



Connection

FALL 2019

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DON'T GO IT ALONE

By Wayne Kent | Executive Director of DHF & Lead Pastor of First Christian Church in Decatur, IL

I received a phone call this summer from a pastor who said, "I can't overstate how lonely I am. There's no one with my denominational background, belief systems, and theology within hours of me."

This pastor serving a rural congregation in the West learned about our ministry through an online search. After years of going it alone, he is tired and worn out.

He soon will have a visit from Rick Grace, DHF's new Church Liaison. Rick joined our DHF staff with an express mission: Provide care for clergy ministering in the trenches of pastoral work.

I know from personal experience it's needed.

It's been my privilege to serve two congregations during my 30+ years in pastoral ministry. In the first pastorate, I was the lone guy in the office day by day. A secretary did come in a few hours a week. Much of what else needed to be done in the life of the church fell to me. I was up for it

and knew that was my job. However, there were some very lonely days.

My second pastorate is currently at First Christian Church in Decatur, IL. This setting is different as I'm part of a larger staff team.

However, there are still days of ministry loneliness. Pastors deal with people's lives, their triumphs and trials. We carry heavy burdens on behalf of individuals, praying and counseling, challenging and encouraging them to follow Jesus in every aspect of life.

Even a team ministry approach does not cut through the top layer of pastoral burdens.

This is why Rick's new role for DHF is so important. Rick and his wife, Nancy, will travel the nation, meeting with men and women in ministry, encouraging them in their leadership responsibilities, while visiting congregations interested in DHF's ministry.

Our plan is to utilize the staff resources of First Christian Church in Decatur, IL as a backup and support team for clergy and churches across the nation.

This is a new and revised approach for DHF.

DHF's board spent the last 18-24 months in prayerful deliberation about the ministry's future. We have more than 70 churches known as DHF congregations across the nation. Some of those churches and pastors are thriving. Others are barely surviving.

Rick will step into pastors' offices, providing a listening ear and some words of encouragement. Perhaps he may even bring a message of advice when appropriate.



In the meanwhile, the full staff team in Decatur are poised and ready to help. When pastors have questions, we offer solutions to areas such as:

- ▶ Youth ministry
- ▶ Moving from one to multiple weekend worship services
- ▶ Technology solutions
- ▶ Personnel issues and job descriptions
- ▶ Budget
- ▶ Preaching resources
- ▶ And much more!

We're willing to share our experience in these and many more matters. We will not have all the answers, but there is a team ready to engage in conversations.

We want to talk to you, helping your church and your pastor develop a more powerful and effective ministry. Contact us today to start a conversation.

DHF & DENOMINATIONS

Disciple Heritage Fellowship has many partners who come from a Stone-Campbell theological legacy. Some have an association with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Some do not. We simply encourage all congregations to experience God's leadership in theology and practice with an emphasis on biblical authority and salvation solely through Jesus Christ.

DHF does not actively promote one denomination over another. We have seen some congregations leave the Christian Church (DOC), including First Christian Church, Decatur IL, the lead church for DHF. It is not our advice to follow our congregation's pattern regarding the DOC. Some of DHF's covenant congregations remain affiliated with the DOC.

We support the autonomous decisions made by individual congregations.

DHF is focused on helping congregations thrive, regardless of the denominational background or affiliation. It is estimated that 4,000 churches are closing in the United States every year. We want to help change that trend.

DHF stands ready to help you and your church. We will draw on the experience of the staff of First Christian Church (Decatur, IL) and other committed Christian leaders to consult, to dream, and to help plan ways to better enable you step into the future God has prepared.

LET'S GET CONNECTED!

By Rick Grace | DHF Church Liaison

"Do your best to come to me quickly . . ."

2 TIMOTHY 4:9

These are words written by the Apostle Paul to his young friend and mentee, Timothy. They reflect the honest struggle of a man who had given himself over to Jesus, yet was feeling lonely and abandoned. He knew God had called and prepared him for this ministry, but Timothy needed someone to come alongside him at this critical moment of life. Everyone who has served in pastoral ministry has known these feelings at one time or another.

