



Stepping Forward in Faith

This last season of my life has been an incredible one. And it makes me look forward to what the Lord has in store for Nancy and me.

This season started at DHF '18. I had been asked about stepping into a newly created role with DHF — the Church Liaison. Nancy and I had real questions about this but committed it to the Lord in prayer. During a worship time at the conference, God spoke first to Nancy's heart and then to mine. I felt led to resign as the pastor of SpringCreek Fellowship (a DHF church in Springdale, AR) and become the first DHF Church Liaison.

This new ministry with DHF started September 2019. I was just starting to "hit my stride" when Nancy's cancer returned in January 2020. Her recovery was well underway when COVID hit, and the world came to a grinding halt. But even then, God was blessing the ministry of DHF in some incredible ways.

Our network of churches has expanded to more than 150 churches.

Our pastors' network has grown to more than 175 participants.

Numbers aren't everything, but they clearly show God has his hand on this ministry. It has been a joy to travel the country to meet and worship with so many of you; to work

side-by-side with you and your leadership teams and help you take the next step in your congregational life and ministry.

With permission, we moved to Texas in February 2024 to work remotely. Once again, cancer reared its ugly head. Nancy had her fourth and most extensive surgery. So many of you prayed us through that season, and we remain humbled by your care and God's grace. Emerging from the ensuing radiation and chemo treatments, we began to sense this season was coming to a close.

I shared this with the DHF board, and we began to search, not for another church liaison, but for an Executive Director with a different skill set and job description. That process culminated

in calling Randy Roberts to become the next DHF Executive Director (see Randy's article on page 2). He will continue to have the support of the First Christian Church (Decatur, IL) support staff and the DHF Board so this leadership transition should be a smooth one.

So, March 2026 will start a new season for me. I will step into a part-time role with DHF when Randy becomes the new Executive Director. In the words of John the Baptist, "he must increase; I must decrease" (John 3:30). I look forward to Randy's leadership and am excited about what is next for the ministry of DHF. Whatever season God has next for the Graces, I trust we will step into it with your love, support and prayer behind us. Soli Deo Gloria!

Rick



Rick Grace | rgrace@discipleheritage.org

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

Top: Rick and Nancy grace visited Sam and Heather Sears at The Stone Christian Church in Clarksville, TN
Left top: Rick Grace and the DHF Board pray over Rick Rusaw during DHF '23, Left bottom: Rick & Nancy Grace



Welcome, Randy!

WE ARE EXCITED TO INTRODUCE YOU TO RANDY ROBERTS, THE NEXT DHF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STARTING IN MARCH 2026

I grew up in the suburbs on the east side of Indianapolis. Members of a young congregation, planted by an evangelizing association, reached my parents and three brothers and caused my family to do a 180-degree turn. For the first time in my life church became a priority and our family was there every time the doors were open. My parents stepped into leadership, and my father served for many years as an elder.

As the oldest child, this turn in our family came just in time. I grew up with a clear understanding of the authority of Christ and the Scriptures because I watched them transform our home. The change was real and lasting because my brothers and their families are still walking with the Lord.

I earned both my bachelor's and master's degrees from Kentucky Christian University. I chose KCU largely because of the influence of my youth pastor and his wife, who were graduates. When I first went to KCU, I had no intention of becoming a pastor. And, judging by my freshman-year grades—passing, but uninspiring—few would have predicted a future in ministry.

At the end of my freshmen year, my family, including my three younger

brothers, moved to Grayson, KY, where KCU is located, because my parents sensed a call to ministry and my father enrolled at KCU. My grades improved instantly as I was determined not to let my dad pass me up. After graduation, my father and I were ordained on the same day at our home church. It was a special day for our family.

“
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On the first morning of college at breakfast, I met Marita. For me, it was love at first sight, although she may have seen me as more of a long-term project. Marita grew up near Columbus, Indiana. Between her studies at Kentucky Christian and Oklahoma Baptist University, she earned a degree with three majors: Bible, Vocal Music, and Education. She has more college hours than I do, even with my master's degree. I have seen God's steady hand in our marriage and Marita is a true "Randy whisperer," keeping me focused and often talking me back from the ledge.

