

## **Digital Signage Turns Two-Campus Church into One Congregation**

When Steve Sjoberg started working at Hope Lutheran Church in 2005 as Director of Communication and Technology, he quickly learned that he had joined a unique congregation with some unique communication challenges.

Hope Lutheran Church in Fargo is the largest Lutheran church in North Dakota with a membership over 10,000. It began with one sanctuary on the north side of Fargo in 1958. In 1992, the congregation started a second worship opportunity in a school on the south side of town. This new gathering grew quickly and the church opened a second campus in 1995. By the time Sjoberg joined Hope Lutheran, the two campuses had nearly the same attendance on Sunday morning.

“This church likes to think of itself as the Little Church on the Prairie, but when I started here, it had grown so rapidly that the communication was a mess. The two campuses were almost operating as separate communities. They even had separate building fund logos”, said Sjoberg. “My staff has spent a lot of time making sure that the communications from both campuses are consistent and the website is unified under one banner. The recent installation of LCD monitors and Tightrape Media Systems digital signage software has had a significant impact on improving communication between the campuses.”

### **Digital Signage System**

In the fall of 2009, Hope Lutheran contracted with Audio Video Electronics (AVE) in Maple Grove, MN to install a digital signage system. The objective of the system was to show one daily schedule for both campuses along with announcements for upcoming events. AVE installed a 32” LCD at each of the three entrances on the north campus and the two entrances on the south campus. After evaluating several digital signage software alternatives, Hope Lutheran selected the Carousel solution from Tightrape Media Systems.

“When evaluating any type of software for a church, ease-of-use is an important feature since church staff are usually not technical. When we tested the Tightrape software, we found using the browser-based interface so intuitive that we knew that any of us would be able quickly update the signs.”

AVE rack mounted a Carousel 300R Player in the control room at each campus. The Player is connected to a Kramer TP-210 one-in-ten-out DA so that the signal from the Player is routed to all the signs and sanctuary projectors on the same campus as the Player.

Hope Lutheran selected a two-zone, side-by-side layout for the digital signs. One zone shows the combined daily schedule for both campuses and the other zone rotates images that include announcements about upcoming events, information from the website, an RSS weather feed and the church’s RSS feed to highlight news about the church.

### **Future Proof**

When Hope Lutheran started discussing the design of the system with AVE, they wanted to make sure that the system would support future enhancements. Nick Abendroth, Account Manager at AVE explained, “Hope Lutheran plans to add cameras in the sanctuaries. They wanted the capability to route the video from the sanctuary to the digital signs. We accomplished this by installing a Kramer distribution amplifier with each monitor and installing a Crestron control system with a four-button interface in the control room. The Kramer DA has two inputs, one for the digital signage network and one to carry the video from sanctuary cameras. The Crestron control system uses a RS-232 network to turn the servers and signs on and off

with the push of one button and, in the future, it will allow them to route the video with the touch of another button.”

### **Two Campuses, One Congregation**

The benefit to the digital signage has been immediate. “Prior to installing the digital signs, the daily schedules and announcements for upcoming events were posted on bulletin boards by each entrance.” said Sjoberg. “The daily schedules would often show the events for only one campus. But, the real issue was that announcements for upcoming events at the other campus were hardly ever posted so there was not as much interaction between the communities as we wanted. Since the digital signs are now updated by my staff, members at each location are more aware of what is happening at the other campus. We feel more like one congregation rather than two.”