

Christian perspectives on life in the military COMMAND

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Called by God, Forged by Christ, Serving our Nation



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

Happy 75th Birthday, OCF!

Since the founding of our nation in 1776, and throughout our nation's history, millions of military men and women have fought our battles, served at remote locations, secured our frontiers, and guarded our freedoms. They have been separated from family and friends, often in harm's way, and in need of spiritual fellowship, guidance, and prayer. This need was first met 75 years ago when Officers' Christian Fellowship was born during World War II as the Officers' Christian Union.



**DAVID
WARNER**
Executive
Director

Since its infant days in the 1940s, the core mission of OCF has not changed—to have a positive impact throughout the military through Christlike leaders who bring the good news of Jesus Christ to our military. Today, OCF's vision is to see “the military community positively impacted through Christlike leaders.” We do this by engaging military leaders in biblical fellowship and growth to equip them for Christlike service at the intersection of faith, family, and profession.

The core of OCF is about leadership—genuine, authentic Christlike servant leadership. This past year, we launched the Integrated Faith Project (IF Project). Its purpose is to achieve our God-given vision and mission of sending out Christlike leaders and their families, who spread the good news of Christ, making a positive impact throughout the military community. This occurs through the powerful and successful integration of their faith into all aspects of their lives.

In the previous *COMMAND*, I discussed the IF Project by expounding on the key concepts of integration and faith. Let's examine personal transformation, the first of four domains, which is the IF Project's cornerstone. At the heart of OCF's rich history are men and women who love Christ, have a deep, abiding relationship with Him, and through their Christlike leadership impact others for Him. This impact began and continues through their own personal transformation.

Let's unpack what is meant by personal transformation. **First, as the name suggests, it is personal.** We can generally define personal as being “something you take on board, deep within your character, that has the opportunity to make a deep and lasting impact.” So, this means that it must be about “you.” Not your parents, peers, or what's popular—it must be YOUR choice and desire!

Second, a transformation must occur. A widely understood meaning of transformation starts with the word transform—it's a verb, and it means there's a change happening, whether as to composition, condition, or character.

So taken together, I think it's fair to say that personal transformation means that you are going to change in some way. But consider this question: “Why change?”

You must ask yourself, “Can I stay where I am, believe what I believe, act the way I act, and pursue what I'm pursuing?” My answer is no—we need to change and continue to change.

If your answer is like mine, then we believe that we live in a fallen world and that all of us fall short of the glory of God. We trust that there is One who is perfect and who paid a great price for us, and that we can live lives pleasing to our Father. We all should recognize this is a journey that no one will ever fully complete on this side of heaven. By following our outline for the IF Project, you will take the first steps toward living a life in Christ, that you may serve Him.

We look forward to sharing this journey with you as we next explore what it looks like and means to integrate your faith in your profession, family, and community.

While OCF's commitment to the military society has not waned over the past 75 years, the mission field and culture have changed. Therefore, OCF has continued to transform to meet those challenges and opportunities. Throughout our history, we have adapted to the needs of those we serve by placing staff in the field at the four academies, education centers, and strategic locations. We procured, expanded, and now operate two conference centers. Through this transformation, however, our focus has remained on our local lay leaders and their families, who, through the integral nature of who they are and where the Lord has them, help to transform others for Christ.

As we step together into the next 75 years, let's rejoice in how the Lord has and will continue to transform OCF to serve His purposes. Let's enjoy this journey as our lives are transformed in Christ's likeness to be His light in the darkness. Let's shout out praise for the giants of the faith who have come before us. In this issue of *COMMAND*, we salute their vision with excerpts from Dr. Robert Spoele's *More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A.* to introduce articles covering current ministry as OCF keeps its eyes on God toward the future.

And, finally, let's pledge to be ready for the challenges and opportunities ahead of us! 🇺🇸

USMA OCF REPORT

Colin & Amy Wooten // OCF Field Staff

Kim and Kari Ann Hawthorne did an excellent job honoring the Lord and His use of OCF during past decades with the special OCF 75th anniversary program on New Year's Eve during the Winter Sports Retreat. It was extremely encouraging to hear the testimony of Don and Karen Martin, as well as many guests who shared what OCF and Spring Canyon has meant to them. It was a good reminder for me of how big God is. We can never fully know the fruit of His purposes through us and this ministry, but He has got it!

Ministry News

Spring Council meeting

OCF Council will be meeting 25-28 April at OCF's White Sulphur Springs Conference Center. OCF members are invited to attend. For additional information, please contact Heidi Martin at heidi.martin@ocfusa.org or 800-424-1984.

Spring Canyon Conference Center

springcanyon.org/events/

OCF Chaplains Family Conference 25-28 April

Speaker: CH(MG) Doug Carver, USA (Ret.), former U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains
Topic: "A Walk Through Ephesians"

Climb Together

26-28 April & 1-8 June

For parents and kids ages 8-13—a weekend of enjoying outdoor activities together while strengthening their relationships.

White Sulphur Springs Conference Center

whitesulphursprings.org/calendar

Resurrection Retreat

18-21 April

Enjoy this meaningful weekend of fellowship, teaching, worship, and the Easter morning sunrise service.



USAFA OCF photo

USAFA OCF

Chipu Chu, a second class cadet involved with OCF since his basic training, received Jesus as his Savior through OCF. Here he is sharing his testimony three years later. From day one of his eternal life, this cadet has longed for God's Word, fellowship, and service! This semester, he is leading a topical Bible study, is responsible for bringing nearly 20 fourth class cadets to OCF, and has gained great respect from all the cadets. Chip just wants others to know God and His mercy, grace, and salvation!

Steve & Rita Wade // OCF Field Staff

WSS Spring Staff Reunion

17-19 May

Previous senior staffers are invited for a weekend to reconnect with others while remembering their summers at Camp Caleb, AOI, and the Harrison House.

BIRTHS

Abigail Jane Rozak, born 20 April 2018, daughter of 2LT **James & Kay Rozak, USA**, Vilseck, Germany.

WEDDINGS

LTJG Geoff Polinder, USNR, married **Julie Wells** on 13 October 2018. Their home is Lowell, MI.

TAPS

LTC William Dantzler, USAR (Ret.), 29 December 2018, husband of **Shelly Dantzler**, Elizabethtown, KY.

Irene Holland, 2 January 2019, Manns Choice, PA.

Philip Peters, 13 February 2019, husband of **Sharon Peters**, Lexington, VA.

Col Bruce Wilhelm, USAF (Ret.), 6 July 2018, husband of **Lou Wilhelm**, Prescott, AZ.



Dr. Robert Spoede

Editor's note: OCF home office staff member Heidi Martin and her brother, Chris, enjoyed a series of conversations with Major Robert Spoede, PhD, USA (Ret.), the author of "More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A.," which chronicles OCF's first 50 years of ministry. Dr. Spoede shared highlights of God's powerful impact through the ministry of OCF that changed his life.

More than a conqueror: from death to spiritual life

BY HEIDI MARTIN AND CHRIS MARTIN

There is no better word to characterize Dr. Robert Spoede's life than service. Through his 20-year military career, participation in OCF, and teaching college students, Dr. Spoede has impacted hundreds of thousands of lives, sharing from his heart the same love that he has received. As evidenced by the exhaustive research and work that culminated in his book *More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A.*, the former college professor who is passionate about history relished sharing the 75 years of OCF history with us, as well as personal stories.

Called by God

Born in Texas in 1926, Dr. Spoede first followed in his father's military service footsteps by joining JROTC in high school. Upon the death of his Marine Corps brother in a plane crash in 1943, Dr. Spoede's interest in a military career spiked to the point where he went on to serve 18 months as a Marine during World War II. He returned to Texas A&M to finish his degree and was commissioned into the Army, serving 20 years before retiring in 1968. A 20-year academic and educational career followed, which included teaching history at Bryan College in Tennessee.

