

## **International House of Prayer**

### **An Evaluation from the Theological Perspective of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**

#### ***History, Beliefs, Practices***

##### **Identity:**

The International House of Prayer Kansas City (IHOP or IHOPKC) is a charismatic organization that, according to its website, is “committed to God, each other, and to establishing and maintaining a 24/7 house of prayer in Kansas City—a perpetual solemn assembly gathering corporately to fast and pray in the spirit of the tabernacle of David” and to proclaim “the beauty of Jesus and His glorious return.”<sup>1</sup>

##### **Founder(s):**

Mike Bickle (b. 1955)

##### **Statistics:**

IHOP in Kansas City holds livestreamed services of prayer and worship 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The 2000 staff members, students and interns are called intercessory missionaries and participate by turn in the prayer services.<sup>2</sup>

Forerunner Church in Grandview, Missouri (in the Kansas City metro area) calls itself “a local church expression of the International House of Prayer of Kansas City (IHOPKC).”<sup>3</sup> Forerunner church members hope to live out the vision and values of IHOPKC. The IHOP Network website lists the locations of Houses of Prayer throughout the United States and in more than 30 countries.<sup>4</sup> These churches support the 24/7 pattern of prayer, although because of trademark issues with the International House of Pancakes restaurant chain the churches may not use the IHOP abbreviation. These communities choose names such as Alabaster Prayer House or Convergence House of Prayer.<sup>5</sup>

In 2021, IHOP withdrew its voluntary membership from the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, an organization whose members are committed to financial best practices.

---

<sup>1</sup> About IHOPKC at [About the International House of Prayer - About IHOPKC](#).

<sup>2</sup> Erik Eckholm, “Where Worship Never Pauses,” *The New York Times*, July 9, 2011, at [International House of Prayer, a Ministry Growing Into a Movement - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> Forerunner Church About Us at [About Us — Forerunner Church](#).

<sup>4</sup> IHOP Network at [www.ihopnetwork.com](#).

<sup>5</sup> IHOP Network at [www.ihopnetwork.com](#).

IHOP's tax return for 2014 showed a revenue of \$5.37 million. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, IHOP's revenue was more than \$20 million.<sup>6</sup>

## History:

In September of 1982, Mike Bickle, an evangelical pastor, claimed to hear the Lord say, "I will change the understanding and expression of Christianity in one generation."<sup>7</sup> After receiving additional prophetic messages in the following years, Bickle founded the International House of Prayer in Kansas City on May 7, 1999. Bickle and 25 intercessory missionaries prayed and worshiped for 13 hours daily. On September 9, 1999, prayer and worship was extended to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.<sup>8</sup> IHOP in Kansas City runs IHOPU, an unaccredited college with schools for ministry, music, media and Chinese studies.<sup>9</sup> In 2001, IHOPKC moved from its location in trailers in Grandview, Missouri to a strip mall in Kansas City. In September of 2009 IHOP committed to combine 24/7 prayer and worship with 24/7 works of justice through the development of new outreach ministries, including food distribution, discipleship programs, street clean-ups, serving orphans and at-risk children and opening a crisis pregnancy center.<sup>10</sup> Other ministries include

Forerunner Music and the Children's Equipping Center that provides camps, conferences and training for young people.

In September of 2010, the International House of Pancakes restaurant chain filed a lawsuit against the International House of Prayer for trademark infringement because of the prayer organization's use of the IHOP abbreviation. In December of the same year, the restaurant chain dropped the lawsuit, agreeing to settle the dispute out of court.<sup>11</sup> IHOP began using the IHOPKC abbreviation.

In 2012, a former IHOPKC intern, Bethany Deaton, was found dead from an apparent suicide, but an IHOPU student, Micah Moore, later admitted to killing her. Moore and Bethany were part of a communal prayer group and Moore confessed that the group had been involved in sexual assaults on Bethany. Moore said that Bethany's husband, Tyler, had directed him to kill her before she revealed the abuse.<sup>12</sup> Moore later recanted his confession, claiming that he had made

---

<sup>6</sup> Cuthrell, "International House of Prayer Resigns from Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability" at [International House of Prayer Resigns from Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability – MinistryWatch](#).

<sup>7</sup> About IHOPKC at [About the International House of Prayer - About IHOPKC](#).

<sup>8</sup> The Global Prayer Room 24/7 Livestream at [The Global Prayer Room–IHOPKC](#). The prayer service features contemporary worship music, singing and spoken prayers.