These words give shape and direction to my new role as the Disciple Heritage Fellowship (DHF) Church Liaison. While my role is new, I am not new to DHF, having been part of this ministry since 1985. I have served on the DHF board, written for its publications, spoken at its conferences, and represented the ministry in a variety of contexts. Now I consider it a special privilege to join the DHF staff and serve alongside Wayne Kent, our Executive Director.

Every recent study of pastoral ministry confirms what we already know: ministry has gotten much harder. Many pastors are lonely, discouraged, and ready to give up. In fact, only one in five pastors who start their career in ministry will finish in ministry. DHF is working to reverse that trend by creating opportunities for us to come alongside each other as servants of God.

Those opportunities will include regular encouraging emails, online group studies, personal visits, regional retreats for pastors and/or spouses, along with our national conference and other growth opportunities. My heart is to create a network among our pastors. No one should feel as if they are in ministry alone.

I ask for your prayer support as this new ministry begins. I look forward to sharing with you the difference we are making together for God's Church and His glory!

Contact Rick Grace at
rgrace@discipleheritage.org
or 217.875.3350



Rick Grace



(from left) Wayne Kent, DHF Executive Director, and Rick Grace, DHF Church Liaison

DISCIPLE HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP

has a rich history of supporting churches. Our shared heritage provides a unique bond.

DHF provides the following to pastors, leadership, and congregations:



ENCOURAGEMENT

DHF provides encouragement to the pastor, leadership, and congregation. We wish to spur one another on to accomplish good works.



FELLOWSHIP

Leading a congregation can be difficult and sometimes lonely. DHF provides professional connections and a fellowship of pastors who understand ministry in today's Church.



MISSIONS

Impact your community and world for Christ! DHF can help you launch community outreach endeavors as well as global missions. We provide opportunities for you to participate in mission trips.



RESOURCES

Resources, such as the Elder Update podcast, can foster growth of lay leadership within the church. Elders have a calling to leadership and need to be challenged to grow.

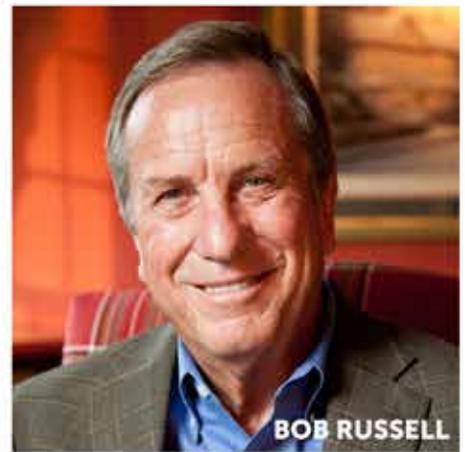


NETWORKING

Connect with other like-minded congregations across the country. The DHF National Conference is a wonderful place to connect with other pastors, leaders, and congregants.

DHF'20

**DISCIPLE HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP
NATIONAL CONFERENCE
APRIL 24-25, 2020 IN DECATUR, IL**



BOB RUSSELL



MARK & JILL SAVAGE

WHY YOU SHOULD ATTEND DHF'20

By Lori Putnam | DHF Coordinator

I constantly receive ads for conferences or seminars. I'm sure they are all great, but I can't attend them all. My calendar and budget won't allow it! When determining which conference or seminar to attend, I consider these questions:

- ▶ Is this a topic that impacts my ministry?
- ▶ Are there other attendees I'd like to connect with?
- ▶ Is this a conference I can afford to attend - both financially and with my time?

These questions help sift through the myriad of conference choices to make the most of the investment of time and money in bettering my ability to minister to those in my care.

The answers to these questions can help you regarding the Disciple Heritage Fellowship National Conference on Friday, April 24 and Saturday, April 25, 2020 in Decatur, Illinois.

