



# Pastor's Update

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LUTHERAN  
CHURCH OF **HOPE**

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By Pastor Merv Thompson

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"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." 2 Cor. 13:14

## Immersion – Worship With Earplugs!

If you stop by Hope after 8:30 pm on Thursday nights you'll see something quite amazing: about 400 people of all ages in a candle-lit worship space praising God with energetic passion to music that sounds like it belongs more on a college Rock station than in a traditional church setting. You'll see them jumping, praying, sitting in silence, and lifting their hands up to God—all postures of passionate worshippers encountering the presence of Christ. You'll also see these worshippers listening intently as God's Word is being preached and eagerly coming to the Lord's Supper as it is offered each week.

When the service ends after 10:00 pm something else amazing happens: people stick around, they drink lots of coffee, chai, cider, and talk and pray with each other, sometimes all the way to midnight. This is Immersion, a ministry and community of Hope focused on reaching into the emerging Postmodern culture with the everlasting love of Jesus Christ.

Immersion is also a very young ministry, only two years old as of Feb. 26. Like Hope, Immersion has undergone many changes. Immersion began as a small group ministry for young Postmoderns. Later it became a larger ministry embracing worship, prayer, discipleship, community life and missions.

How did it all start? About two and a half years ago thirteen people came together with a vision of a community of God's people reaching into the culture of their peers. After much praying, researching, debating, and experimenting,

these young adults asked if they could lead the evening Thanksgiving Eve service for that year. Since attendance was usually low at this service it seemed like an ideal time to try something new. And it was definitely something new! That Thanksgiving Eve around 800 worshippers experienced energetic—often aggressive worship, liturgical dance, performance art, and multi-media images, projected all over the room. Many worshippers weren't sure what to make of it, but many asked for more. One of those who asked for more was Pastor Mike Housholder, senior pastor of Hope.

Two months later Immersion started its regular Thursday late-night services. It began with an initial attendance around 150 people, primarily of young adults. Two years later Immersion has more than doubled in size with worshippers as young as senior high students all the way up to people in their '60's. This year Hope's single's ministry began to offer a meal right before Immersion as well as classes and groups suited to the life experiences of the singles community. As a result, many of these people have also become regular Thursday late-night worshippers and ministry volunteers.

Immersion continues to grow in ministry impact as well as in numbers. About a year ago Immersion began to include a powerful and effective prayer ministry. This ministry is led by a team of prayer warriors who offer monthly prayer ministry to worshippers, pray weekly with those involved in worship leadership, and offer opportunities for people to grow deeper in the practice of prayer for

others. Recently, Immersion has also expanded its ministry scope to include fellowship, discipleship, and various mission opportunities.

Immersion is not just confined to Thursday nights. Immersion folks are found learning, leading, and volunteering all throughout the various ministries of Lutheran Church of Hope. They lead classes on prayer. They dig into God's Word through Crossways. They host A-Teams in Alpha. They walk together with hurting people as Stephen ministers. They take part in prayer ministry teams in weekend worship. They serve the poor and people on the margins in places as diverse as Freedom for Youth in downtown Des Moines and the Westhaven orphanage in Jamaica.

What's the future for Immersion? Immersion began as a God-given vision to reach out with Christ's love in new ways. God has blessed this ministry in ways unimaginable to those who began it. It's been a God-thing from the start and with the Holy Spirit's guidance and power Immersion will continue to be a God-thing for a long, long time.