



Christian perspectives on life in the military

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A fellowship that fellowships

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Community as taught by minions

Just like the silly little yellow guys in *Despicable Me*, each of us was created with an innate desire to belong to a community in fellowship.

Fellowship can happen anywhere

Genuine biblical fellowship is essential for spiritual growth and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ—small group fellowships are the heart of OCF.

United in one spirit

Fellowship, community, ministry in action...it's the heart of OCF



OFFICERS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Building Christian leaders, families, fellowships...for a lifetime

Embolden | Equip | Encourage | Engage

Fellowship in love, faith, encouragement

OCF is packed with examples of being united in one spirit, one purpose

It was the phone call no parent ever wants to receive, but one that LTC Joe and Cathy Orosz, USA (Ret.), nonetheless received one morning in 2013: “Your son John has been injured. He is undergoing medical treatment and will be evacuated to Germany.” Once their then-ILT son arrived in Landstuhl to begin what would be a long and arduous journey through years of surgeries and rehab, Joe and Cathy couldn’t get there immediately to help support him as he faced his daunting challenge.



DAVID WARNER
Executive Director

However, even before John’s aircraft left the tarmac, the word had gone out throughout the Body of Christ and especially that of the OCF family. I received a call from my daughter in South Korea who asked me what had happened to John Orosz. Although I hadn’t yet heard anything, Ashley said it was already being shared online by all the kids who had worked with John at OCF’s White Sulphur Springs Conference Center, a place where the Orosz family spent time enjoying each other and other military believers in fellowship. Much to Joe and Cathy’s delight, several of our OCF family quickly converged on Landstuhl and became the surrogate parents and family for John.

As John himself later said, “Even before everyone in my family knew what had happened to me in Afghanistan, my OCF extended family that I’d known from senior staff and conferences were all praying for me. People in Germany who didn’t know me at all were coming to see me, to comfort me. I even had a friend from staff take almost every conceivable form of transportation to come from England and help care for me. That’s how the Body of Christ should work and I’m so glad that there is an organization like OCF to support and strengthen leaders and families in our military.”

It’s distinctive to note that the second of OCF’s eight Spiritual Pillars—*Uniting for Fellowship*—is not saying that we unite in a fellowship. True OCF fellowship is a verb, mirroring the very essence of the Greek word *koinonia*, which is found twenty times in the Bible, starting in Acts 2:42, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” As I reflected on the family of OCF coming alongside John Orosz and his family with their active care and concern, I realized this was fellowship in action as it’s meant to be.

According to GotQuestions.org, the *koinonia* we are called to throughout the New Testament is best summed up in conjunction with the phrase “one another:”

- > Be devoted to and honor... (Romans 12:10)
- > Live in harmony with... (Romans 12:16)

- > Accept... (Romans 15:7)
- > Serve... (Galatians 5:13)
- > Be kind to... (Ephesians 4:32)
- > Admonish... (Colossians 3:16)
- > Encourage... (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- > Exhort... (Hebrews 10:25)
- > Be hospitable to... (1 Peter 4:9)

Putting a finer point on the “checklist” above, another example of *koinonia* fellowship is captured in an OCF Pensacola ministry report from earlier this year:

“A Naval flight student had completed the initial flight training and was awaiting his PCS to Kingsville when he suddenly went blind. His party-buddies dropped him like a hot rock! Two of our OCF family rolled in and sacrificially gave of themselves to take this now blind flight student to the hospital and his follow-on doctor appointments, and in supporting him in other ways during this difficult time. He wanted to know why they were doing this and they seized the opportunity to share Christ with him. God used blindness to get his attention, and after a couple months of seeing Christ’s love in action through these two men he accepted Christ as his Savior. After accepting Christ this young man was ravenous for the Word of God and several of us have had the privilege to disciple him. He has spent the last year trying to convince Navy medicine that his eyesight is back to normal and he should be allowed to continue. They granted him a waiver and he is on his way to Kingsville over one year later, now on fire for Christ.”

(You can read more of this story on Page 10)

If you want the best example of fellowship, we have to look no further than God, who is the author and definer of fellowship—the kind of fellowship He built us for: “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). ✝



Lieutenant Colonel Joe Hilbert, UNITED STATES ARMY

Born: Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1971

Came to OCF: I came to OCF when I was a student at the Moody Bible Institute and a cross-enrolled cadet in the University of Illinois at Chicago Army ROTC BN.

Involvement in OCF: It has varied from duty station to duty station. Over the years, it’s ranged from participating in/leading home Bible studies to being a part of OCF breakfasts and office Bible studies, to one-on-one fellowship with local OCF members.

Why OCF for me: OCF is a great opportunity for fellowship wherever your military career takes you. We’re nomadic in the military, all knowing the difficulties of getting settled in a new area. While we may be easily distracted with unpacking boxes and learning how to navigate our new neighborhood, nothing is more important than finding a place to fellowship with other believers. OCF makes finding that fellowship much easier.

Alma mater: Moody Bible Institute—their only ROTC graduate! (Though to be fair, they’ve had more than a few chaplains and some OCS graduates.)

What’s on my iPod: A goofy combination of German and French pop music, smooth jazz, and Christmas music. But seriously—aren’t we all using Pandora or Spotify now?

Why a military life: This is what God has called me to do. As crazy as it sounds, I’ve known that since elementary school.

What’s on my bucket list: I’d love to bike across Europe or backpack through the Alps.

Most memorable/exotic places visited: My family and I took a month to drive/camp across the Baltic States. We took a ferry from Germany to Finland, and another one to Estonia, and drove from there across Latvia and Lithuania before returning by ferry to Germany. It was amazing.

Best advice given you: Just do your best.

Quirky habits: I don’t have any, although my wife thinks it’s quirky that I get out of bed and immediately get fully dressed—including socks, shoes, and belt (though, don’t we all get dressed when we get out of bed?).

Something I can’t live without: Mint chocolate chip ice cream

Life Bible verse: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6). That Solomon was a smart dude.