His first introduction to the then-named Officers' Christian Union was in 1955 via a post chapel bulletin at Fort Benning, Georgia. Through his wife, Nancy—who he had married a year earlier and with whom he would eventually have three children—Dr. Spoede feels the Holy Spirit convinced him,

though still reluctant, to attend the advertised Bible study. Surprised by the genuine fellowship and welcoming atmosphere there, he recounted in his book the conversation he and Nancy had afterwards.

"Realizing that we had just shared in the most significant hour of our lives, we simultaneously and spontaneously commented to one another, 'Wasn't that great?' Looking into the heavens above the towers of the Airborne School, we understood a new and powerful reality had entered our lives... We could no longer ignore the reality of Jesus Christ and His message... Our birth in Christ began and our life with Him moved forward decisively that August evening."

OCU's initial appeal to them was that it was a fellowship of officers—"keen, able, field-grade officers with key assignments, even a hard-as-nails airborne instructor"—who held prominent and key positions in

the Army and yet discussed the Bible "seriously with joyful enthusiasm, being open about their Christian faith." His questions were welcomed, and he found the Bible discussions and lessons applicable to life, "not merely studying the geographic travels of Christ and other biblical characters but diving deep into Scripture about varied ideas and topics pertaining to our lives." The warmth and love they felt from their newfound community in their OCU Bible study spurred a new vision in Dr. Spoede for his military service—an opportunity to spread the good news of Jesus Christ wherever their military duties sent them.

Forged by Christ

The Lord used life events and relationships with fellow believers to shape Dr. Spoede into increasing Christlikeness. One of the vignettes he shared was when his



Photo by Heidi Martin

Combining his passions of history with relational ministry, Dr. Robert Spoele (middle), has impacted countless lives in his service for Christ through OCF. The author of *More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A.* continues ministering to military families at White Sulphur Springs. Dr. Spoele is pictured with OCF home office staff member Heidi Martin (left) and her brother Chris (right).

young wife was undergoing cancer surgery. As a new believer, he knew that his conduct was not as it should have been—being the spiritual leader Nancy and their children needed. Crying out to God during her surgery and confessing his shortcomings, Dr. Spoele pleaded that Nancy's life would be spared. He felt God used that moment to convict his heart while simultaneously reminding him he was forgiven and lavishly covered in mercy, grace, and love.

Of the numerous friendships the Spoeles formed, they forged a special relationship with OCF local leaders COL Ira "Teen" and Helen Palm, USA, when the families were both stationed in Germany. He appreciated COL Palm's faith and admired his professional excellence, and later dedicated his *Conquerors* book in Palm's memory. The Spoeles desired to have Christ dwelling in them as they saw in Teen and Helen, who became almost like a second family to them, especially when Nancy underwent additional cancer surgery.

The love bestowed on his family then stands out vividly to Dr. Spoele as a picture of the body of Christ as described in John 13:34-35, where "members of OCF took our children into their homes when my wife needed timely medical care... and I

could not be excused from a field exercise." As Nancy wrote in a letter, "Never have I seen greater expression of brotherly love than since being here in Germany, where not one but many have seemed to long to share in our burden and have seemed humbly grateful when asked to do something to help."

The legacy of faith and embodiment of OCF's tagline, "Building Christian military leaders, families, fellowships... for a lifetime," is lived out today in both the Spoele and Palm families' investment of seeds of faith (see *Susie Palm Wort's remembrances on page 24 and the Please Meet feature with Jonathan Wort and Joshua Wort on pages 30-31*).

Serving our Nation

At 92 years, Dr. Spoele's service within OCF still continues. A widower since 2011, he lives near OCF's White Sulphur Springs Conference Center in Pennsylvania. He remains regularly involved in fellowship, is passionately interested in military members and families ministering to one another, and welcomes any opportunity to pour love into others' lives.

Asked why the vision and mission of

OCF are so important for today's military leader, Dr. Spoele emphatically stated, "The society and the culture of our nation are changing. At one time, there were certain verities that seemed to be almost universally accepted. Our nation's military develops some of the greatest leaders, and our nation needs leaders. Whether called to serve in the military or in spheres of influence outside of the military, we need our nation's great leaders to proclaim Christ and to lead us back to obedience to Him."

As OCF celebrates 75 years of ministry, Dr. Spoele exhorts all OCF members to consider their part in what God has ahead for the ministry and then to participate in what He is doing to positively impact the military community through Christlike leaders. ✝

About Heidi and Chris

Heidi, who works at the OCF home office, and her brother Chris, a senior at Texas A&M University, grew up in the Air Force family of parents Rick and Barb, and siblings Heather and Holly, a second lieutenant in the Air Force. In addition to attending both OCF conference centers, family time spent together has included visiting Dr. Spoele at the "Spoele Abode with Grand Bob."



Few posts were more isolated or dangerous than those manned by British Forces on the Northwest Frontier of India. British garrisons were far from home and...from immediate reinforcements in the event of an attack. Cut off from friends, family, and fellowship, Christian soldiers in India...were in spiritual need. [Captain John] Trotter sensed that...there remained a hunger for the solace of shared faith and the communion of prayer among like-minded officers....He invited them to join in organizing an 'Army Prayer Union for Officers and Men,' with the hope of satisfying this hunger for an informal and strongly personal fellowship.

—From *More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A.*

Standing on God's promises on bended knees

BY OCF COMMUNICATIONS

The Army Prayer Union for Officers and Men—the forerunner organization of today's Officers' Christian Fellowship—was born out of prayer, particularly prayer in concert with other believers. Out of Captain John Trotter's desire to have prayer and fellowship, and through several iterations of prayer unions, eventually came the Officers' Christian Union in Britain. Over the next two decades, the OCU and its affiliate ministry groups prayed for similar organizations to be established around the world. And on 31 December 1943, the Officers' Christian Union—which became Officers' Christian Fellowship in 1972—began in the United States.

Since then, OCF has continued to be rooted in prayer—the very breath of the ministry—and is also one of the eight pillars upon which the Fellowship stands firm (Matthew 7:7-8). OCU first implemented the unwavering devotion to constant prayer through a method known as “Pray and Plan.” In the March 1972 vision for OCF, then-OCF Executive Director Paul Pettijohn listed that “Pray and Plan” process—which later became “Pray, Discover, and Obey”—as the number one objective for the Fellowship. By using this strategy for prayer, discernment, and decision-making, OCF continues to emphasize the vital importance of prayer at every organizational level.

Equally, the ministry encourages members and local fellowships to draw near to God for His help and guidance, in recognition of the often-daunting challenges they and those with families face in their active

duty lives. The concert of ongoing prayer offered up in faith to the unseen spiritual realm of God has taken form over the years through correspondence the OCF home office has received from others, poignantly so from those serving in combat. “Your prayers are coveted for our troops here,” wrote an Army officer serving in Afghanistan. “One of our convoys was hit by a suicide vehicle IED 300 meters from post, but the bomber vehicle bounced off our lead vehicle into a nearby wall, where the bomb exploded. Though shaken up, and having two vehicles destroyed, all eight people are fine. This event, and others like it, has generated much ‘God discussion.’”

Throughout its 75-year history, OCF has encouraged its members to dedicate themselves to periods of prayer and fasting when the Fellowship has considered monumental decisions or encountered challenging circumstances. During his tenure

from 1994-1999 as OCF Executive Director, Art Athens' commitment to prayer and revival were foremost in his mind both as a leader and in his personal life. The retired Marine colonel and his wife, Misti, daily studied Oswald Chambers' *My Utmost for His Highest*, inspired by the book's exhortation that “Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.”

Increasingly convinced of the need for revival in the military community, Athens, who was influenced by OCF stalwarts George Kuykendal and Jim Wilson, spearheaded an initiative of organized prayer events, “Sound the Trumpet—A Day of Fasting and Prayer,” for the military and the ministry. Prayer groups sprang up across the nation, where the “discover” aspect of the pray and plan process was emphasized. “Military leaders of strategic planning and preparation lean towards springing right into human planning after praying, rather



OCF archive photo

From its early beginnings in the Army Prayer Union for Officers and Men, OCF continues in its storied history of seeking God and His wisdom through prayer for discernment and decision-making, as exemplified by this small group fellowship.

than pursuing the full prayer process, which includes confession and worship,” said Athens.

