



DHF Staff and Board present a retirement gift to Pastor Wayne Kent (fourth from left) during the DHF National Conference in April 2022

# DHF Connection

SUMMER 2022

## A Bright Future

At the time, we did not realize the full implications of our plans. We did not realize how many would receive our plans with enthusiasm. We also did not realize how many would receive our plans with anger and hostility.

It was the mid-1980s. We were engaged in a variety of ministry settings within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I was in seminary at Phillips Graduate Seminary. We were evangelical and conservative in theology and polity, hoping to have a voice within the denomination. We were primarily concerned about biblical authority. That did not turn out so well.

Long story short: many in the denomination were glad to hear our voices at Regional and General Assemblies and in our publications directed toward the DOC. A larger number were not so thrilled with our opinions. In fact, they despised our opinions. Clashes came along focused on identity, theology, and congregational polity. We made errors in judgment and practice. The same can certainly be said of denominational leadership.

By the mid-1990s, the clashes became extreme and problematic. I recall one woman from the Committee on Ministry overseeing my impending ordination stating, "I will not shake your hand. Your ordination is the saddest day in the history of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)."

Yes, I too was saddened. Her opinion of my theology appeared quite common in a denomination that promoted diversity.

Since then, many like-minded friends and congregations have stopped working within the denomination. Some churches no longer consider themselves to be Disciple congregations. Many clergy have either withdrawn or lost their standing in the larger denominational Church. We no longer hope or expect to represent a conservative evangelical voice for the DOC.

Disciple Heritage Fellowship continues to have a productive ministry. We are focused on helping churches fulfill Christ's mission in local and global settings. We daily ask ourselves, "How can we help a congregation find identity in mission? How can we support pastors in their calling and identity?"

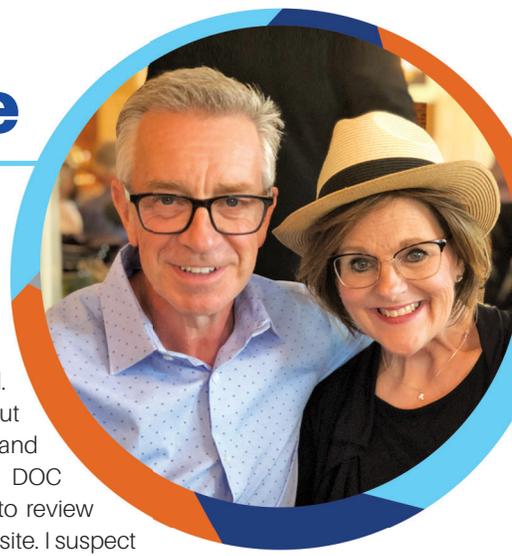
Yes, some congregations within the Christian Church (DOC) still reach out to us, with regularity. They often feel threatened and alienated. I understand. I lived out their fears of exclusion and expulsion. And yes, DOC congregations continue to review our publications and website. I suspect our voice is welcomed by some, not by others.

My anticipation of a long DOC pastorate did not turn out that way. However, I have had a long pastorate, with great gladness. I was simply not a DOC pastor for most of those years. That was not my choice. My hopes of helping and contributing to the larger denomination were thwarted and unwelcomed. My grief has passed with time, but not my sense of loss of what might have been.

My days as a full-time pastor end this June. My convictions about theology and polity remain the same. I know some also have the same opinion of me — I'm far too evangelical and far too focused on biblical authority in my life and in the life of the congregation I have served for 28 years. Nonetheless, I am glad for God's work in me and through me.

I pray God's grace and peace carry you as it continues to carry me.

*Wayne*



### DHF Update

Pastor Wayne Kent will retire as the Executive Director of DHF and Lead Pastor of First Christian Church, Decatur, IL at the end of June 2022. Wayne and his wife, Leslie, (pictured above) will remain engaged in ministry both in the United States and overseas. We are thankful for their involvement with DHF since 1986. The DHF Staff and Board look forward to a bright future as we remain committed to encourage, strengthen, and lead Churches to fulfill Christ's mission.

# DHF'22

**“Then all the people left, each for their own home, and David returned home to bless his family.”**

**1 CHRONICLES 16:43**

It was an incredible scene. King David, along with many from Israel, gathering to celebrate bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. David prepared a special place for the Ark to rest, and the priests presented offerings to the Lord. There were times of worship, fellowship, and the sharing of meals. As the celebration ended, the Chronicler simply recorded, “Then all the people left, each for their own home, and David returned home to bless his family.”