Community as taught by Minions

By Dave Sanders and Raine Miller

If you enjoy animated films or have little ones, you have probably seen the Minions movie that followed the popular “Despicable Me”—a story of a super villain and his minions finding a family—and “Despicable Me 2” movies. “Minions” takes place as a sort of prequel featuring the funny little yellow pill-shaped characters whose only true desire in life is to be together and find and serve the biggest, baddest boss out there! **Nothing is more important to them—it is their purpose.**

Just like these silly banana-eating little guys, each of us was created with an innate desire to belong to a community in fellowship. It’s not just a group of people with similar interests, but a body of believers united for a common purpose. That common purpose is what forges those bonds between you and others. Think of your friends, colleagues, brothers and sisters in arms, and even your spouse. Haven’t you experienced the most significant times of bonding and connection when you were working together, joint effort and joint conviction, toward a common goal? There’s a biblical reason for that.

Since the beginning, we were created for community. Since the time of Pentecost in Acts 1, the Church—the Body of Christ—has been given the common goal of sharing the Good News. Our faith is never meant to be a private thing. We are commanded by Jesus to go, tell, disciple, baptize, teach and keep the faith (Matthew 28:18–20). Those are our marching orders as a community of believers, and we have to make the decision every day to carry them out.

Think back to our little minion friends. At the beginning of the film, when they are without a big, bad boss or a purpose, those normally chipper yellow guys are miserable. They are so depressed they can barely stand. The games and foods that used to bring them joy are empty and unfulfilling. That’s really how our lives were before we belonged to the Body of Christ. Being in the military, most of us have had some form of “community with a mission” that we’ve been a part of, so we get that.

But a mission and purpose that is soul fulfilling with the joy of the Lord is at a whole different level. Just like all those little sad minions, we can go through the motions of life without joy. That’s why God commanded the truth of Christ’s redemption to be delivered through the fellowship of community. As odd or as obvious as this may sound, the Body of Christ and Christ Jesus are inseparable. You just can’t have an alive and growing faith without plugging in to the global community of believers (see Romans 12:4–6).

Your life as an officer may include a lot of transient faith and community. When you PCS, it can be challenging, time consuming or tedious to put in the work to find a group of Christ followers with whom you can connect. Maybe you had to leave a great group of close friends who’d seen each other through some heavy things, or perhaps you had just begun to forge meaningful relationships when your orders came. Once we have experienced deeper Christian community, our hearts eventually ache for this kind of community again. It is our job to take what we have learned from our past communities and take it with us wherever we go next in order to create and include others in something even better.

Think about this—you may be the one at your next assignment with the most experience in community. Community is where we learn, grow, give and receive affirmation and affection and so much more. How appropriate then that we are called together to fellowship and worship together and to disciple one another. In fact, the word “worship” is usually understood in Scripture as a

Biblical perspectives on community and fellowship

Scripture

Galatians 6:1—Here God tells us that *community in fellowship is good for calling out with love the bad things that we do. It is our brothers and sisters in Christ who God often uses to speak to us and show us a better way.*

Psalm 34:3—Another thing we can do in community is praise God together. *There is something very uplifting about being able to worship together.*

Reflect

There are people who are your friends and who will speak truth into your life. Who are those people that you can go deeper with? What are some ways community has been there to support you or other ways your friends have been there for you? Are you a person people can count on?

Apply

Some of the most important things when cultivating deep and meaningful friendships are time, trust and mutual respect. Other things that may help are common interests, groups or hobbies. Maybe it’s time to get out there and try something new. Make an action plan. Don’t wait for someone to come to you. Pray that God would open doors and help you move forward.

—From RezLife

corporate verb.

We are communal beings created in the image of the communal, triune God. As a Christ-follower, you are now part of the Body of Christ—the universal Church that spans continents and centuries and life itself, inclusive of all who call Jesus their Lord. That’s amazing!

If you look around the world today and particularly in our own cultural movements, it should be pretty clear to understand that as the Body of Christ, we are no longer the “home team.” Much of the cheering for Christian values and sensibilities and lifestyles has died down. The world, principalities and powers resist the message of the gospel at every turn. In this current environment, it is all the more crucial to be part of a team with a focused purpose.

Ultimately, we know the end of the story, and it ends in victory. Until then, however, we have a critical mission to accomplish with the rest of the Body of Christ. It is by joining together in steadfast conviction that we live as witnesses for Christ in an unreceptive climate. So, Christ-following minions, unite! Together we show to the world that there is another option—a joy-filled purpose to serve Jesus Christ, the biggest, baddest boss out there! 🍌

About Dave and Raine

Dave is a Christian ministries professor at Judson University, special projects assistant for M CYM, and senior author/editor for the military teen website RezLife with the American Bible Society. Dave’s daughter, Raine, is a freelance writer, reader, nomad, new wife, art historian, animal lover, Pinterest addict, horror fan and Christ follower.



White Sulphur Springs photo

Through handcrafting and handyman projects, work period volunteers lend a collective helping hand towards making OCF's ministry at its Spring Canyon and White Sulphur Springs conference centers possible.

Fellowship through 'practical action'

By OCF Communications Department

Christian fellowship is the linking of lives with one another as the Body of Christ. It goes beyond like-minded people pursuing common interests, although that is definitely an aspect of Officers' Christian Fellowship's 350-plus small groups and its conference center ministry.

OCF has provided transitory military Christians with two static places—Spring Canyon in Colorado and White Sulphur Springs in Pennsylvania—for abundant opportunities of Christ-centered fellowship, programs and fun. The ideal end result: being equipped to reach others for Christ throughout the military society—and form lifetime friendships.

Keeping OCF's spiritual refuges shipshape and running smoothly is a titanic task. The moving pieces and parts of year-round ministry demand more time than the directors and staff members possess. Enter a fellowship subset from decades of service and friendship at OCF's conference centers: the spring and fall work period volunteers who help make ongoing ministry possible.

Here are some insights from a few of the entire volun-

teer army participating in Christ's kingdom work through OCF: Max and Sharon Chastain, and Gene Powell (Spring Canyon); Steve Domsloay, Don Moore, Rob and Anne Stewart, and Dick and Carol Zahn (White Sulphur Springs):

Why do you do volunteer?

Powell: There's a mystery that takes place between a guest and God at the conference center. You don't always know the outcome, the miracles that have taken place. The SC staff has come alongside me more than I have come along them, during my divorce season. I just get teared up thinking about it because I don't know if I would have survived.