Former OCF Director of Resource Development, COL Mike Tesdahl, USA (Ret.), and his wife, Peggy, who also served as the OCF Field Staff rep couple at West Point, led the first “Sound The Trumpet” OCF-wide day of prayer at the Air Force Academy’s community chapel in Colorado in 1997. “The emphasis was humility and corporate confession for our individual and collective responsibility for the circumstances at hand and a call for revival,” said Tesdahl. “At times we need more than renewal; we need an extraordinary outpouring of God’s cleansing, renewing power. We call that revival.”

Prior to the 2006 launching of OCF’s Growing and Building capital campaign of new and/or expanded conference center facilities, numbers of OCF members committed to prayer and fasting in a “Pray, Discover and Obey” process to “discern God’s specific will and a clear call to obedience,” said Tesdahl. “I am convinced that we

could not have been successful in executing the Growing and Building Campaign, with the huge financial pressures and disparate interests of many key players, without our tenacious and recurring reliance of PDO. It held us together and focused us on a common understanding of God’s direction.” And another layer of prayer among committee leaders and OCF staff members continued throughout the entire capital campaign via the weekly “Do Not Grow Weary in Prayer and Fasting” prayer guide created and led by CAPT Jerry Hale, USCG (Ret.).

This critical pray and fast framework remains front-and-center in the ministry. In the fall of 2018, Brig Gen David Warner, USAF (Ret.), OCF’s current Executive Director, called upon members to pray and fast as the ministry works towards continued implementation of the Strategic Framework. This living framework, launched in 2017 and guiding years 2018-2022, seeks to achieve God’s vision of the military community being positively impacted through Christlike leaders by

a series of Bible studies, mentoring relationships, and new plans and programs in every corner of ministry.

OCF remains steeped in prayer. Every hiring decision is made through a “Pray, Discover, Obey” process. Field-site locations host Bible studies and small groups; OCF’s Spring Canyon and White Sulphur Springs Conference Centers host programmed fellowship meetings; and every Council meeting devotes time to prayer and discernment. Using OCF’s monthly *Power in Prayer* guide, home office staff is joined by more than 500 OCF prayer warriors in a unified concert of prayer for members, ministry events, and to discern God’s voice and direction.

It is through these efforts that the legacy of “pray and plan” comes full circle. From its early beginnings in the Army Prayer Union for Officers and Men, to the Officers’ Christian Union, to the present-day ministry of Officers’ Christian Fellowship, “Pray, Discover, and Obey” continues as a guiding principle that has allowed the ministry in God’s hands to flourish. ✠



When World War II ended, the newly-organized OCU had to decide whether and in what way it could continue to offer a Christian ministry beyond the work of the chaplains.... Eventually they decided that initial efforts would focus on the midshipmen and cadets of the service academies. In this way it was felt that the OCU would “grow up” with its members.

—More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A.

OCF's Impact of Ministry to Cadets and Midshipmen

BY OCF COMMUNICATIONS

It could be argued that the most significant milestone in the 75-year history of Officers' Christian Fellowship is the day when General Hayes Kroner and Navy officer Bill Young set sail to explore ministry opportunities at the U.S. Naval Academy. No memorial like the one Joshua set up after leading the Israelites into the Promised Land exists, “so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty” (Joshua 4:24). However, there is a spiritual one—the life-changing impact of OCF ministry still taking place at USNA, as well as at the academies of the U.S. Military, Coast Guard, and Air Force, and among ROTC at various college campuses through lay leadership.

Outreach ministry to our nation's future leaders over the decades has been monumental. Not only have the young military officer candidates been exposed to the Word of God, but they have also been strengthened through intentional fellowship and mentorship with dedicated Christian military professionals. The result is an ongoing ripple effect of lives first touched by Christ who then strive to reach others for Him.

Perhaps first at USNA was Jim Wilson, who later started OCF Bible studies as a Navy officer, served as an OCF staff rep and Council member, and eventually as a conference speaker. Years later was Citadel ROTC cadet Tom Hemingway, who was discipled by Cleo Buxton on canoe trips and later served OCF in many roles, which included Spring Canyon Conference Center director where he created Rocky

Mountain High (RMH), the outdoor leadership program for young officers.

The then-and-now impact of service academy ministries is reflected by OCF Field Staff reps CAPT James Baca, USNR, and LTC Colin Wooten, USA (Ret.). “Thirty years ago, as a midshipman at USNA and through OCF's presence there, I met Jesus Christ and some of the greatest friends of my life,” said Baca. “Over the last year and a half, Juli and I have had opportunities to see the same thing happen time and again throughout the Brigade of Midshipmen.”

Wooten and his wife, Amy, serve in the same USMA OCF post as his parents LTC Marv and Ann Wooten, USA (Ret.). Marv is a West Point graduate. The junior Wooten says one of the most exciting aspects of his work is “seeing cadets helping other cadets grow in the Lord and live a life on mission for His glory.” He explains

that one of the most powerful examples of this is captured in retired Army colonel Barry Wiley's book *Out of the Valley*, on the life of Cadet Jonathan Shine. “Jon Shine's witness for Christ was so powerful that God is still using him today,” said Wooten of the young lieutenant who died in combat in Vietnam in 1970.

Few things are more important in OCF than relationships—with God, fellow servicemen and women, and within families and community. Relational ministry at the nation's service academies and among ROTC cadets and mids is highly valued and critically important toward implementing OCF's mission of engaging military leaders in biblical fellowship and spiritual growth.

CDR Carl and Christy Crabtree, USN (Ret.), serve as the OCF Field Staff rep couple at USCGA. Carl explains, “We all



OCF archive photo

The vision of early OCU leaders to focus on ministry to cadets and midshipmen has grown sustaining roots of fellowship. Pictured here is the OCF contingent from the USNA Class of 1962, as well as Jim Wilson (back row, right), and his wife, Bessie (front row, center). Holocaust survivor, Christian speaker, and author (*The Hiding Place*) Corrie ten Boom is next to Bessie on the right.

know that ministry is about relationships, we know that leadership is about relationships, and we know that loving people in relationships is both good leadership and good ministry. God will continue to do great things through 'loving others' as we have seen here."

The relational aspect of ministry is echoed in the devoted discipling of future leaders taking place. Lt Col Steve and Rita Wade, OCF Field Staff rep couple at USAFA, share Steve's four-year journey with a cadet: engaging him in religious discussions, later praying with him to receive Jesus, and then watching him lead Bible studies and influencing others. "He was alive—it was very clear," Wade observed while discipling him. "He grew in his love for and knowledge of the Lord, desired to share the gospel with his friends, and wanted to walk in a manner worthy of his calling. As an officer, he continues to walk with the Lord and lead others to the Savior," said Wade.

Ministering to young men and women

training to be officers in a way that impacts eternity, during one of the most formative periods in their lives, is no easy feat. It must go beyond superficial Bible studies and become more than casual friendships and engagements. OCF Field Staff reps are tackling this challenge daily, as are several lay leaders serving the ROTC community, starting with LTC Greg and LTC Lucy Lane, USAR (Ret.), OCF Associate Field Staff of ROTC Ministry.

Their position was created in 2018 to revamp OCF's ministry in the vast ROTC "mission field of 40,000-50,000 cadets/mids," said Greg Lane. Although new to that position, the Lanes, as well as other OCFers, have faithfully served the ROTC community, including Tim Wiseman, East Carolina University; Gwynn and Kit Vaughan, Ohio State University; Bob McMaster, Virginia Military Institute; Tom Falconer, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs; Stephen Hobson, Liberty University; and Rob Allen, Clemson University.

OCF teams with CRU Valor and The

Navigators at several ROTC retreats across the nation, where the goal is for ROTC cadets/mids "to enhance their walk with Christ, integrate faith and profession, and see the military as their mission field where they serve as Christlike servant leaders," said Greg Lane.