<sup>9</sup> International House of Prayer – Forerunner Christian Fellowship v. Robert Murphy, Assessor Jackson County - Missouri State Tax Commission, June 8, 2018 at [Missouri State Tax Commission » International House of Prayer - Forerunner Christian Fellowship v. Robert Murphy, Assessor Jackson County - Missouri State Tax Commission \(mo.gov\)](#).

<sup>10</sup> About IHOPKC at [About the International House of Prayer - About IHOPKC](#).

<sup>11</sup> Bill Kisliuk, "IHOP Drops Suit Against Church Over Use of IHOP Acronym," Los Angeles Times, December 30, 2010 at [IHOP drops suit against church over use of IHOP acronym - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](#).

<sup>12</sup> Cuthrell, "International House of Prayer Resigns from Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability" at [International House of Prayer Resigns from Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability – MinistryWatch](#).

the confession in a delusional state. Charges against him were dropped.<sup>13</sup> In December of 2023, IHOP leaders dismissed founder Mike Bickle because of alleged sexual misconduct. His accuser was a woman who said Bickle abused her when she was 14 years old and a babysitter for his family. Bickle admitted to “inappropriate behavior” and “moral failures” between 1999 and 2003. Other alleged victims have called for an independent third-party investigation.<sup>14</sup> IHOP leaders David Sliker, Stuart Greaves and Brad Tebbutt also resigned.<sup>15</sup>

### **Texts:**

Mike Bickle has written a number of books, including *Passion for Jesus* (1993), *Growing in the Prophetic* (1996), *Prayers to Strengthen Your Inner Man* (2009), *Growing in Prayer* (2014) and *Harp and Bowl Handbook* (2020).

### **Beliefs and Practices:**

According to the IHOP statement of faith, the organization teaches that the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God and that God exists eternally in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. IHOP teaches that salvation is by grace through faith alone, in Christ alone and that signs and wonders and the gifts of the Spirit as described in the New Testament are operative in the church today. The IHOP statement calls Baptism and the Lord’s Supper two ordinances of the church. These ordinances are not believed to be means of salvation but are described as channels of God’s sanctifying grace and a blessing to the faithful.

IHOPKC describes its teachings concerning the end times as “historic premillennialism with a victorious Church.” According to this point of view, they believe that Jesus will return to earth at the end of this age to reign personally and visibly “over the nations in His millennial kingdom.” The Church “will go through the Great Tribulation with great power and victory and will only be raptured at the end of the Great Tribulation.” Those who are saved will dwell forever in the presence of God, while the unbelievers will suffer in the lake of fire, eternally separated from God’s presence. IHOPKC members pray for an end-time harvest of souls and “the emergence of a victorious Church.”<sup>16</sup>

Committed to prayer, fasting and living as forerunners preparing for the end times, IHOPKC members seek to “win the lost, heal the sick, feed the poor, make disciples, and impact every

---

<sup>13</sup> Shannon Cuthrell, “International House of Prayer Resigns from Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability,” *Ministry Watch*, February 24, 2021, at [International House of Prayer Resigns from Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability – MinistryWatch](#).

<sup>14</sup> Kate Shellnutt, “Mike Bickle Accused of Absuing a 14-Year-Old Before IHOPKC’s Founding,” *Christianity Today*, February 9, 2024 at [Mike Bickle Accused of Abusing a 14-Year-Old Before IHOPKC..... | News & Reporting | Christianity Today](#).

<sup>15</sup> Matt Flener, “Several Leaders Depart IHOPKC Ministry as Investigation into Founder Mike Bickle Continues,” *KMBC News Kansas City*, January 5, 2024, at [Several leaders depart IHOPKC ministry as Bickle investigation continues \(kmbc.com\)](#).

<sup>16</sup> IHOPKC Statement of Faith at [Statement of Faith - About IHOPKC](#).

sphere of society—family, education, government, economy, arts, media, religion, etc.”<sup>17</sup> Their 24/7 prayer and worship is inspired by Anna, who worshiped day and night in the temple (Luke 2:37) and King David, who assembled 4000 musicians and 288 singers for worship (1 Chronicles 23:1 to 25:31). IHOPKC traces its practice of unceasing prayer and worship from King David’s order of worship through monastic practices of the early centuries of the church and medieval times. From the years following the Reformation, IHOP looks to Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760) as “the next great champion of 24/7 prayer.”<sup>18</sup> Growing up in the Pietist movement, Zinzendorf was influenced by the Moravian preacher Christian David and gave asylum to the Moravians on his land, where they formed the community of Herrnhut, which established 24/7 prayer in 1727.<sup>19</sup> Remembering that Moravian community, the housing for students, interns and staff of IHOPKC is called the Herrnhut Apartments.<sup>20</sup>