Domsloay: Having retired from the Navy, there are limited ways to pay back OCF for all it meant to us during our active duty years, but volunteering is one of the few ways we can.

Moore: I enjoy serving, feeling like I'm doing something of value. I also feel God's (and the WSS staff's) pleasure. The camaraderie is fabulous.

Stewarts: OCF and WSS perform a wonderful service to the military in growing and developing Christian leaders. Putting time and resources to support that mission is more than worthwhile.

Zahns: We knew what a wonderful place it was. After seeing COMMAND magazine articles about volunteering, we decided to help in furthering Christ's kingdom among the military.

What are some of the things you've done as a volunteer?

Chastains: Facilities construction, repair and maintenance work (Max); lots of cleaning, painting, sewing curtains, etc., (Sharon).

Powell: Fiscal plan, outdoor stuff. Change out broken things. Work on old Fort Shine. Ambassador at the summer weeks. My claim to fame now may be washing dishes.

Moore: Set furniture in Heritage House; kitchen, dining room and facility clean up; installations; repairs; rake leaves; make beds, etc.

Zahns: Repair roofs, painting, build horse fences (Dick); reupholster furniture, sewing and embroidering projects (Carol).

How has the fellowship with other volunteers impacted your life?

Chastains: We have developed life-long friendships through the fellowship of working at SC. And we have a tremendous respect and appreciation for the staff and the sacrifices they make daily.

Powell: These brothers and sisters have helped me look at my life, to see the shortcomings I needed to work on. We all learn from each other.

Domsloay: This group has become a second family. We have a reunion with them every six months, in many ways becoming closer than blood relatives—the way it should be among believers. This group has given me more than anything I could return to them.

Moore: The volunteers and staff members are good friends, fun to be and work with, and a special family to me. Some of the best days of my life.

What is one of your most favorite/fondest moments?

Max Chastain: One fall the SC staff had drained the ponds to rebuild their overflow towers and refill them before winter. Gail Friemark and I were the only ones able to be there—and Gail came with a broken arm in a

Opportunities to volunteer at both conference centers

Types of projects

When you volunteer at an OCF conference center, there are any number of possible projects, including: Roof inspection and repair; lots of deep cleaning; decorating, painting, repainting, touch-up painting—more painting; landscaping projects; sewing repairs such as linens, bedspreads, curtains; building/repairing bridges; maintaining hiking trails; inspecting decks/repairs; plumbing repairs/installations; and much more...

More Information Online

For more information about volunteering at White Sulphur Springs, visit the WSS website at: whitesulphursprings.org/volunteer/

For more information about volunteering at Spring Canyon, fill out the contact form at springcanyon.org/contact/

cast. In the midst of our discussion and prayer about how to accomplish what needed to be done, three German carpenters drove into camp to ask if there was any work they could do for room and board. They completely rebuilt the overflow towers—with a little bit of help from us. Truly angels in disguise!

Domsloay: Knowing the volunteers and becoming closer and closer with all those involved. This aspect has enriched us continually and we find ourselves, once we leave, already looking forward to our next return.

Stewarts: There have been many great moments and experiences—fun to work with the other volunteers and staff members. We enjoy coming back and seeing the projects we have worked on over the years.

Zahns: Sitting in the lobby and hearing the stories. Lots of laughter. Rocking on the Harrison House porch. The dedication of Heritage House. Just being there.

What would you say to others about the Christian fellowship opportunities through conference center ministry?

Chastains: There is nothing to compare to the fellowship we've experienced at SC. Anytime we're at SC with staff and other volunteers, we often feel it's a little foretaste of what heaven will be!

Domsloay: Volunteering is a perfect way that we older OCF members can contribute and remain an active part of OCF. We have much more time now to do this and I am glad it's available.

Moore: The Christian climate, fellowship, and eternal "pay" are all fabulous. There is something that everyone and anyone can do and needs to be done.

Stewarts: Volunteering is a rewarding investment of time that directly impacts the OCF mission and the military. You should try it—you will appreciate it.

Zahns: Just do it. Consider what the Good Samaritan did in the Luke 25 parable: he went . . . bound up. . . took care. This is what "love your neighbor" looks like, and it involves practical action. Jesus says, "Go and do likewise." So go and do. You won't be sorry! 🙌



Jeffrey D Vordermark photo

Following a successful seminar presented by a master angler (standing), members of the Outfitters enjoy a fish fry.

Connect in the wilderness with Christ

By Colonel Jeffrey D. Vordermark, United States Army (Retired)

For decades, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, has been a place where the longstanding chapel motto of “bring in, build up, send out” is consistently lived out. I probably could have used more of that “building up” during my stint here as a student in the early ‘90s. But instead of Tuesday morning prayer breakfasts, men’s retreats, and commitment to Sunday school and sometimes even church, I spent a fair amount of time in the woods to connect with God.

It’s been my good fortune to return to the Leavenworth community, and although my desire to enjoy hunting and fishing has not changed, my Christian perspective on outdoor pursuits has. Why not meld both?

While collecting the offering one Sunday, I encountered two gentlemen fresh from spring turkey hunting sitting rather conspicuously among the other congregants. Camouflage may work great outdoors, but not so much in row twenty-two of the post chapel. Not recognizing them as regulars, I realized an opportunity to establish some sort of group or ministry drawing in folks like this on a consistent basis. The chaplain also sensed this and asked me if I would lead the establishment of a min-

istry linked to outdoor pursuits. God began to shape my passion into a calling.

Through prayer and contemplation, the vision for Outfitters, an “equipping ministry,” began to crystallize around two key portions of Scripture. First was David’s preparations to face Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:22-39, in which David turned down the offer of King Saul’s armor because “he was not used to it.” Hunters and fishermen rely on good outfitters for gear and guidance, as well as continually seeking for themselves opportunities to improve. By offering fellowship, mentoring, and an opportunity to use a fly rod or understand the habits of the animals we might hunt, Outfitters can help equip our

members by sharing our collective knowledge.