The vision of early OCU leaders to focus on ministry to cadets and midshipmen has grown deep roots that sustain OCF's "for a lifetime" intent, as the story of LTC Robert Griffith, USA, illustrates: "As part of the Wheaton College ROTC detachment, I participated in small group studies with the Wheaton cadre. I found it fascinating that these career officers were both professionally sound and living a Christian life. The OCF study at ROTC Advanced Camp was a breath of fresh air. OCF taught me that there is more than just the life at the office—am I making an impact on those around me?" ✂

Spring Canyon's Front Office Manager Rebecca Sheriff contributed to this article.



[Under] the leadership of Cleo Buxton, OCU began a wide range of activities... 'Buck' believed in the effectiveness of conferences in ministering to people... Buxton began to envision something larger and better—an OCU retreat and conference center in the middle of the Rocky Mountains... In the summer of 1960, staff member Arnold Belgium heard of a site called 'Spring Canyon' for sale near Buena Vista, Colorado... southwest of Denver. By the fall of 1977... [retired Navy] Rear Admiral Bob Baughan, former president of the OCF... heard that an inn called White Sulphur Springs near Bedford, Pennsylvania, might be for sale to a Christian buyer.

—More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A.

Building up boldness for Christ through fellowship

BY REBECCA SHERIFF

Deep in the mountains of Colorado and in the rolling hills of Pennsylvania are spaces that have been set aside uniquely for the ministry of Officers' Christian Fellowship. These spaces, Spring Canyon and White Sulphur Springs, were purchased, designed, and built around the idea of gathering for fellowship, training, worship, and growth—away from the commonplaces of work and home.

The Fellowship has long believed in the power of conferences and events held outside an officer's standard environment. Cleo Buxton, OCU's first General Secretary (Executive Director), believed in the power of conference centers for training leaders, "building up the believer, evangelizing the nonbeliever, and presenting the OCU ministry to senior officers at posts and bases." During the 1950s, numerous conferences took place at various military installations across the nation and featured beloved OCU speakers including Buxton, Jim Wilson, Dr. Bob Smith, LTG William Harrison, Hudson Armerding, C.N., "Mr. Tok" Tokatoglou, and Ward Graham.

As interest in OCU-led conferences grew, so did the desire for space for OCU to call its own. In 1960, Council member Arnold Belgium brought to light the availability of Spring Canyon—a simple main lodge and a few small cabins sitting on 120 acres seven

miles west of Buena Vista, Colorado. Two years later, summer events were underway, and the Canyon has known Christian conferences and programming ever since.

The idea for an eastern conference center ministry location surfaced in 1972, and by 1977 OCF became the new owners of White Sulphur Springs—629 acres of undulating Allegheny hills in Manns Choice, Pennsylvania. The newly-minted conference center soon came into its own as a place of respite away from the harried military lifestyle throughout nearby Washington D.C., and the surrounding region.

Over the next decades, volunteer workers came out in full force many times a year to complete work projects on the historic infrastructure at both locations. New buildings to accommodate increased numbers of guests were designed, built, and dedicated. Year-round staff members were hired, and distinctive signature programming for

military active duty, guard, reserve, and retired families began to flourish. Generations have experienced the "home away from home" comfort of an OCF conference center. The generational impact is no more clearly captured than through the lives of both center directors and their families, LTC Paul Robyn, USA (Ret.), at White Sulphur Springs, and Col Kim Hawthorne, USAF (Ret.), at Spring Canyon.

Robyn first attended a retreat at WSS as a cadet at the United States Military Academy in 1989, and later returned several times while on active duty with his wife Dawn and their daughters. "We enjoyed summer programs, our daughters loved the Camp Caleb experience, and they even served on staff," he said. "We once had an eight-year gap between visits due to assignments, and my girls made sure to tell me they couldn't believe I had somehow allowed so much time to pass between visits.



OCF archive photo

Since the summer of 1962 at Spring Canyon (and later at White Sulphur Springs), OCF conference center ministry has provided ample opportunities for fellowship, recreation, and spiritual growth for the military community. Pictured here from the 1980s is a Rocky Mountain High (RMH) group at Spring Canyon.

They made me promise that we would return again the next year!”

Hawthorne met his wife, Kari Ann, at Spring Canyon in 1989, and the two were married there the following year. “During nearly 28 years of service in the Air Force, Spring Canyon became a home-away-from-home for me and my family. Over the years, we’ve built memories for a lifetime, and have been able to pass a legacy on to our children, who are third-generation attendees and staff members,” said Hawthorne.

Kari Ann’s parents, COL Don and Karen Martin, USAR (Ret.), served many years with OCF and at Spring Canyon—Don as the Director of Publications and Editor of *COMMAND* magazine from 1972-2002 and Karen as *COMMAND* Associate Editor and Graphic Designer from 1973-2011. Don also served briefly from late 1999 to early 2000 as the OCF Interim Executive Director.

When Lt Gen Bruce Fister, USAF (Ret.), became Executive Director in 2000, he spearheaded the next phase of development at both conference centers. In 2006, after a 40-day prayer vigil, the “Grow-

ing Together...Building the Future” capital campaign of infrastructure improvements and expansions at both locations was launched. The \$15 million raised and invested resulted in: 1) the construction of Heritage House at White Sulphur Springs, 2) Spring Canyon’s Veterans Memorial and new Fort Shine lodges, 3) enhanced dining and outdoor facilities at Spring Canyon, and 4) the creation of an endowment for conference center scholarships.

The OCF conference centers have long provided military members and families with static places of “home and familiarity that they don’t get to experience anywhere else,” said Robyn. “For some, it is the only constant in a sea of change.”

But while the “at-home” feel, programs, and activities of the conference centers provide brief furloughs of refreshment and renewal for attendees, the undeniable core intent is to equip military members and families and send them back out to serve God as Christlike leaders. Through summer and winter programs, leadership seminars, and specialized retreats for academies or ROTC cadets and mids, OCF’s conference centers are places where God

is encountered, relationships are strengthened, and leaders are sent out to engage in the communities to which God sends them.

Connections made at the conference centers impact military members’ lives globally. LTC John Hoyman, USAR, who serves as the Operations and Program Director at WSS, has experienced this firsthand. “While in my office in Kandahar, Afghanistan, I received an email from the OCF Home Office that a mom was concerned about her lieutenant son who was also stationed in Kandahar,” he said. “I had been a counselor at Camp Caleb for him when he was in elementary school. I contacted him right away and we met for dinner and went to Bible study together. That mother was grateful—as was I to have another brother with whom to enjoy fellowship!” ✂

About Rebecca

[Rebecca, the front office manager at Spring Canyon Retreat & Conference Center, has been in camping ministry for the past 10 years and aspires to direct her own camp in the future. Find out more at \[rebeccasheriff\]\(#\).](#)



The channel God used from the British Officers' Christian Union to America was Hayes A. Kroner.... In early 1942, an informal small group began meeting on Tuesday evenings... in Washington, D.C., to study Scripture.... Thus [this] small Bible study... was one of only a few places where American military officers could experience the Christian military fellowship long enjoyed... in the British OCU.

—More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A.

The heart of OCF: small group fellowships

BY OCF COMMUNICATIONS

Since its inception, the heart of OCF has been the small group fellowship. While OCF is comprised of more than Bible studies alone, these groups still serve as the backbone of the ministry. Small group fellowships have long been places where deeper connections and sustaining fellowship can be forged through the truth of God's Word while sharing life with other believers. They are where both officers and enlisted military men and women, and those with families, can forge lasting bonds in the name of Christ.

These groups are often places of refuge where believers can communicate the joys, struggles, and stressors of their unique lifestyle in the military community by praying for and supporting one another. A small group fellowship is where finite minds can ask hard questions and wrestle with the truth of the infinite God, where iron sharpens iron, and prayer becomes a three-braided cord that is hard to fray. Whether on bike rides, hikes, dinners, or shared potluck meals, the small group fellowship gathering is a picture of Jesus and His apostles enjoying a fish fry together on the shores on the Sea of Galilee.

None of this would happen, however, without someone—driven by the Holy Spirit and wanting to serve the Lord in a unique way—first raising his or her hand to say, "I'll lead." It's the affirmative to God's clarion call to something bigger into the unseen and echoes the prophet Isaiah's yes

to the King of kings, "Here I am! Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8).