Mike Bickle had been criticized by some pastors for his “unorthodox theology and a cultish atmosphere.”<sup>21</sup> Bickle and IHOPKC have also been associated with the New Apostolic Reformation. The NAR is a religious and political movement that emphasizes prophecy and spiritual warfare and wants to establish dominion over religion, entertainment, business, education, family, government and media. This idea of cultural dominion is part of the teachings of the International House of Prayer. Through outreach and works of charity and social justice, IHOP hopes to impact seven spheres of society—family, education, government, economy, arts, media and religion.<sup>22</sup>

### ***A Lutheran Response***

According to their statement of faith, IHOP rightly confesses the Bible to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God, the Triune God as the only true God and salvation by God’s grace through faith in Christ Jesus. The Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed are posted on the IHOP website.

---

<sup>17</sup> About IHOPKC at [About the International House of Prayer - About IHOPKC](#).

<sup>18</sup> IHOPKC A Brief History of 24/7 Prayer at [About the International House of Prayer - About IHOPKC](#).

<sup>19</sup> IHOPKC A Brief History of 24/7 Prayer at [About the International House of Prayer - About IHOPKC](#).

<sup>20</sup> International House of Prayer – Forerunner Christian Fellowship v. Robert Murphy, Assessor Jackson County - Missouri State Tax Commission, June 8, 2018 at [Missouri State Tax Commission » International House of Prayer - Forerunner Christian Fellowship v. Robert Murphy, Assessor Jackson County - Missouri State Tax Commission \(mo.gov\)](#). IHOP teachings are influenced by pietism, which directs the sinner “not to the Word and Sacraments, but to their own prayers and wrestlings with God in order that he might win his way into a state of grace.” John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), 455.

<sup>21</sup> Erik Eckholm, “Where Worship Never Pauses,” The New York Times, July 9, 2011 at [International House of Prayer, a Ministry Growing Into a Movement - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#).

<sup>22</sup> See the evaluation of Christian Reconstructionism, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (2015), at [LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations \(CTCR\) -- Evaluation - Christian Reconstructionism](#).

## *Sacraments and Signs*

IHOP regards Baptism and the Lord's Supper as merely blessings for believers and channels of sanctifying grace.<sup>23</sup> They reject the biblical teaching that these sacraments are means of grace that convey the forgiveness of sins and salvation in Christ. According to Holy Scripture, Baptism is a "washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). In the Lord's Supper we receive Jesus' body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:26-28).

IHOP also teaches that signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit are operative in the church today, just as they were in the New Testament church. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod does not deny that God may give such gifts as he chooses, although it is harmful to salvation to teach that extraordinary gifts of the Spirit *must* be received by every Christian. A report of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations states:

The Christian church today will accept with joy and gratitude any gift that the Spirit in His grace may choose to bestow on us for the purpose of edifying the body of Christ. It will recognize that the Lord does not forsake His church but promises the abiding presence of His Spirit. The church, therefore, will not reject out of hand the possibility that God may in His grace and wisdom endow some in Christendom with the same abilities and powers He gave His church in past centuries ... But it will also take seriously the admonition of the apostle to "test the spirits to see whether they are of God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1; 1 Cor. 12:10). The church should seek the Holy Spirit and His gifts where God has promised them, in the Word and sacraments.<sup>24</sup>

## *End Times*

As noted earlier, IHOPKC describes its teachings concerning the end times as "historic premillennialism with a victorious Church." They believe that Jesus will return at the end of this age, raise only believers to life and reign visibly on earth for 1000 years. After His reign, Satan will lead unbelievers in a final assault on the Church. Then, according to this false view, the Church "will go through the Great Tribulation with great power and victory and will only be raptured at the end of the Great Tribulation." Those who are saved will dwell forever in the presence of God. Unbelievers will suffer in the lake of fire, eternally separated from God's presence. IHOPKC members pray for an end-time harvest of souls and "the emergence of a victorious Church."<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> About IHOPKC at [About the International House of Prayer - About IHOPKC](#).

<sup>24</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *The Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1972), 28-29 at [The Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology \[1972\] \(lcms.org\)](#).

<sup>25</sup> IHOPKC Statement of Faith at [Statement of Faith - About IHOPKC](#).

