



DHF Connection

FALL 2024

Seasons in Life

Just over five years ago, I stepped into a new season in my life. It was in God's time, and he had been preparing my heart for years.

I was a member of the DHF Board of Directors, and my good friend, Wayne Kent, was the DHF Executive Director while still being the lead pastor of First Christian Church in Decatur, IL. The weight of those two mantles was taking its toll on Wayne, and the board was considering hiring a full-time staff position.

We had discussions about what this new position might look like and qualities we wanted in a candidate. About that time, late in 2018, God was stirring in my heart, and I sensed our 14-year ministry in northwest Arkansas was coming to a close. Nancy and I began praying about the possibility of stepping into this new DHF role, but a major drawback was relocating to Central Illinois, moving hundreds of miles from our families as I neared retirement.

During one of the worship times at 2019 DHF National Conference, God spoke to my heart. The hesitations I had about accepting the call to DHF dissolved. My eyes teared as I sensed this was God's time, and I needed to be obedient to the Lord. During the next song, God spoke to Nancy and after it concluded, we found a place to talk about what

this new season of ministry might mean for us. I sought out Wayne during the next break and told him our "yes" to this new opportunity.

Looking back at what God has done in and through DHF, and what He has done in and through Nancy and me, I marvel at the grace of God. I have met believers from coast to coast who have become part of the fabric of my life.

"There is a time for everything," including moving to Illinois and later to Texas where I currently reside. "There is a season for every activity under heaven," and for me the ministry of DHF has been "a season of refreshing . . . from the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

I can't tell you how excited I am about the next season for DHF. God continues to open doors for DHF to connect with churches and pastors. And we are partnering with the church plant team for The Stone Christian Church in Clarksville, TN - the first church to be planted as a DHF church. Strengthening . . . revitalizing . . . planting churches. As Solomon later wrote, "God has made beautiful in its time" (Ecc. 3:11). Partnering with God, and celebrating with you, in this beautiful God-made season. Soli Deo Gloria!

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

ECCLESIASTES 3:1



Rick



Rick Grace | 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.

Photos: These are just a few of our online Zoom Bible study groups for pastors that meet weekly. It's a highlight to attend the DHF National Conference when they can meet together in person. Want to join a group? Contact Rick.



DHF

is making a difference!

DHF has grown to be a network of 150 churches, served by 175 pastors. Of the many comments we have heard, this one stands out: *"I am still in ministry today because of DHF. Our church has renewed energy and purpose. We felt very isolated until we connected with DHF. We have found our people!"*

DHF has seen incredible ministry impact under the leadership of Wayne Kent and now Rick Grace.

What is the ministry of DHF?

Simply put, it is a commitment to being part of the answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17. DHF is dedicated to unifying the church around the truth of God's Word (John 17:17, 21-23). That is the basis of our mission statement: "It is the mission of Disciple Heritage Fellowship to encourage, strengthen, and lead Churches to fulfill Christ's mission."

But for what ultimate purpose?

When Wayne Kent became Executive Director in 2017, he asked a profound question: "We [DHF] fought for the authority of Scripture and for the salvation found in no other name under heaven than that of Jesus Christ. Well... what are we going to do with the theology we fought so hard to protect?"

The answer?

"Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them."

—JESUS (John 17:23)

How can you support DHF?

Recently, one elder chair acknowledged, "We used to give 10% of our annual income to a denomination, and we have not even given a fraction of that to DHF since joining." In response, this church has significantly increased its budgetary commitment to DHF for 2025.

Would your leadership prayerfully consider dedicating a percentage of its 2025 annual budget to support the ministry of Disciple Heritage Fellowship?

As a network of churches, this is our defining moment to act. Now is the time to commit together, taking the theology we have worked so hard to protect and share it with the world—"Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them" (John 17:23).

— The DHF Board



**OUR CHURCH WOULD
LIKE TO MAKE A
COMMITMENT
TO THE MINISTRY OF
DISCIPLE HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP**

Name of Church _____

Address _____

We commit _____ % of our 2025 budget to DHF, an estimated annual gift of \$ _____.

Gifts will be sent: monthly quarterly

Please use the enclosed envelope to send in your commitment or contact Rick Grace at rgrace@discipleheritage.org. Thank you for your gifts!



First Christian Church

CARTHAGE, ILLINOIS



First Christian Church of Carthage, IL has new life after deciding to withdraw from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The decision was made after a long and very prayerful process.

Pastor Jerome Lee attended the required DoC lay ministry program at Phillips Theological Seminary. The first day of his classes began with "the errancy of the Bible." Upon finishing the three-year program and showing the Elders what he was taught, FCC Carthage made the decision to stand firm on the authority of Scripture.

After much prayer and meeting with denominational representatives, it was apparent the belief in biblical truth and authority was absent from the DoC. The social gospel and social justice had replaced the Christ-centered Bible church that once was the DoC.

FCC Carthage was then referred to the Disciple Heritage Fellowship (DHF) to engage in conversation with other churches who had walked the same path and faced the same decisions. FCC Carthage found DHF to represent the

Bible-based church they are striving to be. The welcome and loving support for standing on the biblical truth that sin has consequences was foundational for us.

DHF offered the support a church like Carthage needs, while at the same time allowing the church to remain autonomous. FCC Carthage's choice to connect with DHF after more than 70 years as a DoC church was largely based on DHF's willingness to affirm the Bible as the inspired and authoritative Word of God. DHF is connecting Pastor Lee with other pastors weekly to help strengthen his personal walk. They offer Elders forums and weekly encouragement. Their communication and willingness to help at every step in the process has been amazing.

FCC Carthage has grown from weekly attendance of 35-40 in 2020 to 65-70 in 2024. **We attribute this growth to holding the Scriptures in highest regard and standing firm on the Gospel.** The church invests in our community in many ways, from our youth group to a free — no strings attached — Clothing Closet. FCC Carthage is a loving and welcoming church choosing the truth of Scripture over the opinions of the world (social gospel). First Christian Church of Carthage is privileged to serve alongside and be a part of an organization that honors the Lord and the Word the way the DHF does.

Jerome Lee

PASTOR OF FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, CARTHAGE, IL



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Elder Forum

Elders, this is just for you! We want to help you grow spiritually and as a leader so you can better serve your church. We've held our first few Elder Forums via Zoom, and we're thrilled to have served more than 80 church elders nationwide! We'd love for you to join us! To request the link for future DHF Elder Forums, email Rick at rgrace@discipleheritage.org

DHF Elder Forum
Dates & Videos