In April 2022, we gathered together for two days in Decatur, IL to celebrate what God is doing in and through DHF. We heard the Word of God proclaimed, offered our worship to the Lord, enjoyed being together again, and oh, did we eat! Friendships were forged, and networks were created. What a joy to watch!

Each main session and break out session were recorded and will soon be uploaded to [discipleheritage.org](https://discipleheritage.org) where you can access the content of the conference. We hope this will help you “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18)

But as with any conference, its true impact is not measured only by what happened there, but by what happens when we return home “to bless [our] family.” Now that we are back home, I encourage you to be a blessing to your family and your church family. Be a student of the Word, letting the living Word live in you. Be committed to the worship of the One who alone is worthy of it. Be a person of prayer. After all, if we are not praying for our families, who will? Be a wise and generous steward of the resources God has entrusted to you. Bless your family as a consistent Christ-follower in all things and at all times.

Please contact me ([rgrace@discipleheritage.org](mailto:rgrace@discipleheritage.org) or 217.875.3350) if DHF can serve you or your church. Our goal is to encourage you and your congregation to “fulfill Christ’s mission.” Let’s partner together and watch God expand his kingdom as we celebrate and return home to bless our families!

*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 more than 45 years. Rick earned his doctorate from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.*



*From top: Featured speaker Dave Stone; attendees pray together; one of DHF’s pastoral study groups who meets via ZOOM connects in person; one of our many amazing sponsors greets an attendee*



*Can I pray for you?* These are words I've often offered as the solo pastor to an aging congregation and words offered to me more than once at the DHF Conference. Relevant programming, uplifting worship, insight, inspiration... these things I anticipated and found, but, "Can I pray for you?"

I was unaware how deeply I needed to hear those specific words spoken to me. It is not surprising the conference's community aspect, the common bond — that Jesus connection — impacted me most.

A mutually shared interest in not just ministry, but in the lives of one another began almost a year earlier as I *hesitantly* responded to an invitation to join a **pastor's study group via ZOOM**. That decision meant when I arrived in Decatur, I was not alone and unknown — I was joining friends.

My biggest takeaway? Thanks to the DHF family, I came home feeling much less "solo" than when I left. (You don't think it could have been those prayers, do you?)

**PASTOR TOM WARREN**  
**FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, HANFORD, CALIFORNIA**

The 2022 DHF National Conference was a wonderful experience. The worship was uplifting, and the speakers were very inspirational. The break out sessions were most informative. We are grateful for the organization of the conference, and we appreciate all the information, time, delicious food, and service given for this event. We will put it on our calendars and plan to attend next year.

**ELDER STEVE & DIANE ALFREY**  
**ELDER DENNIS & PHYLLIS PARKER**  
**CHESTERFIELD CHRISTIAN CHURCH**  
**CHESTERFIELD, INDIANA**



The DHF Conference was the most spiritually uplifting event I have attended. At the beginning and to the end, I saw smiles, friendly greetings, and open welcomes. I represent a traditional church with traditional music, but the "praise" music was so much better than I expected, and I couldn't stop tapping my foot! "Pray without ceasing" is a term used in the Bible, but it was on stage one here. It was like hearing a child say, "Can I talk to God now?" No hesitation, no word searching, eager to speak with our Creator. I wish we could have had several members of our church attend because it is difficult to explain my feelings and delight. Thank you!

**ELDER JIM ALBRITTON**  
**FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, MINEOLA, TEXAS**



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## GLOBAL MISSIONS

# MINISTRY TO Ukraine

Disciple Heritage Fellowship, in partnership with First Christian Church in Decatur, IL is actively meeting the needs of Ukrainian refugees in Poland. To date, more than \$160,000 has been donated to this effort. We have furnished classrooms and daycare centers, fed children, and provided basic daily needs for families who have fled the war in their homeland. To contribute to this ongoing effort, visit [discipleheritage.org/give](https://discipleheritage.org/give) and select **Ukraine Relief** as the designated fund.

**Thank you for being the tangible touch  
of Jesus to those displaced by war!**



(Background) children play in make-shift playroom in Warsaw train station; (top) meals prepared for refugees; (right) Pastor Wayne Kent visits convention centers in Warsaw with capacity to house 30,000 refugees.