CDR Clay Thomas, USN (Ret.), former White Sulphur Springs Conference Center director couple with wife Marty, now leads a Norfolk/Hampton Roads small group. "The local fellowship—the informal meeting of Christians opening their Bibles, reading and discussing God's Word with peers—is the principle way the gospel of Jesus Christ impacts OCF leaders," said Thomas. "My earliest mentor Cleo Buxton told me, 'Wherever you go, find an OCF group and join it; if there isn't one, start one!' With that wise encouragement, I made it a priority to be in an OCF local fellowship in every career duty assignment. There Marty and I grew in Christ more than from any other source, including regular church or chapel attendance."

Jan Frazer led a Fort Leavenworth neighborhood group for many years with

her husband, Rex. They had been invited to a Fort Bliss, Texas, "OCU Bible study with Jim and Barbara Meredith and George and Peggy Kuykendall. What a way to begin our OCF journey with solid biblical study and lasting friendships," she said. "OCF was extremely important in our spiritual growth and outreach. The studies provided exposure to God's Word in a welcoming, open and encouraging atmosphere, as well as forging the bonds of treasured relationships. I can honestly say OCF is one of my most cherished experiences."

For retired Army COL Rob Jassey and wife, Tami (the daughter of Rex and Jan Frazer), small group fellowships are very much "the family where we learn who we are, what we can do, and the dreams we can fulfill for the world around us. It is the family where our faith and hope buckets are filled to overflowing so we can be a light in a world of darkness."



OCF archive photo

The OCF small group fellowships that occur in home or in workplace studies are the heartbeat of OCF and often serve as places of refuge where believers in the military community can gather to study God's Word, and pray for, support, and encourage one another.

John Haddick, who along with wife Eva serves as an OCF team leader at Joint Base Lewis/McChord in Washington, says of the local fellowship meeting in their home, "Those who went before us took the time, effort, and caring to show us the way. So, we owe it to the Lord and to today's officers to extend the same care and teaching to them. That is primary. The members of the group learn leadership by leading in our Bible study and prayer times."

OCF's vision of "the military community positively impacted through Christlike leaders" may be most initially attainable in the small group fellowship setting. Consider COL Al Shine, USA (Ret.), a long-time local leader in the Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, community. Through Bible study, fellowship, and discipleship, Shine passionately ministers as a lay leader to students attending the United States Army War College (USAWC) so "they will be committed to Christian officership at the

senior level, and have the vision to support, train, mentor, and disciple junior officers." His passion to flame Christlike leadership qualities into others is fueled by his own experiences as a junior officer as others poured into him.

"As a new second lieutenant in Infantry Officer Basic at Fort Benning, some of my peers and I were brought into a Bible study of senior officers and their spouses," said Shine. "In addition to deep study of the Word, I saw in them examples of clearly successful, professional officers living out their faith openly and without compromise—something Sandra and I sought to follow during our 27 years of active duty and on into retirement."

Some snapshots of OCF members living out their faith include deployed members who organized drives for food, clothing, gifts, and school supplies they delivered while off duty, and not without risk, to remote villages; midshipmen and cadets

spending spring break on the mission field in third world countries; or a group of Marine second lieutenants at NAS Pensacola who pooled their resources to support Coast Guard enlisted families that went without pay during the recent government shutdown.

Technical Sergeant Ryan Padgett, USAF, one of four OCF local leaders at Travis Air Force Base in California, serves as a conduit of the living water of Christ to his community affected by devastating wildfires in 2017 and to those in his small group walking through the fiery flames of life.

Padgett shared the story of Air Force airman Bailey Adams: "I had been going through a rough patch in my life and was making decisions that weren't beneficial for others or me. My life was in danger because of my behavior and my mindset. OCF is now my family and I am more than thankful and blessed to have met Ryan Padgett and the rest of the group." ✝



Centers of Mass

[Field staff members] were considered critical to the effective functioning of the Fellowship. The executive director and the council pursued an aggressive growth policy in the 1970s...to place staff representatives at strategic locations, including all the service academies as well as service schools such as Maxwell Air Force Base... [and] at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

—More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A

OCF's key strategic gateways for ministry impact

BY OCF COMMUNICATIONS

Highly trained and ready to respond at a moment's notice—that is our nation's Armed Forces. In a profession of continual training and education that keeps the edge of combat readiness sharp and effective at all times, ongoing growth and development to maintain and improve that combat preparedness is a must. With the rise in rank and responsibility as a military career marches on in time, so too comes the necessary preparation for greater leadership responsibilities and skill sets.

The revolving doors of Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, NAS Pensacola in Florida, and Maxwell-Gunter AFB in Alabama, are open to military men and women who fly in for training and education and jet out to new assignments. They are not entirely unlike those of Fort Leavenworth in the 1800s, where the Army post served as a temporary destination station for soldiers, settlers, trappers, and preachers passing through to new opportunities elsewhere.

It's at those tactical training and education locations, or where large numbers of people are stationed, such as the Puget Sound region in Washington state, home to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, the West Coast's largest military installation, that the greatest opportunities exist for reaching others for Christ. It's also at these military communities where another form of continuing education can take place—growth

and maturity in Christ, of being equipped to reach others for Him when military life moves you elsewhere.

As Dr. Robert Spoele wrote about Fort Leavenworth OCF's launch into ministry in *More Than Conquerors*, "God had given George Kuykendall a vision of strategic importance at Fort Leavenworth in penetrating the world with the Good News of Christ. The Army, and other military services, brought in leaders from all areas of the world to this post, then sent them out again to positions of power and authority, where they remained in contact with younger officers and the enlisted."

Now serving as the OCF Field Staff rep couple at Fort Leavenworth are LTC Jim and Christina Harbridge, USA. "From the early 1970s, the Fort Leavenworth ministry has been one of OCF's most dynamic, robust, and productive ministries area,

with world-wide impact through OCF," said Harbridge. "Strongly connected to the local chapel community, and first initiated by OCF staff pioneers Dr. George and Peggy Kuykendall, the ministry supported deeply committed lay leaders. Mid-grade officers were served and sent out globally with the primary goal of seasoning the U.S. military with Christ-honoring leaders."

With Maxwell-Gunter AFB in Alabama tagged by OCF leaders in the late 1980s as "a key strategic gateway for OCF outreach," in 1992 the OCF Council approved Col Charles and Tilley Cox, USAF (Ret.) as OCF Field Staff reps there. As reported in *More Than Conquerors*, "Under their leadership, OCF at Maxwell became a vibrant, sustained ministry with numerous Bible studies [and] was integrated into the chapel program."

Now continuing under the leadership



OCF Pensacola photo

Tactical training and education locations have long served as key OCF strategic locations to equip the U.S. military worldwide with Christ-honoring leaders. Small group Bible studies, such as this one at NAS Pensacola, are one of the critical components of ministry efforts.

of OCF Field Staff reps Maj Tim and Kim Tormey, USMC (Ret.), Bible studies remain a crucial ministry offering available to military professionals coming through Maxwell-Gunter for training and education.

“It is a real joy to see men and women step into the breach and go outside their comfort zone, and to see God at work,” said Tormey. For example, one Air Command and Staff College student stepped in to lead the weekly Christian leadership breakfast. “I had shoulder surgery and needed someone to lead the study in my absence. Justin volunteered to lead, and he led an excellent study on the tensions between love and obedience, and between justice and mercy.”

Col Chet Arnold, USMC (Ret.), was once a flight student at Pensacola. Over 35 years ago he arrived with his bride of one week, Michelle. Now the Arnolds serve there as the OCF Field Staff rep couple. Their ministry efforts are centered on newly commissioned Navy, Marine, Coast Guard, and Air Force officers assigned to aviation training and “use Bible study fellowships and mentoring for individuals and couples to foster relationships that allow us to genuinely ‘spur one another on to love and good deeds’” (Hebrews 10:24).