From Ephesians 6 came the second motivation for members to be “geared up” with God’s spiritual armor, becoming more mindful in the field that despite whatever top-notch worldly hunting or fishing gear we possessed, God had outfitted us richly with His armor, and there was more to our pursuits than just catching fish or bagging game. The notion that God was “the Ultimate Outfitter” gave the group its focus by challenging its members to connect their faith with their time afield. The ministry was launched in 2013.

The response to events has been heartening, and the value of Outfitters as an “equipping ministry” has become apparent as members become better—not only in their chosen outdoor pursuits like bow hunting or fishing, but also in learning to apply Scriptural “lessons learned” to their time afield. That there are plenty of lessons to be learned was evident by the interest in our wild game dinner and story night, where members young and old shared their adventures afield and some profound truths they had discovered. Such as in finding a deer antler.

The purposeful hunt for deer antlers—shed hunting—in late winter has become a bit of an addiction of mine, to escape the confines of the house and enjoy an outing. As weather and free time permit, I wander deer trails and known bedding areas in search of antler sheds while also pondering the meaning of sheds, which are nothing more than castoffs the buck no longer needs. Likewise, in our Christian walk every once in a while we need to take stock of our lives and figure out what we’re lugging around that needs to be cast down at God’s feet. It may be things we hang on to: insults, pain, unforgiveness, or bad habits (too much TV, one too many helpings at the dinner table). Casting off these useless things lightens our personal burdens. The symbology becomes readily apparent to the deer hunters in our fellowship, and the finding of an antler will later be a tangible reminder of the lesson.

This nascent fellowship has grown since its inception, and needs are being met. Perhaps the most unexpected benefit has been with the kids, who seem ever ready for adventure outside the surly bonds of video games. Many parents want to learn more about the outdoors because of the potential family bonding opportunities. They may not know too much about hunting or fishing, so Outfitters provides a ready group of Christian mentors who are not shy about sharing their skills.

In a complementary manner, the idea has struck a chord here with outdoorsmen who don’t necessarily “connect” with other chapel programs but now find they have a ministry geared to their interests. Activities have been as varied as a weekend fishing clinic supported by master anglers in both a classroom and on the lake, capped off by a fish fry fellowship. Nearly all caught fish—and were physically and spiritually fed in the process. A wild game dinner and story night meant sharing recipes, adventures, and even some tall tales—all centered on God’s provision.

Join a fellowship group—or start one!

The Word of God is clear: We aren’t meant to go it alone, “Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). If you don’t find an active OCF group at your new assignment location—start one!

The OCF website has many resources to use in starting your own small group fellowship, where you can gather with other like-minded believers for Bible study, prayer, encouragement—and fun. Shared pursuits—hunting, fishing, bicycling, dining, etc.—make the fellowship twice as fun.

Find an OCF fellowship group near you

www.ocfusa.org/find-ocf/

Starting an OCF small group

www.ocfusa.org/articles/starting-ocf-small-group-fellowship/

Small group resources

www.ocfusa.org/ocfresources/small-groups/

Bible studies

www.ocfusa.org/ocfresources/bible-studies/

Devotionals

www.ocfusa.org/ocfresources/devotionals/

Seminars, guest speakers, and support to other organizations offer opportunities to grow and serve, thus teaching, equipping, and fellowship are centerpieces, all the while applying what we learn to Scripture.

The Outfitters program model is certainly not something that needs to remain unique to Fort Leavenworth. Good things happen when strong Christian men and women and others come together, and the place for that isn’t always in a pew. Sometimes you need to go to the wilderness to connect with its Creator. Jesus did, and we know that He was perfectly outfitted. Since perfecting the wearing of armor can only get better when in the company of fellow believers, are you ready to get really “geared up” with the ultimate Outfitter?

About Jeff

Jeff, a retired Army officer now on faculty at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, recently published his first book, “Wilderness Reflections: A Pursuit of God’s Lessons in the Field.” He once led OCF studies on four continents and now leads a neighborhood one.



Pensacola OCF photo

Worship and God's Word are center stage during an OCF Pensacola small group Bible study.

Kingdom work can happen anywhere

By OCF Communications Department

Plain and simple, we were created by God to be in community with one another: “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... all who believed were together and had all things in common” (Acts 2:42, 44).

As a relational ministry where genuine biblical fellowship is essential for spiritual growth and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, the very heart of the ministry of Officers’ Christian Fellowship remains small group fellowships. Whether meeting in homes or workplaces, regardless if one-on-one or within larger group settings of conference center or field staff ministry—or by optimizing technology for online fellowship opportunities—OCF fellowship gatherings are reservoirs of spiritual support, encouragement and accountability for one another.

Two microcosmic examples of Christ’s immeasurable kingdom work through OCF follow below in the tried

and true of field staff ministry and the bold and new of an online virtual fellowship group for Christian military women:

Pensacola OCF

Active in OCF for over twenty years, once Marine Corps **Colonel Chet and Michelle Arnold** retired from active duty, a never fading stirring in their souls frequented their prayers and discussions, “How can we better serve the military community for Jesus Christ?”

From a job opening announcement they heard at

OCF’s White Sulphur Springs conference center in 2013, the next summer the Arnolds’ aspirations became the Lord’s calling on their lives. As the OCF field staff rep at Pensacola, Florida—the “Cradle of Naval Aviation”—Chet calls his opportunity to disciple the young officers attending OCF activities “a great privilege.”

Such as **2ndLt Nick Koza, USMC**, who was temporarily blinded by an adverse reaction to a flu shot and unable to get friends to help him. Pensacola OCF members stepped in. Kory Defore and Matt Haskins started taking Nick to the hospital and follow-up doctor appointments—and inviting him to Bible study. “We started talking about knowing the Lord, having our priorities straight—and that He has a good plan for us,” said Nick.

While undergoing tests and MRIs for nearly a year before finally being cleared by flight doctors for intermediate/advanced flight school, Nick attended the weekly OCF fellowship. Both Chet and Nick reflected on that season of ministry at Pensacola:

How did Nick’s medical issue come to your attention?

Chet: We met Nick after arriving to Pensacola and heard his story from him and the others involved to that point.

How did you know Kory and Matt?

