

PARTNERSHIP STORY

CARE

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LIVING HOPE CHURCH IN FAYETTEVILLE, Arkansas was originally planted out of Sovereign Grace Church in Louisville, KY in 2017. Like many churches in Sovereign Grace, we deeply appreciate the strong relational ties that exist between all of our churches. However, the depth and benefits of these wonderful ties have been particularly used by God to sustain and strengthen us.

Replanting a Church Plant

At the beginning of 2020, we underwent a massive transition: *we replanted a recent church plant*. We changed our name, location, and leadership. And as you would expect, we were weary. The whole church was weary. We felt that we had the faith to make these changes but not necessarily the faith to sustain them. As a result, the future of our church was uncertain, to say the least. That's where Sovereign Grace stepped in!

I'll never forget Brian Chesemore (Sovereign Grace Church, Louisville, KY) and Dave Odom (Redeeming Grace Church, Franklin, TN) flying into Fayetteville to preach on two different Sundays in January 2020 because I was unable to get off work (my *other* job). Additionally, these men refused to receive any financial assistance from our church. *And it was good they refused because we didn't have any money to give them!*

Then in February 2020, Mickey and Jane Connolly (Crossway Community Church, Charlotte, NC) showed their love and commitment to our church by moving to Northwest Arkansas for a month so that they could care for us in our weariness. When they arrived, we collapsed into their arms. Their investment built faith into the team and hope into the church, which are still evident to this day.

Help in Word and in Deed

Not only did our friends in Sovereign Grace care for us relationally, but they also cared for us financially. At the time of the transition, we were broke and in desperate need of a new meeting place. This made it very problematic when the ideal church building became available. I'll never forget hearing Mickey say, "Get the building; we will figure out the money." He was right.

With just a handful of people and a few dollars in the bank, by faith we moved into a 4,000 square foot church building which was totally renovated and equipped with state of the art sound equipment. Though we were little in a large space, the Lord gave us childlikeness "[not to despise] the day of small beginnings" (Zech. 4:10), and he gave us eyes to watch for his hands to build the church.

The Lord has provided for us in so many ways, and many of those ways were through our friends in Sovereign Grace. We have been left speechless as several churches across the country sent financial gifts to Living Hope Church. At the same time, we have been blessed with grants from Sovereign Grace. Even individual members across Sovereign Grace Churches have given generously to us.

Receiving all these gifts and categorizing them correctly in our accounting has been another unsung hero, Mark Donovan (Treasurer and Deacon, Sovereign Grace Church, Louisville, KY and Business Manager, Sovereign Grace Central). Mark served our church in this capacity for over two years and remarkably never once requested financial compensation. He served our church with joy and selflessness which remind me of the character of Christ. Last year, Mark trained a qualified young lady in our church to take over these responsibilities so that we could take another step forward in health and independence.

Honestly, as I recount these evidences of grace in our church, through our partnership in Sovereign Grace, I find myself asking, "*Who does this sort of thing?*" I have never seen or heard of such commitment to one another in a denomination of churches like we have experienced in Sovereign Grace.

Changing Lives and Stabilizing the Church

As a result of Sovereign Grace's investment, lives have been changed. In August of 2020, we baptized a man who had been living as a homosexual for 30 years. In August of 2021, we baptized a young lady who found Living Hope a refuge from the prosperity gospel which had been influencing her for years. In 2022, we baptized a young man who had been an atheist for over a decade. We've continued to see baptisms as we watch God add to our number.

In May of 2022, I was ordained and installed as an elder at Living Hope with the help of my coach, Steve Whitacre. We also were able to install three trustworthy men into the office of deacon. This was only possible through the guidance and counsel of men in my region, such as Walt Alexander, C.J. Mahaney, Jeff Purswell, and Brian Chesemore. I'm happy to report, as a result of God's faithfulness working through sacrificial partnership, Living Hope Church is not only surviving; we are thriving and healthy.

With the Psalmist (118:23), we at Living Hope say, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." The members of Living Hope Church are deeply thankful to Sovereign Grace for their investment in our local church, for taking gospel partnership so seriously, and for living it out with sincerity. All glory to God.