For example, Arnold met with a “hard-charging ensign” who wanted to meet over coffee to discuss his disbelief of the Word of God as trustworthy and applicable to everyday life. He shared that “within a couple months the ensign’s questions went from those of a skeptic to those of one who now sees the living God in the Bible,” said Arnold. “Not long after arriving at his next duty station, he started a Bible study for the junior officers in his squadron.”

In the Pacific northwest, Washington is a coastal land mass “of interconnected marine waterways and basin,” where OCF’s family outreach work is led by Col Larry and Bobbie Simpson, USAF (Ret.). The Simpsons have used their location to engage the region’s geological interconnectedness with ministry outreach and development from Joint Base Lewis-McChord out to the many sea service installations and units.

Their family outreach work of counseling runs the gamut from one-on-one mentoring to pre-marriage counseling to leading the Art of Parenting curriculum for couples stationed at JBLM. An annual Puget Sound regional picnic brings together military service men and women,

including those with families, for a “great time of Christian camaraderie,” said Simpson, where attendees “offer testimony to God’s working in their lives.”

The Simpsons see their ministry calling as “walking the narrow path together” and with others, such as the active duty singles, couples, and spouses “God has providentially brought into our lives to extend His love, grace and truth at the right time,” said Simpson. “We have seen mountains moved in response to prayer and walls rebuilt through obedience.”

As envisioned early on by OCF leaders, the ongoing ministry efforts over the decades at these strategic military locations are vitally important and require a team effort involving OCF Field Staff reps and lay-led leaders.

“The importance of Christ-centered fellowship cannot be overstated. Central to realizing OCF’s vision is Christian military leaders gathering together to pray and to encourage one another in God’s Word,” said Arnold. “OCF must actively connect members to a vibrant local leader network. In this way, members are encouraged and equipped to positively impact the military society for Christ.”



We seek to support and encourage chaplains. Local or ship-based chapel activities offer prime venues for Christ-centered outreach and service to a military community. OCF acknowledges the chaplain's responsibility for and authority in local Command Religious Programs. Thus, we support chapel-sponsored and workplace ministry activities through prayer, encouragement, and participation. By cooperating with and assisting chaplains and lay leaders, we seek to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the entire military society.

—OCF's Spiritual Pillars, Article IV of the OCF Constitution—Supporting the Chaplaincy

'We understand the value of having a chaplaincy'

BY OCF COMMUNICATIONS

If there's one thing the ministry of OCF emphasizes most to its members, it's that their service in the Armed Forces is beyond a duty, job, or career—it is a calling straight from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Commander in Chief of the universe Himself. No matter where—in housing, in a unit, at a base, or aboard a ship—God has assigned Christian men and women in uniform the high privilege of doing kingdom work for Him in the vast, unique mission field of the military community.

Long a mainstay of the ministry of OCF, support of the chaplaincy is one of the key ways OCF members can effectively serve Christ. Supporting those in the office of the chaplaincy charged with the spiritual care of those who serve our nation means that OCF demonstrates that “we understand the value of having a chaplaincy supporting our free exercise of religion,” said Col Hous Waring, USA (Ret.), OCF Director of Field Operations, in his November 2018 Leader Touch e-newsletter. “What a joy that our nation assigns people to ensure religious accommodation without mandating a denomination, creed, or spiritual allegiance. Since every chaplain is charged to be an advocate for the free exercise of religion and freedom of speech, leaders ought to intentionally seek out chaplains as advisors and counselors, especially in matters where there is an intersection of faith, family, and profession.”

An important distinction of OCF's encouraging its members to support the chaplaincy is that it “doesn't require a check to see whether we agree theologically with our chaplains,” Waring emphasizes. “We are Christian leaders who love every chaplain; we care about them; and we check in to see how they're doing. You might be the only leader who takes time to see how your chaplain is really doing.

“It usually takes time to build relational trust, so build that relationship by regularly checking in and sharing with the chaplain how you are doing,” said Waring.

While the military is reflective of our secular society's loss of Judeo-Christian moorings, there are also doors of great opportunity opening up for God to be glorified with ever greater clarity. Christian chaplains need Christian laborers alongside them. “My experience is that chaplains today have less and less time for what

you would call ‘Christian ministry efforts,’” said CH(LTC) Fred Robinson, USA (Ret.). “They're consumed with staff requirements, training, counseling, etc. And most secular commanders do not care that much about ministry either, unless chaplains can show that their programs are well supported and are meeting the spiritual needs of their unit or garrison.

“If chaplains value ministries such as Bible studies, Sunday school, etc., and would like some help from someone trustworthy, an OCF member can work to gain that trust. But that is a big if, because not all chaplains want help from OCFers. You will have to meet them to find out,” said Robinson.

“Even if some theological differences exist,” says CAPT Bill Weimer, CHC, USN (Ret.), “focus on Christ while reaching out to meet, befriend and encourage them. Chaplains can feel lonely at times.”



Photo by Janell Deckard

OCF members can effectively serve Christ by intentionally reaching out to the chaplains of that office in many way that include praying with and for them, inviting them to functions, or offering to assist with religious activities. At the U.S. Army ROTC Cadet Summer Training each summer at Fort Knox, Kentucky, OCF members assist the chaplaincy in many ways to help provide Bible studies to the cadets.

Some of the ways Chaplain Weimer was supported while serving as a chaplain included lay leaders “praying for my ministries and me, as well as for my spouse and family, and offering to assist and supplement my command religious program (CRP) ministries,” he said. “But being befriended and encouraged as a fellow military member and shipmate was also very important to me.”

“Over the years, I have been undergirded by several ‘military prayer’ types of groups,” said CH(LTC) Erik Gramling, USA. “The best support they gave me aside from prayer was sending me ‘convoy kit’ bags of goodies and literature. When I was in a transportation unit in Kuwait, we had the line-haul mission in and out of Iraq every day. Over the period of my 15-month deployment, my assistant and I personally prayed for more than 500 convoys and gave each truck a convoy kit in the name of Christ!”

The ripple effect of ministry that can take place when OCF members step forward in support of the chaplaincy is demonstrated at Fort Knox, Kentucky, as exemplified by

LTC Bob Deckard, USA (Ret.), and the late LTC Dan Dantzler, USA (Ret.). “When I was APMS at University of Illinois Campaign-Urbana, I met Dan, who was OCF’s local leader at Fort Knox,” says Deckard. “We got permission from the chaplains to place OCF materials on the in-processing table. That summer was the humble beginning of the ROTC cadet summer ministry at Fort Knox.

A rich opportunity to reach others for Christ takes place there every year when some 10,000 cadets come through to attend the U.S. Army ROTC Cadet Summer Training. When Chaplain Gramling arrived at Fort Knox’s U.S. Army Cadet Command, he met “Bob, Lola, and Janell Deckard, who were ministering to provide Bible studies to cadets during summer training. They organized the volunteers and developed the training. It was my joy to work with them to take this ministry to the next level.”

“There is no way I could provide such a robust study each summer without my OCF brothers and sisters,” said Gramling, who as the U.S. Army Cadet Command

Chaplain at Fort Knox considers the religious support provided to the cadets as “our main mission.”

To chaplains hesitant to accept the support of OCF members, Robinson urges, “you will find few other organizations that will provide you as much ministry support as OCF. They will support your commander’s ministry programs as volunteers and willingly serve as Bible study leaders, Sunday School teachers, service ushers, and parish council members.

“At your request, they will also meet with you personally for prayer or just to be a friend. This can be a win/win, because a helpful OCF member under your supervision can make you look good to your commander by assisting your unit programs to be vibrant and well supported,” he said.

Taught as a cadet by an OCF mentor to reach out to chaplains, Waring relates his story of stopping by the chaplain’s office after arriving at his first assignment. “Before departing, I asked the chaplain if I could pray for him. He wept as he told me no one had ever come into his office and asked to pray for him.”



As the 50th anniversary of OCF drew near... it was apparent that the Spirit of God had worked powerfully. That first Bible study in 1943 had expanded both in number and in spiritual influence within the U.S. military... [there were] over 350 Bible studies... field staff had grown... [a] strategic goal for the year 2000 was in place....

—More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A.