Nick: Matt and I started at The Basic School. The day I selected jets, Matt told me I should come to church with him, adding I could meet Kory, a fellow jet pilot.

What was the impact of Kory and Matt’s actions?

Nick: I wondered why Matt would spend a big chunk of his day driving me to a hospital, so willing to sacrifice his schedule for me. And Kory drove an hour to check up on and pray with me in the hospital—sacrificing his time to visit someone he met only once. I told Matt, “If the Lord gets me through this, I will trust Him.” When things started getting better, I wanted to know God more and more, and to be around like-minded friends.

Chet: This story has permeated the OCF Pensacola crowd—a vivid reminder of how God will work through us if we step out boldly in faith.

What did you observe in Nick’s growth of faith?

Chet: I saw a young man growing in his faith and desire to disciple others—ravenous for the Word of God and on fire for Christ. Nick’s story is one of those in which God’s hand is so clearly evident. It’s very encouraging to see the fruit of the harvest and know that he’s now a shining light headed for the Fleet Marine Force.

What did that season in your life mean to you?

Nick: It gave me plenty of time to get into God’s Word, to really meet Christ at the cross, and help me see the bigger picture. I was often caught up with the things I had achieved and never gave them back to Him. And to learn from people you respect like Chet and Jamie Vandiver (OCF Council vice-president)—all their abilities, military experiences, their faith—it was great. And I also met

my wife then! The power of gathering for fellowship is a great way to have relationship with like-minded people, to reach out to others, and go places.

OCF virtual fellowship group

Col Mandy Birch, USAFR, an OCF Council member, and **Air Force veteran Tami Waring**, who now serves with OCF field staff rep husband Houstoun at Alabama’s Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base, have launched a new online outreach for Christian women in uniform. Mandy answered a few questions about the experimental phase of “Leading Women” fellowship forum:

How did this come about?

As Christian women in uniform, we often find women, Christians, or leaders in other contexts, but we rarely find those who are all three. There are many of us, but we’re rarely at the same location. We’ve heard a need from many military women to connect with others of like calling. So we’re experimenting with filling that gap with a hybrid online/retreat concept.

What’s the technology you’re using?

We’re using Moodle, an open-source learning platform that allows us to post videos, engage in discussion threads, log prayer requests, message one another and more. It includes security features so that we can be sure we’re all genuine participants. We subscribed to a hosting service that makes configuring the site easy with modular options to build the course we wanted to create.

How’s it going?

We’re discovering there’s definitely a need for both Bible study and fellowship. Amazingly, we’ve quickly begun sharing our lives with one another; we’re encouraged to be able to walk together through life and to learn from one another!

How many women are engaging?

Thirty women are participating in the forum. Some have followed Christ for a year; others for decades. Some were trailblazers in the military; others chose civilian paths after a few years of service.

What are some things you’ve learned along the way?

Online, both introverts and extroverts can have a strong voice. We get wonderful insights. I’ve learned it’s more important to be a facilitator than a teacher. And we’re filling niches we’d never thought about (such as shift workers).

Any advice for starting something similar?

- Reach out to anyone who isn’t regularly participating.
- Building community is as important as teaching biblical principles.
- Set guidelines up front, and start simple.
- Never go it alone; recruit a partner and define roles.



Edwards AFB OCF photo



USAFA OCF photo



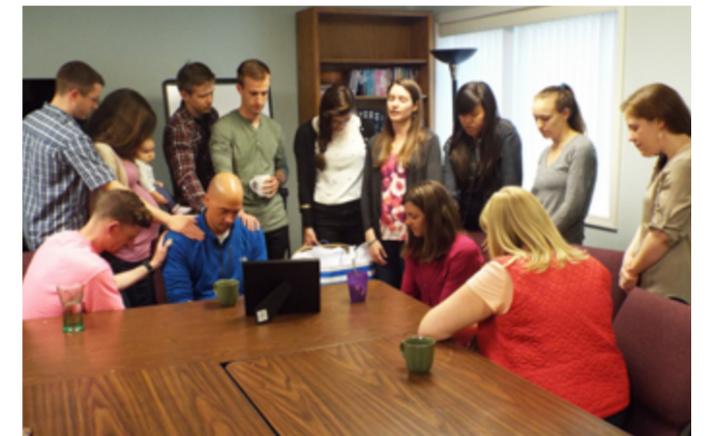
Marty Thomas photo



Fort Leavenworth OCF photo



Maxwell-Gunter OCF photo



Puget Sound OCF photo

Edwards AFB, California

TOP: Small group fellowships—This group at Edwards Air Force Base exemplifies an OCF core competency for community among military Christians. These gatherings to study and apply biblical truths in personal, family, professional, and ministry activities and relationships encourage believers to live boldly for Christ wherever they're stationed.

Chesapeake/South Virginia Beach, Virginia

ABOVE LEFT: Uniting for Fellowship—As a relational ministry, OCF regards authentic biblical fellowship with one another in Jesus Christ as essential towards visible service and witness that glorifies

Him. With Regent University NROTC students in their fold, the members of the Chesapeake/South Virginia Beach OCF small group started a recent Bible study on the Book of Ephesians.

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

ABOVE RIGHT: Centering on Scripture—With the study and application of God's Word paramount to Christian growth, Bible study groups flourish throughout the ministry of OCF. This women in uniform Bible study lunch is just one of the twenty new Bible studies in and around the Fort Leavenworth area.

USAFA, Colorado

TOP: Equipping to Serve—The ministry of OCF is committed to the spiritual development of our nation's future leaders, as exemplified by this cadet retreat at OCF's Spring Canyon conference center. USAFA's ministry team members taught on various topics relating to loving God and loving others, helping each find expression in godly service and outreach to the military.

Maxwell-Gunter, Alabama

ABOVE LEFT: Lay-led—Whether active duty or retired, OCF members are encouraged to view their stations in the military society as unique opportunities to lead Christ-centered ministries of outreach and service. This weekly "serving as a Christian" chapel class assists

military leaders with learning to think about the how-tos of serving under authority.