Marita and I have three grown children: Ryan and his wife, Sharon, live in Decatur, IL, with their daughter, and he serves as an associate pastor. Our adopted son, Caesar, and his wife Jessica live in Dyer, IN, with their seven children. Our adopted daughter Crystal and her husband, Aaron, live in Crystal Lake, IL, with their son.

My favorite bible verse is Proverbs 27:17: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." In marriage, in the believer's witness to the world, and in the leadership of the church, we have the power to make others sharp — or dull. I thank God for those who continue to sharpen me. I look forward to encouraging leaders through the ministry of DHF so that we can continue to sharpen others for the Kingdom.

Randy Roberts



2026 DHF National Conference

APRIL 29-30, 2026 IN DECATUR, IL



**DR. DON
HAWKINS**

Host of
Encouragement Live
& Pastor of
FCC Wylie, TX



**MATT
PROCTOR**

President of Ozark
Christian College



**RANDY
ROBERTS**

New DHF Executive
Director



**RICK & NANCY
GRACE**

DHF Church Liaison &
Women's Ministry
Speaker

The 2026 DHF Conference is just around the corner, and we are excited about our featured speakers this year! Each brings solid biblical teaching and practical application to the proclamation of God's Word. Our four main sessions will be:

- Dr. Don Hawkins has hosted such nationally known radio shows as "Back to the Bible" and currently hosts the Encouragement Live radio call-in show. He has been a Bible College president and is authored of over 25 books. He will teach on avoiding burnout.
- Matt Proctor is the president of Ozark Christian College in Joplin, MO and professor of New Testament and Preaching.
- New DHF Executive Director, Randy Roberts, has been a pastor and a church planter. For the last 24 years he has been the lead pastor of the Living Creek Church in Monee, IL. Randy will share his heart and vision for DHF in this new chapter of our ministry.
- Dr. Rick & Nancy Grace. Rick has been the DHF Church Liaison for more than six years, and Nancy is an author, speaker, and retreat leader. They will share together on managing the stresses of marriage and ministry, while also battling cancer.
- And we will have a special closing session in store to celebrate Randy as our new Executive Director. You won't want to miss it!

In addition to the feature speakers, there will be several breakout sessions from which you may choose up to four:

- "Effective Missions Strategies for the Local Church" with Kevin Dooly (Pioneer Bible Translators) and Bill Warren (Fellowship of Associates of Medical Evangelism)
- "Discipleship in the Pattern of Jesus the Master" with Dr. Don Hawkins
- "Elder Forum LIVE" with Dr. Doug Harvey (IA), Perry Keller (KS), Joe Leslie (VA), and Russ Reimer (IL)
- "Designing Effective Security Measures for the Smaller Church" with Steve Vandermolten who has 31 years of experience of as a global security advisor
- "Appreciating Your Volunteers" with Jonathan & Andrea Grunden of First Christian Church, Decatur IL
- "Supporting Small Churches" with Greg Taylor of Lincoln Christian Institute

We will be led in worship throughout the conference by the Worship Arts Team of First Christian Church (Decatur, IL). Affinity lunches will be hosted on Wednesday, and we have planned an evening of food, fellowship, and laughter for Wednesday night.

It is shaping up to be a great conference. If you have not already registered, register today. You will also find links on the DHF website to participating hotels in the area. Get ready for two full days of celebrating Jesus!



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Disciple Heritage Fellowship

3350 N MacArthur Rd / Decatur, IL 62526 / 217.875.3350

f **@** discipleheritage.org

DHF Staff

Rick Grace
CHURCH LIAISON
rgrace@discipleheritage.org

FCC Decatur

Brian Talty
LEAD PASTOR
Jonathan Grunden
EXECUTIVE PASTOR
Crystal Kirkman
COMMUNICATIONS
Dawn Wendt
OFFICE

DHF Board

Drew McClellan
CHAIR / TEXAS
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DISCIPLE HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP NATIONAL CONFERENCE

DHF'26

April 29-30, 2026

Decatur, IL

DETAILS & REGISTRATION AT

discipleheritage.org/conference