This two-day conference is designed with your ministry in mind. Main session speakers will provide encouragement and challenge for you as a ministry leader. Speakers include Wayne Kent (Executive Director of DHF), Dr. Tom Harris (Executive Director of Interim Pastor Ministries), Bob Russell (former lead pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, KY), and

Mark and Jill Savage (authors and speakers on ministry and marriage).

Breakout sessions will be available on topics such as healthy elder teams, mental health for ministry, first impressions, assimilation, church communications, adoption and foster care, and much more. The quality and breadth of topics will help you and your church.

The schedule of the DHF National Conference includes time to connect with other pastors and leaders from around the nation. You will gather around meals and table conversations fostering connections and networking.

Decatur, Illinois is easily accessible. Several regional airports are within a 45-minute drive. Larger airports in St. Louis, Chicago, and Indianapolis are within a 2-3 hour drive. Registration is affordable with breakfast, lunch, and snacks included. Some scholarships are available. Hotel information available with registration.

We look forward to connecting with you April 24 and 25, 2020 in Decatur, Illinois.

Details & registration can be found at discipleheritage.org

Celebrating 140 Years

Flora, Indiana

On September 8, 2019, Flora First Christian Church in Flora, Indiana celebrated 140 years of ministry. The worship service included scripture readings by the oldest and youngest attending members, recording artist Malachi Jagers, and a message by Senior Pastor Kim Holley. The service was followed by a pitch-in lunch. We celebrate with and pray for the Flora congregation as they continue to serve and represent Jesus in their community and around the world.



Pastor Kim Holley and Rick Grace, DHF Church Liaison



Leslie Kent at Pleasant Hill Christian Church in North Carolina

DHF Conference in NC

Richlands, North Carolina

Several DHF churches in North Carolina gathered for their annual conference on September 21, 2019 at Richlands Christian Church with special guests DHF Executive Director Wayne Kent and his wife, Leslie. Wayne was the keynote speaker, and Leslie shared her gift of music. Following the conference, the Kents served the congregation of Pastor Lynn Maxwell at Pleasant Hill Christian Church during Sunday worship.

Ordinations

Decatur, IL

On August 25, 2019, the elders of First Christian Church in Decatur, Illinois were pleased to present five candidates for ordination. Nic Mayberry (High School Director), Lacey Philips (Worship Arts), Lori Putnam (Ministry Development), Heather Vance (Family Ministry/Middle School Director) and Mitchell Yaksh (Ministry) all completed requirements for ordination.



Wayne Kent leads ordination service



MINISTRY PARTNER HIGHLIGHT



A TALE OF TWO CHURCHES



By Keith J. Mackey | Interim Pastor Ministries

In one church, a pastor was retiring after three decades with the congregation. The church had grown exponentially in thirty years, recovering from a previous split. He did everything right as he prepared for the big day. His hand-picked successor was on board, his role ever expanding. The retiring pastor handed the baton (literally) in a time of celebration. Many alumni came to be a part of the festivities.

The pastor moved on, confident in the church's continued success. But soon he began to receive troubling calls; things weren't going so smoothly at the church. There was discontent. There were rumblings and mumblings, and conflict was on the rise. The new pastor was making changes. It just wasn't going well. A nostalgic spirit of discontent was rearing its ugly head. The successor's tenure was a short one, and full of trouble.

A second scenario is from a small church in a mid-size city rocked by the discovery of the pastor's moral failure. The leadership's indecisive response was back and forth. Should they keep him and get him counseling, or fire him? They botched the job, and it tore the congregation apart which resulted in a deep hurt that lingered for years. A new pastor came in, but the scars of mishandling the previous minister's foibles lingered long. A tremendous spirit of defeat and malaise infested the church. The congregation dwindled. The new minister endured a twelve-year struggle before leaving. A few years later, the little congregation closed.