Puget Sound, Washington

ABOVE RIGHT: An exciting year of ministry— Where "member care and support are common traits of Puget Sound OCFers," fourteen small group fellowships, including new ones at the Seattle Coast Guard Base and Naval Station Everett, meet regularly to hearten and help one another with God's truth. Ministry highlights included the annual half marathon ministry fundraiser, picnics and retreats, encouragement to integrate faith and profession, and lots of prayer—such as for this couple transitioning out of the area.



USMA OCF photo



USNA OCF photo



Mike Patterson photo



Redstone Arsenal OCF photo

USMA, New York

TOP: Integrating Faith and Profession—Biblical standards such as devotion to duty and professional excellence are just a few of the values OCF field staff reps and local leaders impart into the lives of our nation's future military leaders. Fellowship opportunities are central to such outreach, such as this USMA OCF cadet retreat in New York.

Quantico, Virginia

ABOVE LEFT: Festivities, fun and faith—Gathering at the home of Mike and Arden Patterson (she's pictured left) this joint-service OCF

group from Marine Corps Base Quantico enjoys a Christmas event together while celebrating the reason for the season—the birth of Jesus Christ.

Redstone Arsenal, Alabama

ABOVE RIGHT: Having fun is not rocket science! These OCFers took a break from studying the Book of Revelation to enjoy food, fun and fellowship at a lake. This weekly intergenerational group, ranging from crawling toddlers to seasoned pros, enjoys lively discussion applying faith wherever called by God.



Michael Edwards photo



USCGA OCF photo

USNA, Maryland

TOP: The Body of Christ—USNA OCF hosted a joint fall retreat at OCF's White Sulphur Springs Conference Center along with students from the Navigators, USNA's Protestant Choir, St. John's College, and the Merchant Marine Academy. Dr. Del Tackett was the keynote speaker.

Tennessee Tech, Tennessee

ABOVE LEFT: Tomorrow's military leaders today—Gathering at the home of LTC Steve and Julie Peterson, USA (Ret.) every Wednesday for dinner and Bible study, this Tennessee Tech OCF group is studying a John Maxwell book on leadership and discussing how it applies to their future military service.

USCGA, Connecticut

ABOVE RIGHT: Columbus Day weekend fellowship at Shepherd's Fold—Fellowship opportunities at USCGA OCF includes men's and women's Bible studies and accountability groups, mentoring, baptisms and mission trips. A fall event at Shepherd's Fold of enjoying cider, apple pie and carving a pumpkin was a chance for new cadets coming there to be encouraged with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Send us your #MinistryInAction group photo

For consideration in **COMMAND** magazine or OCF Facebook, send your **high-resolution photo** to Managing Editor Karen Fliedner: karen.fliedner@ocfusa.org.

Former OCF USAFA field staff rep Woodruff goes to glory

Colonel Robin M. Woodruff, USAF (Ret.), who served along with his wife, Ginny, as OCF staff representatives at the Air Force Academy from 1980-1993, went home to be with the Lord on 18 October.

After graduating from pilot training—where Rob received his wings, “butter bars” and wedding ring all on the same day—he served his country for the next twenty-eight years. Rob especially enjoyed flying the F-100.

“We came to know the Lord in 1958 through Phil Smith, an Air Force chaplain. And Roy Minor was a big influence in introducing us to OCF,” Ginny said. “We sure loved OCF. It’s like a second home. The greatest influence of our lives was Dr. Bob Smith, a Presbyterian pastor who spoke at OCF conferences. He was a wonderful man, gifted speaker and spiritual leader. Rob loved the Lord and loved sharing His Word. His favorite book was Ephesians and he never prayed without asking that we might be ‘to the praise of His glory.’”

Attending the 29 October celebration of life service for Rob were many family, friends and a cadre of USAFA grads, including Col Scotty and Joelyn Nowlin, USAF, both of the 1992 class.

“Like with so many USAFA cadets, Col Woodruff shared the gospel with us, and then lived it out before us every day since. He always remembered our names after meeting us for the first time at an OCF or chapel event while we were doolies—which was a big deal to many grads,” Scotty said. “Over all the years of their cadet ministry and beyond, he was always willing to share his time to pray with, counsel, commission, wed, baptize or retire any of his and Ginny’s ‘cadets,’ all the while being a rock and a provider to his own family



Michael Edwards photo

Rob and Ginny Woodruff, celebrating God’s faithfulness at the 2013 dedication of Veterans Memorial Lodge at Spring Canyon Conference Center.

and the local church. He made and will continue to have a profound and eternal impact upon us both and each of our children. To God be the glory for the great things He hath done through the life and ministry of Rob Woodruff.”

Three-on-three fundraiser for OCF

A three-on-three basketball tournament fundraiser sponsored by a Massachusetts high school netted more than \$700 for OCF and its ministry purposes earlier this year. Because of OCF’s favorable four-star Charity Navigator ratings and its “focus of Christian outreach and care to military personnel,” two Boston College High School clubs sponsored the hoops event involving 150 participants. Charity Navigator is the largest and most-utilized evaluator of charities in the United States. 🏀

OCF Honor Fund

The OCF Honor Fund gift is a meaningful way to honor or remember someone special in your life while also supporting the ministry of Officers’ Christian Fellowship.

In Memory of...

Andrew Baer

By Mr. Arthur E. Woolley Jr.
By COL & Mrs. Robert A. Baer, USA
By CDR & Mrs. Steven R. Nichols, USNR (Ret.)
By LCDR & Mrs. Aaron P. Rouland, USN
By Mr. & Mrs. Lance Giddens
By CDR & Mrs. Joseph R. Chiaravallotti, USN (Ret.)
By CAPT & Mrs. Samuel L. Tate, USN (Ret.)
By Ms. Elizabeth Britt
By Ms. Regan Stark
By Mr. & Mrs. David B. Britt
By Ms. Audrey Heleni
By CH(COL) & Mrs. Marc S. Gauthier, USA
By LTC & Mrs. Michael E. Bigelow, USA (Ret.)

Louis Reed

Joseph T. Black
Azalee Little
LaVerne Breazeal
Billy B. Spencer
By CAPT & Mrs. O. W. Camp Jr., USNR (Ret.)