As Lutherans we look forward with great joy to our Lord's return and anticipate with joy the day when "we will always be with Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). We reject the false teaching that Christ will reign over an earthly millennial kingdom, after which the Church will suffer through a time of tribulation and then be "raptured," or caught up, to be with the Lord. Scripture teaches that after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to reign at the Father's right hand (Luke 22:69). The risen Lord reigns now over all things (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23). When He returns in glory on the Last Day, He will come "with the clouds, and every eye will see him" (Revelation 1:7). On that day "all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:27-28). All believers will then be caught up "in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).<sup>26</sup>

### *24/7 Prayer*

According to the IHOP website, House of Prayer followers believe that they are called to establish a "perpetual solemn assembly gathering corporately to fast and pray, in the spirit of the tabernacle of David."<sup>27</sup> We are told in Scripture to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), but as C.F.W. Walther cautions, "The Word of God is not rightly divided when sinners who have been struck down and terrified by the Law are directed, not to the Word and the Sacraments, but to their own prayers and wrestlings with God in order that they may win their way into a state of grace."<sup>28</sup> Also, "the tabernacle of David" is not the focus or inspiration of our devotion. When discussing Sabbath laws with the Pharisees, the Lord Jesus said of Himself, "Something greater than the temple is here" (Matthew 12:6). As Christians we look to our Lord, who spoke of His own body—crucified and risen—as the temple (John 2:13-22). Jesus opened for us "a new and living way" into the presence of God, through the curtain of His own flesh (Hebrews 10:19-20; see also John 4:19-24). As the CTCR says in its report on the *Theology and Practice of Prayer*, "God-pleasing prayer in the Scriptures is always a response of the believer to the grace of God freely given in His Son Jesus Christ."<sup>29</sup>

### *Cultural Dominion*

IHOPKC may reflect the influence of the New Apostolic Reformation in the NAR belief that the church of Jesus Christ must dominate all areas of society and culture. This is the "Seven Mountains" program, an effort to establish influence and control over seven areas of culture—

---

<sup>26</sup> See Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *The End Times: A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1989) at

[LCMS CTCR Report — The End Times: A Study of Eschatology and Millennialism \(1989\).](#)

<sup>27</sup> About IHOP at [About the International House of Prayer - About IHOPKC.](#)

<sup>28</sup> C.F.W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, Reproduced from the German edition of 1897 by W.H.T. Dau (St. Louis: CPH, 1986), 127.

<sup>29</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Theology and Practice of Prayer: A Lutheran View* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2011) 14.



family, education, government, economy, arts, media and religion.<sup>30</sup> We know, according to Scripture, that Christ our Lord has dominion now over all things. We seek to help those in need and encourage one another in faith, but instead of trying to change society through military or political action, we obey the Savior's command to preach the Gospel in all nations. The Lutheran theologian Carl Mundinger speaks of these changes in society as people are enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of the Gospel:

Keeping strictly within her sphere, the Church must put forth every effort that the nation within whose boundaries she exists become more and more permeated with the principles of social life laid down in the Word of God, the principles of righteousness, of justice, of tolerance and forbearance, of mutual helpfulness and co-operation. She must do this not by futile efforts to control legislation or to direct the administration of government, but by laboring patiently and persistently to increase the number of those within the nation whose hearts have been regenerated by the Spirit of God and whose lives are directed by that Spirit. Not by invading political assemblies, but by entering the pulpit with an emphatic and convincing proclamation of the whole Gospel of Christ can the Church make a real contribution to the political well-being of our nation.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Links and Websites***

The International House of Prayer

[IHOPKC Home Page - International House of Prayer \(bing.com\)](#)

*The End Times: A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism* (1989)

[LCMS CTCR Report — The End Times: A Study of Eschatology and Millennialism \(1989\)](#)

*A Lutheran Response to the "Left Behind" Series* (2004)

[A Lutheran Response to the "Left Behind" Series \[2004\] \(lcms.org\)](#)

*Theology and Practice of Prayer: A Lutheran View* (2011)

[Theology and Practice of Prayer: A Lutheran View \[2011\] \(lcms.org\)](#)

*The Lutheran Church and the Charismatic Movement* (1977)

[The Lutheran Church and the Charismatic Movement \[1977\] \(lcms.org\)](#)

*The Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology* (1972)

[The Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology \[1972\] \(lcms.org\)](#)

---

<sup>30</sup> See [evaluation of the New Apostolic Reformation, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod \(2024\)](#). Also see the [evaluation of Christian Reconstructionism, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod \(2015\)](#).

<sup>31</sup> Carl Mundinger, "Dangers Confronting the Church Today," *The Abiding Word*, ed. Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), 1:503–4, quoted in *Render unto Caesar ... and unto God: A Lutheran View of Church and State* 1995. CTCR, LCMS, 74.

*Christian Reconstructionism* (2015)

[LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations \(CTCR\) -- Evaluation -- Christian Reconstructionism](#)

Russell P. Dawn, "Piety vs. Pietism," *The Lutheran Witness*, March 15, 2018

[Piety vs. Pietism – The Lutheran Witness \(lcms.org\)](#)