



Attendees connect with each other during the 2022 DHF National Conference

FALL 2022

DHF Connection

In this Together

"After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea."

COLOSSIANS 4:16

Networking has become a key part of American culture. Friends network, business leaders network, computers network, even pastors and churches network. While networking is an important concept, it is by no means a new one.

The Apostle Paul wrote his thirteen New Testament letters to churches and individuals who were in his network. And it appears Paul expected these congregations and people to not only network with him, but also with each other.

Paul wrote to the Colossians and the Laodiceans during his Roman imprisonment when travel for him was impossible. He instructed these two churches, located only a few miles apart, to network in this way: "After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea" (Colossians 4:16). Churches sharing information and resources. Sounds like networking to me!

Throughout our ministry, DHF has encouraged churches and pastors to network with each other.

This has been done through national conferences and regional events, joint missions participation and online pastoral studies. A recent

major networking effort has been our Ukrainian outreach. This effort (detailed more fully by Wayne Kent on page 2) has blessed, and will bless many for years to come.

A newer expression of DHF networking is the Spiritual Health Checkups. This, explained more fully by Pastor Joe Ensley on page 3, is where two or three outside pastors spend time with a local church, conducting interviews with leaders and members to get the pulse of the congregation and offer feedback. This checkup can affirm what is going well in the church, but also serve as a "blind spot indicator" to help congregations see what they are not seeing themselves.

I am excited about how DHF is providing needed networking opportunities for pastors and for churches. Perhaps what you have learned is just what the Laodicea up the road needs to hear and vice versa. We are in this together; let's continue to grow this network known as the Disciple Heritage Fellowship.

Contact me (rgrace@discipleheritage.org) or call 217-875-3350 if you are interested in seeing how DHF can better network with you. **Our goal is to encourage you to "fulfill Christ's mission" for your church, to the glory of God!**

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

Rick Grace preaches at Wolcott Christian Church in Wolcott, Indiana in September 2022

MISSION: UKRAINE

Her name is Irena. She was dressed elegantly, her hair neatly arranged and make up done. She appeared to be in her late sixties. And she had a story to tell.

Irena and her husband were in Warsaw, Poland. They are Ukrainian refugees fleeing the Russian invasion. They had a home in Mariopol, Ukraine, but it is gone — shelled beyond habitation. They bunkered down in the basement for more than three months early in the war, as Russian shelling obliterated their city. They would climb the stairs out into the sunlight for a few minutes daily, simply to see the sky. Nothing was left.

After three months of hiding, they walked out of the city, passing the bodies of children with arms and legs torn off by bombs. One man bled to death in front of them with both legs severed by an explosion.

Our group listened in horror as Irena told her story.

A congregation in southern Warsaw is providing food and a place to stay for Irena and her husband. In fact, they are providing meals for more than 100 war refugees a day — in addition to housing and clothing many of them.

The Warsaw congregation is fearful about the upcoming winter. The winter will bring unbearable cold to the flattened Ukrainian homes and basements without electricity or gas for heating and cooking. Many from eastern Ukraine will cross into Poland, some traveling more than 500 miles. Most entering Poland will be women and children. They will leave their fathers, husbands, and adult sons behind — men who are not allowed to leave Ukraine for the war effort. The congregation wonders if their ministry funding will continue. Can their volunteer teams continue?

Irena's story is one of many stories heard by DHF representatives while on a Discovery Tour of Poland in September 2022. Those on the discovery team were sent by their individual congregations, looking for settings where good stewardship practices are in place. Several DHF congregations contributed to a relief fund for Ukrainian refugees.

After reviewing places where needs are being met, we have a plan for helping these refugees in the months ahead. DHF has partners on the ground, involved in credible and authentic ministry to people in desperate need.

You and your church can help. Consider a special gift for the ongoing expenses of DHF's regular ministries, as well as our Ukrainian refugee work. You can give securely at discipleheritage.org. This work is another positive way DHF churches network together in ministry, in ways that speak to missions, in ways that express the broader Body of Christ in unity together.



Photos: (background) DHF churches helped purchase supplies in bulk that are shipped to communities in the eastern portions of Ukraine. Local congregations there manage the distribution of the food and medical supplies. (above) Leslie Kent and Irena in Poland



Scan for a PDF of the full report of the Discovery Team's observations. If you'd like to make a donation, go to discipleheritage.org/give and select "Ukraine" as the designated fund.



Wayne Kent

Wayne is the former Executive Director of DHF and Pastor Emeritus of First Christian Church in Decatur, IL. He is enjoying retirement with his wife, Leslie.



Photos: (top) Rick Grace, second from left, meets with the leadership team of FCC in St. Francis, Kansas; (left) FCC in St. Francis Kansas



Spiritual Health Checkup

BY PASTOR JOE ENSLEY

Pastors and church leaders face unique and challenging responsibilities and questions. Is your church growing? Is that growth good? What if it's not growing? If you are like me, this question keeps popping up: "What in the world must God be thinking of all this?"

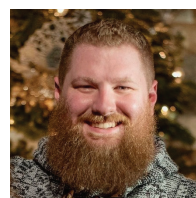
Like most churches, the church I pastor has been through ups and downs in its journey. As our leadership team prayed about how to continue to grow forward well, we realized we need to "know what we didn't know." Thankfully, God provided a type of "blind spot indicator" for us in the form of a spiritual health check with DHF. After speaking with Dr. Rick Grace detailing how he and some other pastors had provided this service to churches in the past, I knew I wanted it at my church. And let me tell you, I was not disappointed!

In September 2022, Dr. Grace teamed with Pastor Michael Ten Eyck to provide a spiritual health check of our church. This was slightly complicated by a COVID diagnosis, but creativity and perseverance prevailed. Over the course of two days, these men interviewed 15 people, surveyed our processes and building, and observed our operations. Then, they presented a report explaining their methodology, affirmations, concerns, and recommendations for future action and adjustments. It was a priceless gift to our leadership team and encouraging

and helpful to me as the pastor. And as a church, it was a much-needed outside perspective helping us to be intentional as we grow forward well.

This spiritual health check provided a framework for those questions and pointed our leadership team in the right direction to find the answers. I don't want to mislead anyone so let me say this: it is a vulnerable process! But it is vulnerable in the way I think Jesus was with His disciples — real conversations about real issues initiated from a heart of love.

I don't know what kind of shape your church is in, but I know anyone who wants to live a healthy life has regular medical checkups on their body. And this process is much like asking a doctor to give a few spiritual vital signs for a church. As someone who loves his flock, I was blessed by this "checkup" and inspired and hopeful about healthy years to come.



Joe Ensley

Joe is the lead pastor of First Christian Church in St. Francis, Kansas. He has a B.A. in Church Music from Bob Jones University and an M.A. in Christian Counseling from Queens College of Theology.



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Support the Ministry of DHF

God has richly blessed DHF throughout 2022. Among the highlights are:

- More than \$220,000 was raised in partnership with First Christian Church of Decatur, IL for Ukrainian relief. A team with representatives from three DHF churches went to Poland in September 2022 to see the work being done.
- Our national conference was a highlight for many, including many first-time attendees. Plans are underway for DHF'23 which will be held April 26-27, 2023.
- Many new churches have been added to the DHF orbit. We hear from new churches almost weekly who want to network with DHF.
- We launched a new YouTube channel with lots of great resources.
- Pastors are continuing to connect and thrive via weekly ZOOM™ group studies.

As you plan for your year-end giving, please consider a gift to DHF so we end the year strong and expand our ministry in 2023. Thank you for supporting the ministry of DHF!



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