Martha Elizabeth “Betsy” Teuton

By Justin Sherman
By ENS Jordan C. Rank, USCG

Col Richard Artells Morris

By Ann James

Col William Bruce Rember, USAR (Ret.) Evelyn Kent

By Mrs. Ellen D. Rember

CAPT Michael Dallam

By CAPT & Mrs. Paul D. Ims Jr., USN (Ret.)

Col Robin M. Woodruff, USAF (Ret.)

By Mr. & Mrs. Dale Oderman
By Richard Daniel
By Mrs. Cindy E. Smith

Mara Leary

By Amy Leary

Maj Ronald P. Johnson, USMC (Ret.)

By Mrs. Earline K. Johnson

Uncle (Pastor) Willie Graham

By Judge Graham Jr.

In Honor of...

The Bryan Burt family

By Kyle T. Waldorf

Gloria Gelpke

By Capt. Roy A. Gelpke, USMC (Ret.)

MIDN Abigail White, USN

By Mr. & Mrs. Tim White

Houstoun & Tami Waring

By Maj Michael M. Aflague, USAFR

Jesus Christ

By Anonymous

Fall Council Meeting: God desires for us to truly know Him

By Captain Alysa Angel, United States Army

Greetings brothers and sisters in the Lord! Your OCF Council assembled together 22-25 October for its fall meeting in the snowy mountains at OCF’s Spring Canyon conference center. The theme verse for the session was: “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ...may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him” (Ephesians 1:17). What a sweet reminder of God’s desire for us to truly know Him.

Thursday night we joined together for worship, prayer, small groups, and accountability. MajGen Mel Spiese, USMC (Ret.), led a devotion focused on chapter one of Nehemiah which prompted us to remember four things: how God’s character was displayed in Nehemiah; Nehemiah’s emphasis on prayer and planning; how God intervenes at the right time for His glory, and that God-centered leadership is about God—not the leader. The night ended with a “welcome home” open house at the home of the Spring Canyon director couple, Col Kim and Kari Ann Hawthorne, USAF (Ret.), complete with their famous jalapeno popcorn.

Friday was also bathed in prayer as LCDR Chad Tidwell, USN (Ret.), led us through a Pray, Discover, Obey (PDO) session, helping us draw closer to God through worship, thanksgiving, confession and repentance, and petition. We sought God’s guidance and direction for future ministry activities and opportunities to advance His kingdom through Christian military leaders. Following PDO, Brig Gen David Warner, USAF (Ret.), presented his executive director report acknowledging a transition in the life of OCF as we prepare to implement the strategic framework for 2016-2021. Council was in unity as we passed the 2016 budget. Paula Halvorson, Lt Col Steve Wade, USAF (Ret.), Col Larry Simpson, USAF (Ret.) and Col Hawthorne shared ministry updates, testimonies of hearts and lives being changed, marriages being restored, and cadets coming to faith in Christ through OCF’s min-

istry efforts. Before wrapping up for the evening, The Class of 2018 was confirmed and the 2016 officers were selected.

Saturday started with devotion and small groups, followed by an overview of the strategic framework for 2016-2021, which focuses on four key elements: member engagement and growth, growing Christian military leaders, delivering ministry, and stewarding resources. We also discussed the opportunity to partner with Christian SNCOs. We on Council are praising God for His faithfulness and provision. During our evening meal, members of the outgoing Class of 2015 were thanked for their Council service. Worship was led by Lt Col Wade, followed by a message from beloved LTC Tom Schmidt, USA (Ret.), who reminded us to “keep our hands in the soil.”

Please continue to pray for and support the purpose and vision of the ministry of OCF. We on Council give thanks for you, remembering you in our prayers (Ephesians 1:16).

OCF Council election results

The OCF Council confirmed the membership’s selection of the Class of 2018. Starting a three-year term on the twenty-two-member Council in January are:

LTC(P) Steve Berger, USA
RADM Rick Breckenridge, USN
COL Rich Goldsmith, USA (Ret.)
COL Alicia Smith, USA
Maj Matt Uber, USAF

Council officers for the upcoming year are:

President: MajGen Mel Spiese, USMC (Ret.)
Vice president: CAPT Jamie Vandiver, USN (Ret.)
Secretary: LCDR Gordon Hood, USCG
Treasurer: CDR Steve Hoffman, USN

Council also elected Col Mike Moyles, USAF, and MAJ David Guida, USA, to serve with the Class of 2018, and CMSgt Vance Clarke, USAF (Ret.), to serve as special council.

Births

Alexander William Bazemore, born 7 September 2015, son of **CPT Thomas and CPT Brandi Bazemore, USA**, Killeen, TX.

Avery Cline Bess, born 20 August 2015, daughter of **CPT Jeffrey and Janelle Bess, USA**, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

Ezra Joseph Davies, born 27 August 2015, son of **CPT Nathan and Nicole Davies, USA**, Landstuhl, Germany.

Selah Grace Garland, born 23 September

2015, daughter of **LT John and Abby Garland, USCGR**, Livermore, CA.

Kyle Matthew Meyrahn, born 2 October 2015, son of **Capt Andy and Stacie Meyrahn, USAF**, Pensacola, FL.

Taps

COL Edward Blight Jr., USA (Ret.), 2 February 2015, Charlotte, NC.

Audrey Barr-Calmes, 29 May 2015, wife of **CH(MAJ) Gary Calmes, USA (Ret.)**, Mount Prospect, IL.

Joy Dehnert, 4 November 2015, wife of **Brig Gen Robert Dehnert, USAF**, Fairfax Station, VA.

Lt Col James Greshel, USAF (Ret.), 1 October 2015, Okemos, MI.

Lt Col Douglas Johnson, USAF (Ret.), 6 September 2015, husband of **Nancy Johnson**, Davidsonville, MD.

Col Robin Woodruff, USAF (Ret.), 18 October 2015, husband of **Ginny Woodruff**, Colorado Springs, Colorado.



White Sulphur Springs photo

Snow glistens on the trees at White Sulphur Springs, above, while Hartley Holmes Lodge at Spring Canyon sits under a blanket of snow.

Come experience the true meaning of Christmas

By OCF Communications Department

OCF conference center directors Col Kim Hawthorne, USAF (Ret.), and LTC Paul Robyn, USA (Ret.), were asked about the special events during the upcoming winter retreats at Spring Canyon and White Sulphur Springs. Come experience the true meaning of Christmas with family and friends in Colorado or Pennsylvania!

