



# DHF Connection

SUMMER 2024

## Joy in Fellowship

Luke wrote in Acts 2:42, 47 five priorities of the early church. These same priorities that were so foundational for the fledgling church were on display at DHF'24.

Main sessions rooted in Scripture were:

- "Discerning God's Voice" with Michael Ten Eyck
- "Global Missions" with Will Partin
- "A Kingdom Mindset" with Nathan Loewen
- "Unity & the Church" with Kim Holley
- "God's Masterpiece" with Rick Grace

All these messages can be accessed on the DHF YouTube channel at [youtube.com/@discipleheritage](https://youtube.com/@discipleheritage). We encourage you to use these free video resources to enhance the ministry of your church.

Fellowship, or sharing life together, was said to be the best part of the conference by many attendees. Connecting with church leaders from around the county, networking, developing and/or deepening friendships is an ongoing impact of the conference. Sharing meals together, finding a quiet place to talk or pray, interacting with our ministry partners, all create bridges the Holy Spirit can walk across.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer . . . praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

**ACTS 2:42, 47**

kingdom ministry. The bread of life, the cup of redemption taken as a family "to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26) prepared us to re-enter our ministries.

A precious time of prayer took place when Sam and Heather Sears, and Chris Henderson stood before us. The DHF Board of Directors, along with members of the Nexus Leadership Team (a church planting ministry), joined in "the laying on of hands," commissioning them to plant the first church started as a DHF church, The Stone Church in Clarksville, TN

(more on page 2). You could sense the Lord's smile as we prayed over the team.

The Worship Arts team from FCC Decatur, IL led us in praising God several times throughout the conference. Joining in worship with believers from around the country, lifting hearts, hands and voices to the One who alone is worthy was a special experience.

**DHF is devoted to the Bible as the Word of God, to connecting churches and people for ministry, to the centrality of communion, to prayer and the praise of God.** There is a home for you in this ministry! Join us as we "encourage, strengthen and lead churches to fulfill Christ's mission." Email Rick Grace at [rgrace@discipleheritage.org](mailto:rgrace@discipleheritage.org) to explore how DHF can partner with you.

*Rick*



**Rick Grace** | [rgrace@discipleheritage.org](mailto:rgrace@discipleheritage.org)

*Rick is the DHF Church Liaison. He and his wife, Nancy, have served in pastoral ministry for 50 years. Rick earned his doctorate from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.*



At the conclusion of the conference, we shared the Lord's Supper together. In the breaking of the bread, we joined together to remember Jesus' sacrifice and recommit ourselves to

*Top: Pastoral spouses ate lunch together during DHF'24; Left: We love to work hard and play hard! Attendees of DHF'24 had a blast playing games reminiscent of their youth group days.*



# CHURCH PLANTING

**Why can't you just go be a pastor at one of the established churches?**

This question came from a dear family member, with whom I had an adversarial relationship as a child. But God softened my heart for this person after I experienced God's grace, and I am thankful to have played a part in his walk with Christ. I prayed for him for years, and it was my honor to baptize him after he came to faith.

Now, we are closer than ever, and I see him growing in Christ. But he just couldn't understand why I was planting a church. In his eyes, I was leaving a paid position in my chosen vocation—a career choice that I had spent years getting an education to have.

He was stunned when I told him I was applying to be a part-time bus driver. He was certainly glad that my family and I were leaving California and would be closer to our families, but he was concerned about how I would make a living. To help, he told me about a nearby small church paying its pastor well for just "eight hours of work a week."

He meant well, but I didn't have the heart to explain to him that the eight hours was only the time he saw the pastor working. In addition, he was worried about the two other men on the launch team who were both leaving vocational ministry to move and take on secular jobs. He asked honestly, "Why would y'all do that to your families?"

I did my best to explain why we were launching **The Stone Church in Clarksville, TN**. It was beyond feeling called to do so and beyond feeling

confident in the unity and heart of my family and the launch team. It boils down to my feelings about lost people. I love existing churches, but study after study demonstrates new churches reach more unchurched people. A 2015 Lifeway study found 42% of church plant attendees were previously unchurched, but 90% of new members in an existing church came from another congregation. The possibility of reaching four times more unchurched people is the feeling that excites us as a team.

After pouring my heart out with this explanation, he responded, "So it's about winning more people to Jesus." Yes! That's it! He got it! He still thinks it sounds crazy, but he knows our heart is to reach as many of the 88,000 admitted non-Christians in Clarksville, Tennessee as we can. And he understands that, even though he may not quite fully understand our method.

So where are we in this goal? To date, two of our launch team members have located full-time secular jobs in the area, and the rest of us are applying. We are fundraising to reach a goal of \$250,000 to fund our first two years. Our biggest challenge right now is the move itself so we appreciate your prayers.