Seeking and trusting God for the 'God-sized' things

BY OCF COMMUNICATIONS

When Officers' Christian Fellowship celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1993, the World Wide Web (with just over 500 websites) had been online in the U.S. for only for two years. Fast forward to today, and the astronomical tech explosion has drastically changed the way humanity communicates.

While OCF continually considers and reexamines how it connects with the military community, especially with its young members having grown up teething on technology, what remains constant is staying focused on God and His truth. As Dr. Donald W. Ekstrand writes in *Common Pitfalls in Ministry*, when we “are not abiding in Christ,... our efforts will not accomplish anything spiritually,” rendering “man-made tools, techniques, programs, and resources” powerless.

OCF's plans and programs to fuel God's objective of Christlike leaders impacting the military community utilize technological and printed resources, as well as the tried and true of relational ministry.

Integrated Faith Project: In 2018, OCF launched the Integrated Faith Project (IF Project), an online resource. It is OCF's foundational teaching that provides a biblical framework for the integration of faith in Christ into all aspects of military life to encourage and equip members to serve “on-mission” for Him. Facilitator and par-

ticipant guides and an animated video can be downloaded for each of the domains: personal transformation, family, profession, and community relationships.

OCF Crosspoint podcast: While OCF has utilized print and digital communications channels for years, the newest channel for delivering ministry was introduced in January 2018, when OCF launched an audio podcast called Crosspoint. The bi-weekly podcast focuses on sharing stories of military life at the intersection of faith, family, and profession. Senior Designer Josh Jackson acts as host and producer of the show, and other OCF staff members have stepped in as hosts from time to time. If you have an idea for a guest, topic, or story you'd like us to consider for a future episode, send an email to podcast@ocfusa.org. The podcast can be found in such places as Apple Podcasts and Spotify, or by pointing your browser to ocfusa.org/crosspoint.

Timothy and Paul: Just as Timothy

needed a Paul to encourage him to greater growth and maturity, OCF seeks to prepare aspiring leaders to thrive in their early post-commissioning years by connecting them with authentic OCF fellowship both for personal development and for service. Specifically focused on junior officers to help equip them for Christlike service in the military, it's intended to engage OCF staff, mid- and senior-grade leaders, and retirees as partners in junior officer leader development.

Warrior Connect: In November 2014, an OCF volunteer began welcoming new members to the ministry through a phone call and email ensuring that their questions are answered and they are linked up locally with other OCF members. Three more volunteers were added as official OCF Warrior Connect Greeters in April 2015. The program has continued to grow, and more volunteers are welcome.

OCF Hosting Ministry: It was suggested that a valuable resource for leaders



USMA OCF photo

Just as Timothy needed a Paul to encourage him to greater growth and maturity, the “Warm Handoff” event earlier this year at USMA OCF is designed to connect post-commissioned junior officers with OCF staff, mid- and senior-grade leaders, and retirees as partners in leader development and for authentic OCF fellowship.

moving to a new location and unable to provide a place to meet for fellowship would be to arrange for a local Host who could. The OCF Hosting ministry is a way for established members to be a Host, who is not the local leader but who provides a stable meeting location for recurring fellowship activities that aren’t inhibited by limiting factors.

NCOs: OCF Council passed a motion in 2015 affirming the significant role that senior noncommissioned officers play in Christian military leadership development and ministering effectively to the military society. OCF is currently engaging with senior NCOs to explore how the ministry can build and then promote bridges of relationship between Christians serving as officers and senior NCOs to reach the entire military society.

Focus on Lay Leaders: OCF’s Certificate of Incorporation established a lay-indigenous ministry “...by officers currently serving, or who have served... to help all ranks, grades and ratings come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ... for their mutual improvement and growth in grace.” Since 1943, the OCF staff focus has been to en-

courage and equip military leaders in the field to live integrated lives such that the gospel of Jesus Christ informs all aspects of their lives.

Strategic Framework 2018-2022: Much like OCF’s 50th anniversary strategic plan for the year 2000, keeping the ministry moving forward is the intent of OCF’s current Strategic Framework. Its bold goal: that OCF be increasingly recognized as a premier Christian military leader development organization. Its core four Lines of Effort (LOEs) are:

1. Engaging Military Community—engage the entire military community through OCF members willing to be visible at the local level and to be “findable” in OCF’s web-based directory. OCFers are called to spend time, energy, finances, prayer, and themselves for the sake of their neighbor, and should be members of a local church or chapel body.

2. Growing Christian Military Leaders—provide tiered leader development from a Christ-centered, biblically based perspective through traditional, creative, and technological means to produce lead-

ers who integrate faith and profession to model true biblical servant leadership. Resources include the IF Project; OCF Crosspoint podcasts; toolkits for local leaders, small group facilitators, and junior officer leaders; webinars; regional training conferences; and mentoring model.

3. Ministry Delivery—adopt flexible, repeatable, and sustainable methods for teaching, training, and equipping military leaders to glorify God through their personal lives, professional excellence, and military leadership through podcasting, blogging, video production, social media, website, online Bible studies, brochures, booklets, e-newsletters, and COMMAND magazine.

4. Stewardship—intentionally and transparently steward our people, finances and facilities in accordance with best ministry and business practices to serve and ensure ministry viability, growth, and sustainability: USNA Maranatha Mansion, Spring Canyon kitchen, USMA Fellowship House, USCGA Shepherd’s Fold, increase and diversify funding streams, implement ministry-wide financial systems and processes. ✖



In June 1950, the OCU adopted a new constitution. It established the first OCU governing council, which was to begin [in] 1951... The new OCU constitution was approved on 1 May 1953. Besides specifying a new statement of faith for members [and three classes of membership] ... the council would be elected by the membership.

—From *More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A.*

Leading with wisdom and a heart for the military community

BY OCF COMMUNICATIONS

In France's Chartres Cathedral of 167 stained glass windows are four panes featuring one New Testament gospel writer standing on the shoulders of one of the four major Old Testament prophets. In the OCF's CONNECTED newsletter (Winter 2006/07), Lt Gen Bruce Fister, USAF (Ret.), speculated about the artist's intent. He surmised the depiction was that the gospel writers were seeing "Christ, the Messiah, about whom the prophets only spoke."

Fister attributed that symbolism as representative of Officers' Christian Fellowship, a ministry "on the shoulders of... 'giants' whose legacy we have inherited and whose vision we have seen and chased after." He wrote, "[It's] as much a testimony to their labor as it is a record of anything we have done."

Included among the then-Officers' Christian Union giants of visionaries, teachers, and ardent supporters are the OCF Council presidents who served the longest-terms—BG Hayes Kroner, USA; LTG William Harrison Jr., USA; and MG Clay Buckingham, USA—who led the OCF Council, which has fiduciary responsibility over the entire ministry as its governing body. Because the OCF Council's deliberations have far-reaching implications, all decisions made have weighed heavily upon on the shoulders of all those serving on the Council, which the OCF Governance Manual underscores: "The OCF Council and its members are corporately and indi-

vidually responsible for all of the ministry and activities of OCF and for its ultimate success or failure in achieving its stated Mission and Vision."

The current OCF Council President is Maj Gen Mel Spiese, USMC (Ret.), who has served in that post since 2014. He leads as many as 21 other council members of military officers elected by their U.S. military officer peers—the Regular membership of OCF. The OCF Council meets in the spring and fall each year, and alternates between OCF's two conference center sites of White Sulphur Springs in Pennsylvania and Spring Canyon in Colorado. The Council has one employee, the OCF Executive Director, Brig Gen David Warner, USAF (Ret.). Warner has managed OCF for the Council since 2010 and leads a team of staff members in the home office and out in the field, as well as volunteers.

With prayer's prominence woven throughout the history of OCF, Spiese and his colleagues begin with intentional

prayer, which continues throughout the entire meeting. They seek to be obedient and deliberate with biblical thinking in their business discussions, which include policies, programs, and budgets.

