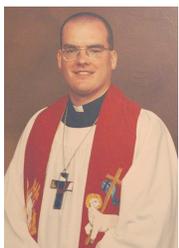


Twenty-five families officially became members of Hope on Charter Sunday, May 2, 1976. Almost immediately they set towards the goal of building their first facility and in February of 1977, a building committee was appointed to study the present and long-term needs of the year-old mission. An architect was engaged to assist in the planning and development. In May 1977, the Voters of Hope approved a set of drawings, which were then let out for bids. After months of fine-tuning, groundbreaking was set for the spring of 1979. In November, the first portion of our current building, the sanctuary and education wing, was dedicated to the Lord's service.

As the Spirit blessed the growth of the congregation, it rapidly outgrew its ability to worship in one service on Sunday mornings. Beginning in February 1984, two services were offered, making space available for more worshippers. Stained glass windows were donated in memory of loved ones by a number of families, and a new electronic organ was purchased. A preschool was established to meet the needs of members and as a tool for congregational outreach. Concerned about community service, Hope became a partner with Virginia Beach Social Services, a ministry to the needy in our community.

With continued growth came the desire for additional space required by the burgeoning Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and preschool. A Long Range Planning Committee was appointed in 1985 to study the direction of mission and ministry of the congregation. Bill Cristman was hired to serve as Pastoral Assistant in the areas of administration and visitation, under the direction of Pastor Kettner. Building plans were presented to the congregation and accepted, and in the summer of 1994, groundbreaking took place for a new fellowship hall with stage, kitchen, classrooms, restrooms and storage rooms. The expansion was completed in December of 1994.

Feeling the Spirit lead them in the direction of increased social ministry, the congregation joined hands with the Judeo-Christian Outreach Center, serving meals to the hungry and homeless and providing clothing for indigents in the area. With the congregation's size also came the need for increased pastoral support. The Voters agreed to call a seminarian to assist in the ever-expanding responsibilities of the pastoral office.



On June 11, 1995, Christopher L. Otten was installed as Assistant Pastor. His primary responsibilities included Sunday School, youth work, evangelism and outreach.

Near the end of 1996, Pastor Kettner retired and Pastor Otten accepted a Call to Hawaii. The people of Hope took the valuable step of studying their direction, priorities, outreach, and programs before initiating the call process. To provide for pastoral coverage and administrative support, the Rev. Dr. George Lobien was called and commissioned as Interim Pastor from February 2, 1997 to June 27, 1998. Meanwhile the congregation formulated its plans to begin the call process for a senior pastor.

The Rev. Gary Brooks, an active duty Chaplain in the United States Air Force, stationed at Langley Air Force Base, was called to serve as Interim Pastor while the congregation continued its search for a senior pastor. Pastor Brooks served Hope from August 1998 to December 1998.



On October 11, 1998, the Rev. Thomas Clocker was extended a Divine Call as senior pastor and after accepting, was installed on November 9, 1998. Under Pastor Clocker, the late service became a “blended service,” designed to reach out to those in our community who were not traditional Lutherans and to minister to those who desired a more contemporary form of worship.

To better meet the needs of our “senior community,” the Rev. Art Meyer served as Assistant Pastor from February 1997 to January 1999. He ministered to the sick and shut-in, while also assisting in the leadership of worship.



When Pastor Meyer again “retired,” the congregation sought to increase its pastoral staff once again. After study and prayer, a Call was extended to Timothy A. Utton, who was ordained into the Office of the Public Ministry here at Hope on Sunday, July 21, 2002. Again, the congregation continued to grow.

During the summer of 2000, a Memorial Prayer Garden was built towards the rear of the property by Josh Smith as his Eagle Scout project. Now maintained by a cadre of loyal volunteers, the Garden has become a place of deep meaning for many members. The remains of several members have been interred there. Over the same time period, the congregation enrolled in the Stephen Ministry program, with a number of volunteers being trained in care giving.

Hope Lutheran has also been blessed with a vibrant youth ministry. Beginning with a small group of high school age youth, the program has continued to grow. A three-year confirmation process is now in place for grades 6, 7, and 8, culminating in a very meaningful Confirmation Sunday. Each class also makes a banner to hang with the banners of previous classes in the fellowship hall. In January 2005, Hope dedicated a youth annex, a modular building designed to facilitate this expanding ministry.

With the Virginia Beach/Chesapeake area seeing rapid demographic growth, especially among the un-churched and under-churched, the Rev. Jeff Wuertz accepted the Call to begin a new mission in the area. It was specifically designed from the beginning as a ministry to reach those who didn't know Jesus at all. Pastor Wuertz was installed as Church Planter for Hope Lutheran on January 11, 2004. His ministry, Chesapeake Community of Hope, is focusing its efforts in the Great Bridge and Deep Creek area, worshiping at a school, with offices in a rented house.



Change came again to Hope as Pastor Clocker requested and was granted a "Peaceful Release" from his call on April 19, 2004. His last Sunday was May 23, 2004. Pastor Timothy Utton soon saw his status change from Assistant to Associate, allowing him to vote in District elections and to assume more responsibilities at Hope, while at the same time, the congregation again established a Call Committee. Once again, Pastor George Lobien, now a dear friend of many at Hope, returned to bring his gifts of ministry to the congregation.

On March 12, 2006, the Rev. R. Mark Nieting, senior pastor of Emmanuel, Asheville, North Carolina, accepted the Call of Hope and was installed on July 9, 2006. Then, at the verge of its 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, the congregation started to plan a wonderful celebration of thanksgiving to God for all the blessings He has provided in the past, recognizing that there is so much more to do in the future.



Anticipating the anniversary, a "Burning Bush" campaign was started to raise the necessary funds to "burn" the first mortgage, thus preparing the way for much more ministry to come!

***To God Be the Glory!***

**Hope Lutheran Church  
Charter Members**



**Sidney & Cheryl  
Barnes**



**Ruth Berry**



**Linda Hammond**