What makes coming to an OCF winter retreat so special?

Kim: Winter at Spring Canyon is such an amazing experience. You can't help but draw closer to God and to family in such a beautiful mountain setting during this special time of year. Our guests get to play in the snow and experience skiing, snowshoeing, and beautiful snow-capped mountains here in central Colorado—one of the most beautiful places on earth. Better yet, we draw wonderful speakers for deep spiritual discussions that sharpen us, refresh us, and equip us for an abundant life of service.

Paul: Let me give you a few reasons why a Winter Retreat at White Sulphur Springs is so special! First, it's a wonderful place to focus on the true meaning of Christmas—our Savior's birth. Second, it's the perfect place to reunite with family and friends in a warm, comfortable place where you don't have to worry about cooking and cleaning or having to cram everyone into cramped quarters. Third, you're celebrating the season with

like-minded believers in the OCF family, so the opportunity to build new, meaningful relationships makes the season extra special.

Any special plans for this year's retreats?

Kim: This year we'll offer guided cross-country skiing or snowshoeing trips, and our own Spring Canyon Tubing Run. Nearby hot springs and world-class skiing at Monarch and Ski Cooper add to the wonder of your holidays.

Paul: We'll enjoy a Christmas Eve Family Celebration Service, caroling in the "cove," candy making, live manger service in the Promise Barn, fireworks on New Year's Eve, Christmas and New Year's communion services, special holiday meals, and more.

What do guests need to know for this year?

Kim: We're excited about our holiday programs and look forward to seeing you here at Spring Canyon! Our programs and speakers are specially planned for military families.

Paul: We are offering four retreats this year. We'll have a special skiers breakfast and shuttle to the slopes on Saturday, Dec. 19. Also, there's also a new 2016 Loyalty Program at White Sulphur Springs: Stay ten nights, get one night free! As a special bonus for this year's Winter Retreat guests, one night from 2015 will count as credit toward the 2016 Loyalty Program.



Spring Canyon photo

Winter Sports Retreat Schedules

For more information and details about all the activities, programs, and speakers' topics, please visit the SC and WSS websites.

Spring Canyon

Celebrate the Christmas season in a spectacular Colorado winter wonderland!

#1: 19-26 Dec. Speaker: Col Kim Hawthorne, USAF (Ret.)

#2: 27 Dec.-3 Jan. Speaker: Col Jim Dutton, USAF (Ret.)

> springcanyon.org/winter-sports-retreat/

White Sulphur Springs

Join family and friends for Christmas memories and traditions that last a lifetime!

#1: 18-22 Dec. Speaker: Pastor Joe Batluck Jr.

#2: 22-26 Dec. Speaker: CH(COL) Marc Gauthier, USA

#3: 26-30 Dec. Speaker: Dr. Scott Redd

#4: 30 Dec.-3 Jan. Speaker: Dr. Gary Phillips

> whitesulphursprings.org/winter-retreat/

Free-will offering is one of thanksgiving

In the Old Testament we read about the peace or fellowship offering. Every ceremonial sacrifice that an Israelite made was of a certain type and for a specific purpose. The fellowship offering was unique in that it was the only major offering shared by the offerer, people and priests. A further distinction is that it was a free-will offering (Leviticus 7:16; 22:18, 21, 23) of thanksgiving to God (Leviticus 7:12; 22:29-30). It had to be voluntary because if God had commanded the thanksgiving, then it might not seem honest or sincere.

The voluntary fellowship offering was beneficial to the Israelite because it provided the peace of knowing and experiencing God's forgiveness. And more than this, God's anger was not just appeased in general. God was no longer angry with the offerer in particular—His favor was with him individually.

Today, we know that Jesus Christ is our peace or fellowship offering to be shared among all in fellowship with Him and with each other. Christ's death appeased God's righteous anger over sin. And more than this, because of Jesus' sacrifice God is no longer angry with anyone who has identified with Him by faith. We can individually experience the inner peace that comes from knowing God's favor is directed toward us. Just as our love for God is reflected in love for others, so our "peace with God" also manifests itself in a peace and fellowship with people. This is the message which Paul taught in Ephesians 2:13-18.

If we have been redeemed and rescued by God, shouldn't we naturally want to freely give Him thanks for that? Should not our hearts be burning with an attitude of gratitude because not one of us deserved it? The evident answer is of course yes. That's why the peace or fellowship offering is voluntary. We should, out of sheer gratitude, want to thank God for His saving grace.

Today we can still give this type of fellowship or peace offering but not out of compulsion or obligation. We want to freely offer thanks to God for all He has done for us, His children. And we want to manifest our gratitude by seeking peace and fellowship with other believers.

OCF small groups and retreats are a wonderful illustration of God's grateful children coming together in a type of fellowship offering. For example, a Puget Sound OCF member recently wrote, "I wanted to let you know that this week's study greatly impacted me. I am extremely grateful for the time and effort you put into organizing and leading these studies."

A member of a women's lunchtime group at Fort Leavenworth wrote, "It is an answered prayer for me to be included in this Bible study. I'm grateful." And a USAFA cadet expressed, "The OCF retreat was incredible. I definitely needed the time away. The message was very applicable to my life right now—so I am very thankful."

When you give a free-will offering to the ministry, your invaluable partnership makes Christ's kingdom work through OCF possible—eternally impacting lives for Him. This excerpt from USCGA ministry report of OCF field staff reps Carl and Christy Crabtree is just one example of the entirety of soul tilling in OCF, "Bible study on Sunday morning brings forty to sixty cadets.... There have been many challenges with swabs with health issues, morale issues, etc. All of this has led to sharing with all the swabs & parents about anchor points in our life... Some parents are growing as much or more than their swabs."

Are you grateful for how God uses OCF to advance His Kingdom throughout military society? Please pray about giving a free-will offering of thanks to God today.



CHRIS BLAKE

Director of Ministry Advancement

Ways to get involved

Pray.
Donate.
Join OCF.
Lead.
Volunteer.

To make a donation:
www.ocfusa.org/donate

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