

Congregational Town Hall – 5/13/25

Opening with Prayer: (Scott Horner)

State of the Church: (Pastor Mike)

- **Attendance**

- **2025 Attendance to date:**

- Overall: 318.87/week **Down 0.57 people/week or 0.18% decrease from 2024.**
 - In Person: 216.62/week **Down 3.36 people/week or 1.53% decrease from 2024**
 - Online: 102.25/week **Up 2.79 people/week or 2.81% increase from 2023.**
 - 7:30am 38.92 **Down 2.81% from 2024**
 - 9am 97.69 **Down 1.3% from 2024**
 - 10:30am 59.75 **Up 1.27% from 2024**
 - 8 New Members in 2025 (4 more in the New Member Class)
 - 10 Baptisms in 2025
 - 0 Weddings in 2025
 - 23 New Members overall since we voted on our name change (4/30/24) plus 4 more in this new class = 27 New Member adults
 - Early results of the time change seem encouraging as our goal was to have plus 70 at each service every week. Which has happened 2 out of 3 weeks so far. Giving us a chance to grow both.
 - Our assumption that the 9am would start off as the less attended service was correct. But our assumptions also suggest that it will eventually overtake the 10:30am as 9/9:30am is the number one time for church services across our country.

- **Giving Trend**

- **Pre-School is crushing it and looking/praying about adding a Kindergarten class in the fall of 2025 or 2026.**
 - **2025 General Fund thru April**
 - **Giving this year has not been good, but April was particularly bad.**
 - **We are trending a negative \$36,396.48 for our 2025 Budget (which is a pace for a \$109,189.44 shortfall by end of year.) This is a huge giving swing**
 - **We were beginning to see the early signs of a giving shift after January's numbers (as it continued a slide that began in November) so we made a 12K cut in February, that was taken from misc. accounts across the board**
 - **After another particularly concerning month in March, we made another 12K in cuts, that again were taken from a variety of ministry areas, but also... we were forced to cut the Children's ministry position (Katie). Fortunately for us, the Pre-School stepped in and offered to cover that staff cost moving forward. However, even at this point, we believed... that these two cuts put us in a good place moving forward... as**

the weekly giving average to that point in 2025 positioned us to make budget by end of year.

- **However, in April, the giving slide fell off a cliff. For even after these two prior cuts... it left us still trending a negative \$28,299.55 for our 2025 Budget through April (which is still an uncomfortable pace for a negative \$84,898.65 shortfall by end of year).**
- **Thus, I am recommending a further cut of 55k (bringing the total for the year to 79k in cuts... which is almost 10% of our overall 2025 budget).**
 - These cuts will drastically reduce our tithe budget as well as cost us the ability to pay Pastor Tim. Pastor Tim will still remain a “called Pastor”, however, given the change in his compensation, it would make sense that he would want to renegotiate how much he does around our church. Given that he may need to seek employment elsewhere to make up for loss income.
 - Adequate (although slimmed down) funding remains for almost all ministry functions.
 - Adequate funding remains for facilities (as that went largely untouched).
 - Tithe was cut pretty drastically (to about 25% of its prior amount)
 - Funding remains for the remaining staff
- **This cut will bring us to our last 12-month giving actuals. Allowing us to better navigate the giving trends of the coming months.**

- **Reasons for slide...**

In a recent report from the LCMS

- Economic uncertainty has affected charitable giving across the board over the last several months (churches, missions, etc).
- Inflation has affected families, most notably, over the last 12 months.
- Post-Covid, people have again begun to “live” life and their disposable income has been drastically reduced (affecting giving to the church).

Recent Changes to Hope

- Changed our name in April (best estimate is that we lost 1-2 families over this).
- Did a Capital Campaign in November (best estimate is that we lost 0 families over this).
- Changed times and added lights (best estimate thus far is that we lost one family do to these changes).

So while changes may be to blame for the change in giving patterns... usually that would coincide with lost families (which we are just not seeing). This leads us to believe that this drastic shift in giving is more cultural... and less ministry related.

Further Complicating and Weird Statistics

- We went from 4191 donations from 4/30/23-4/30/24 to 4202 donations from 4/30/24-4/30/25. An increase of 11 donations
- We went from \$981,169.06 in donations from 4/30/23-4/30/24 to \$1,051,146.48 from 4/30/24-4/30/25. An increase of \$69,977.42

- Summary:
 - Congregation is giving more (for this includes building fund giving as well) than last year.
 - Most of increase in giving must be going towards building fund.
 - Need to grow to accommodate a higher budget.
- **Reasons why we have continued to change things...**
 - **At a recent Pastor's Meeting, we were given this information.**
 - 75% of the Churches in the LCMS are now worshipping under 100/wk
 - 50% of the Churches in the LCMS are now worshipping under 50/wk.
 - The Pastor's Circuit that we are in is the only one in the country that doesn't have a church in it that is worshipping less than 100 (our circuit is made up of 8 churches).
 - **Summary: Traditional Worship is dying. Churches are getting older. And too many churches have refused to make changes that are necessary to keep growing in today's world.**
 - **And the even sadder part... the LCMS is doing better than most of the other church bodies out there today (including non-Denominational). The Catholics have fared the worst.**
 - **The Call then was to remain faithful to the Word of God. But also... to be innovative in reaching people, (especially young families) for Christ.**
 - Update: Over half of the new families we have brought into this church over the last year have been under 40. We are growing our children's ministry. We are baptizing children and adults. We are growing online. Our middle school program is solid. Our missions efforts in our community have been outstanding. Our facility has seen incredible "paid-for" upgrades. Our capital campaign is on pace. And our worship services continue to be a front door to this community for Jesus Christ.
 - But obviously, as our giving suggests, we haven't quite arrived yet. We have to keep going. The road to the future is the same as it has always been. To reach out share the gospel with this world around us with the purpose of "connecting to people to Jesus Christ." And to do that... we either have to grow... or increase our giving. Seems like we're doing the latter... so it would seem... we need to start inviting people to church... so as to grow God's Kingdom in eternity and at Hope.

Two More Announcements:

- 1) ***We are setting up a separate fund to provide a way for anyone who is interested to support Seth as he pursues going to Concordia Seminary starting this fall. The Cost is around 12k a year... and anything you can do to support him would be appreciated.***
- 2) ***Given everything... just a quick update on my Sabbatical (after 21 years here at Hope). It was supposed to be taken over the summer (we had intended to announce that this evening)... but it will be postponed until a much later time.***

Prayers

- *Prayer that God would continue to fund our mission.*
- *That God would grow the number of people in our services.*
- *That we would be a place that would grow people in their faith.*
- *That God would continue to give us “unity”.*
- *That God would bless our Pre-School!*
- *That God would keep satan far away from this place.*
- *That God would allow us to add space.*
- *That God would allow us to add staff.*