

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### River of Hope Lutheran Church

**How do I join?** Just keep showing up! There is a small group that is just for newcomers. Let someone in the office know you would like to join, [office@riverofhopehutchinson.org](mailto:office@riverofhopehutchinson.org) via email or by calling 320-587-4414. Bring your questions and your whole life. You don't have to pass a test. It's a process of relationship building where you are free to say, "Yes, I'm staying" or "No, I'm leaving" at any time.



**Isn't this the gay church?** I'm glad you asked. Of course we are. But

then we're also the teacher church and the young family church and the professional church and the blue collar church. See where this is going? It just so happened that River of Hope's beginning in 2010 made a splash when we openly welcomed LGBTQ people. But splashes are common place in a river. We do our best to seek out and welcome all people that God loves, including you.

**Is there a church council?** There are both a Vision Table and a River Table that guide the heart, mind, and vision of River of Hope. River Table leaders are elected. The Vision Table is whoever wants to serve. Requirements? Passion for the work, commitment to read scripture, your financial support, your active participation in the life of River of Hope.



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**What committee are you gonna stick me on when I join?** Nope. Not gonna do it. We have Tables that are self-generating and self-sustaining. That means you must have a passion to serve, be willing to grow into reading scripture, give financially, and be an active participant in the life of River of Hope.

**What's a River Team?** Well, that is one group we are gonna stick you on. :) It takes a committed group of hands and voices to make worship happen each week. Your river team will be assigned to you a few times each year. Make it a priority on your calendar. Help give voice and muscle to worship. We need introverts, extroverts, newbies and oldbies. Ultimately, you get to help show God's love by reading scripture, leading music, making treats, greeting people at the door, etc.

### You don't have Sunday School?

No. First, we practice intergenerational worship with intentional teaching and learning for all age groups. We believe that children of all ages can lead worship and learn stories from the Bible and language for God by being participants in worship.

Second, we have Headwaters, which is a faith formation event with crafts, games, music, stories and fun for 6th grade down to toddlers on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays. It's followed by a free meal and a 30-minute worship before 7th-9th graders break into small groups for confirmation.

**The most important place for a child's faith to grow? The home.** But don't worry - you are not alone! We are committed to giving you tools of faith to bring home and practice together.

A classroom simply cannot replace a life of faith that's shaped and nurtured in the home. We'll walk with you in this. Pastor Hans is always available for conversation. Seriously.





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**What is worship like?** We are committed and defined by engaging and interactive worship for all ages that communicates a clear message of God's love for you and for all. Worship at River of Hope is a safe place to practice a courageous Gospel. Sometimes you'll be asked to talk to someone next to you or to participate in a way that gets you out of your seat. It can be downright awkward. Nothing is ever mandatory and participation is never meant to embarrass. We take seriously the notion that worship prepares us and grounds us to live out our faith in our daily lives.

Worship also changes with each church season we're in. So for 4-6 weeks, worship will be one particular way; then it will change. Some of the seasons you'll love. Some of the seasons you might not love. This is what it means to be in community together – it's not about style or personal preference; it's about community.

Worship is a powerful gathering of regular people like you and me that is for the glory of God and in service to the neighbor, the stranger, and the person who doesn't know God's love.

**What's with the meeting new people thing?** Every church swears they are friendly & welcoming. But when you're new, all bets are off. We cannot afford to be afraid of each other. We belong to each other. Make the first awkward move.



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#### **What's with the root beer floats?**

We sometimes have seen that hope floats. In a world that can be heavy with worry, we believe that God's beauty and abundance can buoy or lift us up above the despair. So we show up at community events and hand out root beer floats, telling people they are beloved. No strings attached. In a world that is suspect of anything free, it's refreshing to smile and say, "This is for you. It's free." and to mean it. Just like God's love.



**Is there a youth group?** Yes. There are some pretty great adults in the congregation who love kids. Throughout the year, youth participate in camping ministries, service projects, and fellowship events.



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**Is there a choir?** Yes. It's an Instant Choir – just add people. You'll hear about it a few weeks before it happens. The morning of the Sunday you'll sing, the choir will show up early to practice and then sing the same day in worship. It is a gift to worship. Jim Nelson, our Worship and Music Curator, is just the guy to pull it all together. We also have a chime choir called Ringers of Hope, directed by Linda Remucal.



**What is confirmation like?** Confirmation is for youth in grades 7, 8 and 9 culminating in a fall of 10<sup>th</sup> grade confirmation celebration. Of course, any adult at any time can confirm their faith (reaffirmation of baptism) since faith is a life long journey.

**Confirmation is about relationship:** Twice a month, confirmation kids and their adult mentors all meet together, are taught by Pastor Hans, and have small group or one-on-one time together to apply scripture to daily life.

**Confirmation is about worship and spiritual growth:** Confirmation youth and their families are encouraged to attend worship at least once a month. Confirmation students are also strongly encouraged to participate in youth group activities, including summer camps.

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**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**

**What's the ELCA?** The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Bishop Elizabeth Eaton is the church-wide Bishop. Locally, there are synods – 6 in Minnesota which is a lot because, well, of all the Lutherans. We are part of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod and our bishop is Bishop Dee Pederson. The synod offers guidance and resources to each ELCA church, and given the freedom to live out our faith in our own particular way, specific to our context. It's a big tent.



#### **When are you going to build?**

Never say never, right? We don't have interest in constructing or owning a building which ties up precious resources (leaky roof! broken furnace! new carpet!) that could be used to further Christ's mission in the world. We're interested in showing love to Hutchinson, so we're also open to see where the Spirit may lead us.

**Why do you need my money?** Sometimes people think churches are supported by some other shadow entity. As Christians, we believe all we have is from God. Giving financial gifts to River of Hope is one way to practice giving thanks to God. Your financial support pays for our staff, including the pastor, worship and music curator and our administrative assistants. That's nearly 80% of what our financial gifts support. Your donations also go towards our worship and office space. Finally, we tithe (give 10%) back to the Southwestern Minnesota Synod, which helps fund a new ELCA congregation in Montrose and supports other local ministries. The short answer? The goal is to give your money away to give life to others.



# River of Hope Lutheran Church

We are the ELCA church in town. We are a purposely intergenerational community who is following Jesus out of the building and into the world where we live. We are learners (disciples) and practice-ers. Worship is a safe place to practice a courageous gospel. And, believe us, it takes practice. Your questions, critical thinking, doubts, and imperfect lives are welcome here. In fact, no matter your status in society (divorced, never-been-to-church, gay, straight, old, young, cranky, liberal, conservative, questioning, allergic-to-church, snarky) you'll be welcomed here. Then you'll be sent out, to live your life, transformed by Jesus Christ. And we believe, through the love of Jesus, you'll help to transform other lives.



## **Our purpose as a church:**

We go out to transform lives through Jesus Christ.

## **Our guiding principles:**

*(disciple = learner)*

*God is God and we are not.*

*We are called to grow together as disciples: to forgive, to teach, to love.*

*Disciples are inspired by the Holy Spirit to take risks.*

*Disciples seek God's justice.*

*Disciples serve with no strings attached.*

*Disciples invite and welcome through loving acceptance.*

*We meet you where you are.*



**IF YOU KEEP UP WITH BRANDS,  
THEN YOU SHOULD KNOW  
WE ARE PART OF  
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN  
CHURCH IN AMERICA (ELCA).  
WE'RE PRETTY PLEASED ABOUT THIS.**