

DHF Connection

FALL 2020

During Pastor Wayne Kent's sabbatical, he and his wife visited the mountains of North Carolina.

rest + research

I'm not in my office this week. I wasn't there last week either, or the weeks before that. Why? I am on a 3-month sabbatical. Here's why I'm highlighting it in this Disciple Heritage Fellowship publication:

DHF exists to help congregations thrive by assisting churches in their mission to reach people for Jesus Christ. We desire congregations to thrive in all aspects of ministry life, including pastoral spiritual and emotional health.

Besides providing leadership to DHF, my 'real' job for the past 27 years has been at First Christian Church in Decatur, Illinois. At FCC Decatur, we've learned part of our church's thriving comes through long-term pastorates filled by men and women excited and challenged in their ministry roles.

However, pastoral ministry can be very taxing. All of us in ministry have moments when burdens take a toll. The never-ending list of people's needs fills a to-do list each week. There are periods of ministry when we are desperate for a break beyond a week-long vacation. A sense of disillusionment in the current ministry setting can grab hold.

We look for greener pastures and dream about a vocational

change. Searches through the internet detail all sorts of congregations in need of new pastoral leadership.

And so we move on, often more because we need a new challenge, as compared to a Holy Spirit-driven change. We say it's the Holy Spirit's call, but is it?

All pastors on staff at FCC Decatur take a 3-month sabbatical after seven years of service and every five years thereafter. (We have a different plan in place for non-pastoral staff.) The church's regular contributions to a Sabbatical Fund provide for costs of the sabbatical. Each sabbatical has three components:

- Rest
- Study and research for the pastor's personal development
- Study and research of a project for the benefit of the church

Our experience with sabbaticals has proven invaluable. Yes, it costs. However, new projects are brought into the church's life, and we develop new ministries and opportunities.

With a sabbatical practice in place, the pastor remains on staff, building into years of relationships and community insights. The staff turnover rate is diminished dramatically, and it allows our church to thrive.

I'll soon be back in my office. Meanwhile, I'll be presenting our church new ideas, research, and plans for the coming years.

After all, the grass is still green here.



Wayne Kent | wayne@firstdeatur.org

Wayne is the Executive Director of Disciple Heritage Fellowship and Lead Pastor of First Christian Church, Decatur, IL. He has theological degrees from Phillips Theological Seminary and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Is the pastor available today?
No, he's out on visitation.

Here is Pastor Wayne's mobile office during his sabbatical. The boat is set up for anchoring off shore, and all the necessary study materials are found in the cabin.





Looking Back... Looking Forward

I have served as DHF Church Liaison for a little more than a year. Our Executive Director Wayne Kent asked if ministry has developed in the way I anticipated. I gave him an unequivocal answer: "yes and no!"

I anticipated developing relationships with pastors and churches. It has been a blessing for my wife and me to travel, get to know, encourage and support God's servants across the country. Many pastoral couples are new friends to us and the ministry of Disciple Heritage Fellowship. Watching the DHF network of churches expand has been a high point in this first year.

Online Ministry

Due to the pandemic, we have not traveled as extensively as anticipated. This has led to developing online ministry. DHF has hosted two webinars in response to questions church leaders are asking. We hold Zoom-based "Leadership Conversations" in a format for church leaders to engage with others around topics facing the church and its leaders. I did not anticipate how effectively God would use these formats which are now a regular part of DHF's ministry.

I host five weekly online pastoral study groups. These groups create a virtual sense of community for many of our pastors who live and serve in isolation. It has been amazing to watch God create some incredible networks of support through these small groups of pastors studying and sharing life. One

pastor recently said, "God has used this group to keep me in the ministry." I am in awe regarding how God has used these groups to breathe life into pastoral leaders. If you are interested in a pastoral study group, please contact me at rgrace@discipleheritage.org or call 217.875.3350.



On the Road Again

Travel around the country to visit churches and pastors to build connections and provide assistance will continue to occur as much as restrictions allow. To schedule a visit with you, church leadership, or church family, please contact me.

God is moving in and through Disciple Heritage Fellowship. I am encouraged about our future and the things God has in store for as we seek "to encourage, strengthen, and lead Churches to fulfill Christ's mission."

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.

MESSAGE FROM MICHAEL TEN EYCK

I have been honored to serve as DHF Board President for the last several years. As the pastor of a church in a small, rural community, it is easy to feel isolated. This feeling is exacerbated as parts of Christian community continue to slide away from their foundations in God's Word. DHF exists to strengthen and encourage churches, such as the one I serve, to remain true to God's Word even as the world around rejects it. I am grateful for the ministry of DHF. Within the DHF network I have always found personal support, as well as support for our church's leadership, through authentic relationships. I am thankful I can reach out for assistance from my DHF brothers and sisters in those difficult times of ministry. As I reflect on my time with the DHF Board, this passage comes to mind: **"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up."** (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). I am excited for this new chapter in DHF's journey. It is wonderful to have Rick Grace on the road, connecting with churches and pastors. As I leave the Board, I ask you to consider supporting the ministries of DHF. It is a worthwhile Kingdom investment. Thank you for the privilege of serving.

Gilboa Christian Church

MINERAL, VIRGINIA



Welcome to the DHF family!

We warmly welcome one of the newest DHF churches, Gilboa Christian Church. Gilboa is located in rural Mineral, VA and is a family-oriented, Bible-preaching, country church. They want to be known for loving the Lord, developing disciples, serving Him in their community, and supporting missions worldwide.

Gilboa Christian Church has a long history within the Restoration Movement. It was founded in 1834 by Uriah Higgason, a devoted follower of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Services were first held in an outdoor arbor of trees and branches, but soon the believers built "a small, neat frame house" which they called Mount Gilboa. For many years, they did not have a resident minister, but traveling evangelists were frequent guests. The church elders led Sunday worship services with an emphasis on the Lord's Supper while carrying out other functions of ministry.

The main section of the present church building was completed in 1858. And while it has been refurbished and added onto throughout the years, the simplicity of the original structure has been maintained.

Gilboa's present membership is diverse and vibrant, with a wide range of ages and backgrounds. Ministries of the church include music, youth, and missions, supporting both local and international ministries. Travis Witt is currently serving as the interim pastor while the search for the next lead minister is in process.

Early in 2020, Gilboa Christian Church reached out to DHF, driven by a desire to be connected to a fellowship of like-minded churches. After much discussion and following the recommendation of the elders, Gilboa voted to become a DHF church. They look forward to a long and mutually beneficial relationship.

Gilboa Christian Church is currently looking for their next pastor. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, contact Rick Grace (rgrace@discipleheritage.org) or Chris McCotter (mcfish9144@gmail.com).



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Growth Opportunities

Let's get connected! Check out these ways you can be inspired and be refreshed to do ministry!



MONDAY MORNING ENCOURAGEMENT

This weekly email devotional is designed to give you a little extra spiritual boost on the first day of the work week. And who doesn't need that?! Register for our emails at

discipleheritage.org



LEADERSHIP CONVERSATIONS

These Zoom-based conversations happen regularly throughout the year and are announced on our social media platforms. Conversations are centered around a particular topic and feature a guest speaker. Church leaders from across the country can interact and learn from each other.



[@discipleheritage](https://www.instagram.com/discipleheritage)



ONLINE SMALL GROUP PASTORAL STUDIES

These groups not only study the Bible together, but we create virtual community for pastors who often serve in isolation. There are currently five such study groups. If you are interested in being in an online study group with other pastors, email Rick Grace at

rgrace@discipleheritage.org