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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FREEHOLD, NJ - Hope Lutheran Church is excited to announce the calling and installation of The Rev. Dr. Edward E. Kropa as their new pastor. On June 11, 2017, at a special congregational meeting, Pastor Kropa was "called" to serve Hope and began his leadership role in early August. Pastor Kropa's installation service will be held Sunday September 24th.

The Rev. Pastor Kropa, known as Pastor Ed to his congregation, spent part of his youth raised in Freehold Township. In 1967 when he was 11 years old, he and his family became charter members of the newly formed Hope Lutheran Church. "During this period, I regularly served as an acolyte and was involved in the church youth group. In fact, it was while growing up at Hope that slowly but surely, I began to sense a call to ministry" said, Pastor Kropa of his early days at Hope.

It was while attending college that Kropa finally began to explore the possibility of religious service and applied to Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. He accepted an offer of admission where he earned his Masters of Divinity and in 1985 returned to Hope Lutheran Church, where he was ordained by Pastor Gibson acting on behalf of the Bishop of the ALC's Ohio District. He later went on to earn a Doctorate in Ministry at Drew University in Madison, NJ.

During his 32 years of pastoral leadership Kropa and his wife Jeanette have served 6 churches & raised 3 daughters.

Framed similar to Noah's Ark, with a cross shaped like an anchor, Hope Lutheran strives to live by their mission statement, "Anchored in Christ. Growing in Faith, Love & Service." The church has strong footings in ministering to the Freehold community and surrounding municipalities. This was a contributing factor to finding a person of God who shared the church's vision.

The church call committee determined the qualifications they desired in a new pastor and generated a profile for what they were looking for. This information was passed on to the New Jersey Synod and after a thorough search and interview, Pastor Kropa was called to fill the role.

The church elders see Hope Lutheran as unique in that they have had only 2 pastors ministering their church in the last 50 years. Even more unique, is the fact that Pastor Kropa is returning to them after being both raised and ordained in their church. Asked about his journey back to Freehold, Pastor Kropa stated "Not only am I coming back to my church, I am returning to my community. Returning to Hope is coming home."

"Our church is entering a new era right now" said Bill Seifert, Council President. "There is a lot of momentum around some very exciting things here; the union with Grace Church, new staff members, an expanding musical ministry, the growth of Hope Christian School and now the return and installation of Pastor Ed. We were counting on faith and the Holy Spirit to guide us, and I am very pleased with the decision to bring Pastor Kropa on board. He is approachable, easy to talk to, and very relatable. We are rallying around our new leader and I am looking forward to a bright new future for Hope!"

Hope Lutheran Church, which services 761 congregants, is a participating congregation in The New Jersey Synod, a geographical grouping of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations.

The Rev. Dr. Edward Kropa's Installation Service will be held at Hope Lutheran Church, 211 Elton-Adelphia Rd. Freehold, NJ on Sunday September 24<sup>th</sup> at 10:45am. The ceremony will be officiated by Bishop, Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew with a reception to follow in Fellowship Hall. This event is open to the public and all are welcome to attend.