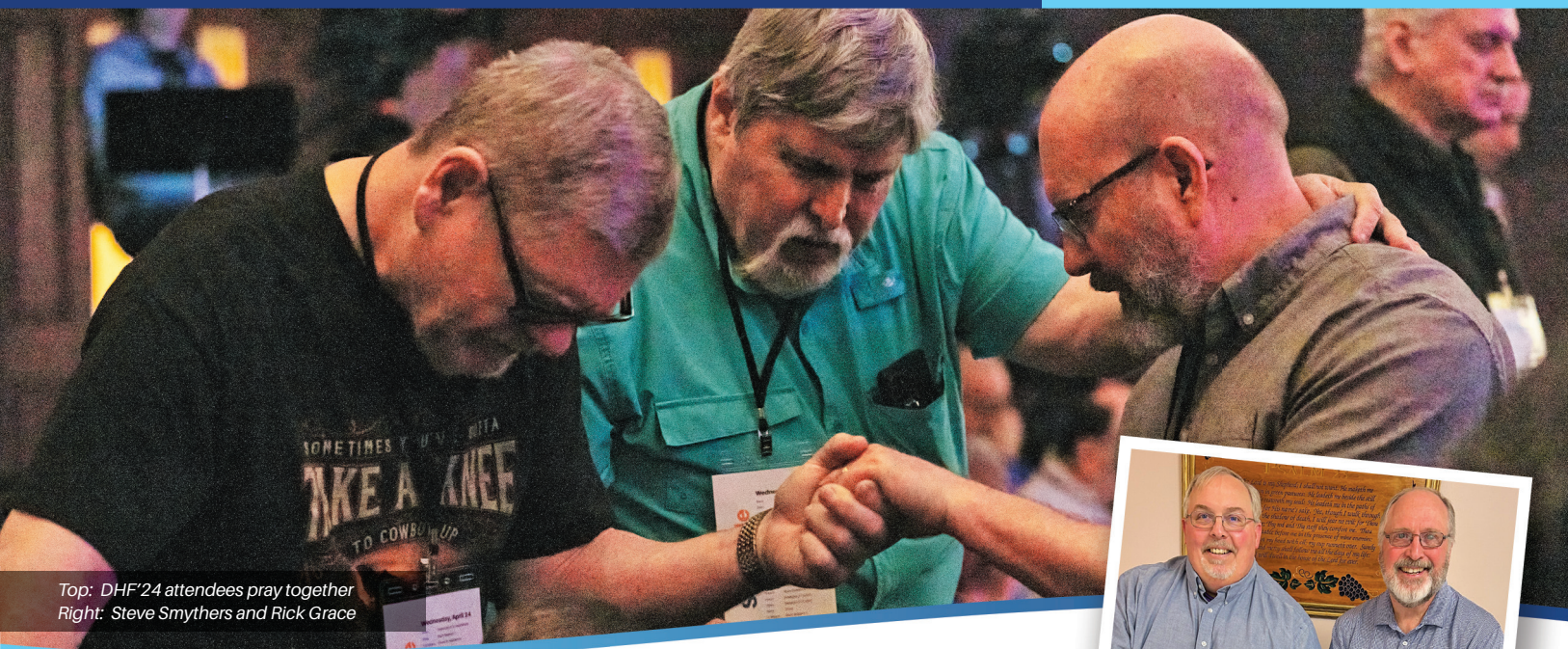
*Sam Sears*

**The Stone Christian Church** is a new church plant in Clarksville, TN in partnership with Nexus Church Planting and Disciple Heritage Fellowship. To get added to their e-newsletter, contact Sam Sears at [sam@thestone.cc](mailto:sam@thestone.cc). Find out more at [thestone.cc](http://thestone.cc).



From left: Chris Henderson and Sam & Heather Sears





Top: DHF'24 attendees pray together  
Right: Steve Smythers and Rick Grace

## A Fresh Perspective

I am a lifelong member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I have been involved in church since I was young and was ordained to the ministry in 1994. I attended the General Assembly (GA) for decades but have stopped going because I just don't feel part of the church anymore.

My views and those of the Disciples have drifted so far apart I hardly recognize the DoC anymore. I would leave the GA angry and disillusioned. The DHF Conference was a breath of fresh air. Everything was so uplifting and positive. The worship was incredible, and the fellowship was such a fresh experience. It was everything I had hoped it would be.

I enjoyed all the speakers. It was wonderful to listen to speakers you can relate to, and still be inspired to grow in your faith. I took notes and then studied them in light of Scripture when I got back to my hotel, being so engaged in the word. This was refreshing, as compared to going back to your room angry and studying because social justice issues were being preached or taught as gospel as it is at the GA.

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell in unity" (Psalm 133:1, ESV). It was good for my spirit to join with others in worship and study without the agenda of the world being infused in the gathering. The DHF conference is truly about worship and study of the word of God. Every session was an uplifting experience, allowing me to grow in understanding God's word. The fellowship also enhanced the whole experience with times of discussion and mutual respect. There was never a time when someone looked down at you because you believe in the word of God.

No presentation was used as a political weapon to push an agenda. Unfortunately, my last experiences at the GA were about

pushing agendas neither the churches I served, nor I would ever support. The DHF Conference was about God and God's word without a social justice or political agenda.

I just turned 60, and I will say it was one of the most positive and enriching spiritual blessings I have experienced in my life. My recommendation is if you have never made it to a DHF Conference, **start making plans now to attend the conference next year May 7-8, 2025**. It is such a positive and uplifting experience; you will not regret it. It is an outstanding value, but more than that it is a spiritual experience that will enhance your faith journey. I hope to make it every year.

*Steve Smythers*

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May 7-8, 2025 in Decatur, IL

Celebrating 40 years in 2025!







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DHF 2024 playlist



# Watch DHF<sup>24</sup> main sessions & breakouts on