Both stories are true, and more common than we care to admit. This is the reason Interim Pastor Ministries (IPM) was formed, to help and guide churches in times of transition with a program that is exciting to execute. Consider the nostalgic spirit of discontent in one church and a spirit of defeat and malaise in the other, both underscored by unresolved conflict. Upon

completion of IPM training, the stories of both these churches came to mind for me and my wife. We realized if both churches had followed the IPM process, their outcomes would have been much better.

IPM's ministry includes a five-stage process:



IPM is proud to be a trusted resource for DHF. If your church is in a period of transition or approaching one, IPM and DHF are available to assist. We are here, we are ready, and we would love to partner with you to make the way for great days of ministry together. **For more information, contact Rick Grace at rgrace@discipleheritage.org or 217.875.3350.**



GLOBAL MISSIONS: THE CUBAN CHURCH

Members of DHF Churches from across the country meet with a Cuban pastor in December 2018

By Michael Ten Eyck | DHF Board Chairman and Lead Pastor of First Christian Church in Pittsfield, IL

I was intrigued when I first heard about the Disciple Heritage Fellowship / First Christian Church of Decatur (IL) discovery trip to Cuba. Cuba is a mystery to Americans. Images of a hostile nation, repressed people, and political instability dominated my thoughts despite the relational thaw that transpired under the Obama presidency.

I had never traveled to a communist nation in the past. I was intimidated at the thought: Communists and me? Glancing at my calendar and realizing the trip was at the beginning of Advent gave me all the excuse I needed to brush this opportunity aside.

A dear friend who was going on the trip kept encouraging me to reconsider. Eventually, I agreed to go despite the busyness of my work and family schedules. I am not proud of my hesitancy, but looking back, I am so glad I listened to my friend. I now have a passion for the wonderful Cuban people as well as admiration and concern for the Church in Cuba.

It was inspiring to see worshipers who truly were desperate for Jesus. He is literally their only hope. Our prosperity can blind us to our absolute and total need for Christ.

I was guilty of assuming there was a level of hatred towards American culture in Cuba. I discovered the citizens of Cuba are warm and lovely people. I marveled because of the poverty and limited opportunities that exist for most Cubans. I was sobered by the level of household income. It's very lacking.

The oppressive nature of communism was evident all around.

I was stunned by the spiritual climate. The Cuban church impressed me with their passion and zeal. The constant presence of witchcraft and the tension with the communist government keep their very survival under threat. I admire the manner in which they have grown and evangelized.

I cherish the relationship I forged with my translator and look forward to developing deeper bonds with others in the church. This was an unexpected blessing. I was not looking for another passion, but I certainly have one.

We encourage you and your church, in the words of Leonard Sweet, to begin to think more "glocally." Our heart is to help foster a passion to impact the world globally for Jesus, as well as locally. This is not an "either or," but a "both and." Overseas or next door, we want to partner in the spread of the Gospel "glocally" for His glory.

For more information, contact Missions Pastor BJ Leonard at bleonard@firstdecatour.org or 217.875.3350 regarding your participation in a work, medical, or prayer/discovery trip to Cuba, Kenya, or one of our mission nations. Go ahead! Kick start community and global missions in your church.



Disciple Heritage Fellowship

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Who is Disciple Heritage Fellowship?

We are a group of evangelical Christians — some of whom come from Stone-Campbell backgrounds — who are passionate about helping congregations thrive in ministry. We strive to work with a spirit of gracious Holy Spirit creativity.

Why this publication?

Welcome to a new model of ministry — a consulting team with a proven growth track record, ready to help you and your church. This is God’s timing for your congregation to experience new mission endeavors and community impact.

Let’s partner together!

Invite us to partner with you and your congregation, helping you discover God’s best plan for your church.

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be encouraged.



Brighten your Monday mornings with DHF!

- ▶ Encouraging devotionals
- ▶ Updates of events happening in our churches
- ▶ Prayer points for churches and pastors
- ▶ Highlights from visits to DHF churches
- ▶ And much more!

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