Each seated OCF Council member accepts a responsibility, which, according to the Governance Manual, "requires wisdom, discernment, judgment, a heart for the military community," and God-given spiritual qualities. Because most council members are active-duty military, often in key positions, their service to OCF is sacrificial servant leadership. In addition to time, travel, and multifaceted pre-meeting preparation and demands, the meetings themselves can come with "iron sharpening iron" situations within themselves and toward one another.

"The telling mark of any person or organization is not that they can avoid the conflict that inevitably and sometimes should arise. It's how conflict is handled when it happens," said Lt Col Kate Veseth Toms,



Photo by Susan Wallis

Wisdom, discernment, judgment, a heart for the military community are among the responsibilities OCF Council members accept as being a part of the OCF governing body with fiduciary responsibility over the entire ministry. Here the Council prays for Brig Gen David and Lori Warner, USAF (Ret.), the OCF Executive Director couple.

USAF, of her time on the Council. “OCF Council deals with conflict very well. If and when discussions start getting heated, the council tables the issue, and re-vectors to prayer. This humbles hearts and puts matters into perspective before a holy God. I’ve seen apologies freely exchanged, issues reconciled, consensus achieved. It’s really quite beautiful.”

Spiese’s journey to becoming the OCF Council president started by his discovering “OCF late in my career as colonel” at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Spiese was mentored and profoundly impacted by Dr. George Kuykendall and attended his discipleship breakfasts. “To experience fellow military members in uniform—particularly general officers—speaking about faith in profession was life-changing,” he said. The subsequent “Spring Canyon experience” of OCF’s conference center ministry was “a washing over of our family as we supported OCF and were active participants.

“The Council experience has caused a change in my perspective from taking from the ministry all the good it offers to having a responsibility for the ministry and those

involved in it,” said Spiese. “In my conversations with ‘giants of the ministry’ such as (OCF Bible teacher and speaker) Dr. C.N. “Mr. Tok” Tokatloglou, (former Spring Canyon director) Tom Hemingway, and others, I realized the passion for and responsibility of caring for the ministry and preserving it while dealing with some of the challenges.”

OCF Council member LCDR Gordon Hood, USCG, exemplifies the “for a lifetime” intent of participating in OCF activities, as well as the paying-it-forward responsibility for future generations. “As a cadet, I was in a position through OCF to observe married junior officers who were living out their integrated faith in the fleet. As a junior officer, with my wife Arlene, I watched midgrade officers serving in command and advancing in their career who were also raising young children,” said Hood. “Now with children of our own, we look to senior officers who are preparing their teenagers for a life of godly service while leading large units and strategic missions in the security and defense of our nation.

“Serving on the OCF Council has afford-

ed me the rewarding opportunity to help govern the organization and posture it to fulfill its mission,” Hood said.

While the work of the OCF Council is largely unseen, its earnest efforts fueled by intentionality to seek God in prayer are felt throughout the ministry as it strives to determine OCF’s strategic direction. “I saw that prayer is the firm foundation of OCF. Decisions, discussions, deliberations—everything is bathed in prayer,” said Toms. “Council recognizes that the ministry is God’s. We OCFers just get to be a part of His work, and that’s really cool.”

The OCF Council governs and oversees a ministry that asks its military leaders to serve as God’s laborers in the field doing the work of loving others with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Spiese says that “personal faith—for both my wife and me—changed profoundly through Fort Leavenworth OCF. It was a transformation from believing in a dead God to a personal relationship with a living God and understanding the disciplines I will take to the grave and beyond. I can’t imagine this change happening in my life without OCF.”



Field Staff

God has empowered and provided as His Word promises He will do. The challenge facing the Officers' Christian Fellowship... is to rely on God's strength and to walk in vital union with Him as we live for Christ in the military community.

—More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A.

Strategic 'touch points' to reach the military community

BY OCF COMMUNICATIONS

Early on in OCU, leaders recognized the necessity for strategically placed field staff reps at the service academies, military career education centers and centers of mass, and the conference centers. These OCF staff members in the field are what Col Hous Waring, USAF (Ret.), OCF Director of Field Ministries, calls “intentional touch points to teach, train, equip, and exhort others to spend their lives for the souls of men and women in uniform.”

The focus of the ministry of OCF has been, and will continue to be, that of teaching, training, and encouraging its members to “be the ones who do the work of reaching others in the name of Christ,” says Waring. He contends that OCF is distinctive from other Christian ministries: “Other ministries are represented by their staff members, while in OCF it is the member, not the staff, who represents the ministry of OCF in a local context.”

Waring is emphatic about what OCF membership really is and the expectations for it. “OCF is not here simply to give benefits. OCF is here to challenge us to go share the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's about lay leaders and participants living our lives to be spent for souls, learning how to serve God while in uniform, all the while submitting to governing authorities.”

Over the decades, the military men and women filtering through locations where OCF has field staff presence have had God's truth poured into their lives by OCF

Field staff reps so, in turn, they pour into the lives with whom they live, work, and serve. COMMAND asked OCF Field Staff rep couples what they are looking forward to God doing in the future:

Fort Leavenworth

LTC Jim and Christian Harbridge, USA

In 2019 and beyond, we intend to expand our support of Christian officers beyond those on post or attending chapel; reach out to help several local churches expand their understanding of the issues and needs facing military officers and their families and offer OCF tools to help them meet those needs; and focus on outreach to our Catholic parish and the enlisted community.

Maxwell-Gunter AFB

Maj Tim and Kim Tormey, USMC (Ret.)

After spending time in prayer and consternation asking God who was going to help with the daunting tasks ahead of me,

I received this email: “My wife and I have a heart for the military. Although not having served in the military, we can vouch for a life filled with deployments, loss of life, dealing with destructive forces, and all of the other administrative and leadership amenities in a paramilitary setting in fire- and disaster-prone California. Let me know if or how we can be of service to you and to those who serve with honor, integrity, and distinction. We want to bless those who serve for God's glory.” Through servants like Mike and his wife Marie, God is building a local leadership TEAM to equip and encourage military leaders to Christlike service.

NAS Pensacola

Col Chet & Michelle Arnold, USMC (Ret.)

Our focus here is sea service and Air Force officers in aviation training. Once trained, these newly-minted professionals leave for platform-specific training and then on to their first operational assignment. We work

with fellow OCF staff, members and others in military ministry for a positive handoff to Christ-centered fellowship for these young men and women. In the future, we plan to visit more of the installations and Bible fellowships where these aviators are assigned. Our goal is to strengthen the network of like-minded Christian military leaders willing and able to lead and mentor others.

Family Outreach & Puget Sound

Col Larry & Bobbie Simpson, USAF (Ret.) (retiring from OCF in 2020)

With fully grateful hearts we have discovered in our 12 plus years with OCF that walking the narrow path (Matthew 7:14) together and with others is our ministry calling. As these precious military members and families come to our hearts, we are reminded "... that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:6, NIV). It is with great reluctance we leave, but also with exceeding joy, as we look back at how God has orchestrated our years here to challenge and grow us spiritually.

Spring Canyon

Col Kim & Kari Ann Hawthorne, USAF (Ret.)

In the 57 years of its existence, Spring Canyon has been a place where guests experience God's presence. Now and into the future people will come here to reconnect in the Rockies to old friends, family, and most importantly to God. Spring Canyon's upgraded and new facilities have laid the foundation for the next 75+ years as we refresh, equip, and inspire military leaders and their families to serve at the intersection of faith, family, profession, and community.

USAFA

Lt Col Steve & Rita Wade, USAF (Ret.) (retiring from OCF in 2020)

By God's grace, we are laboring to develop cadets into Christlike leaders who will positively impact the military community. We strive to enable our future Christian officers to integrate their faith in Christ in their personal, professional, and community lives in these areas: biblical knowledge and godly perspectives for all of life; biblical skills; conviction to walk as men and women of God; commitment to multiplication discipleship; commitment to live in Christian community; and continual spiritual influence.



USAFA OCF photo

Since the 1970s and strongly continuing to today, OCF Field staff rep couples have served as "intentional touch points" in service to God through the kingdom work He's given the ministry. These men and women teach and exhort those in the military community toward becoming Christlike leaders who vie for the "souls of men and women in uniform."

USCGA

CDR Carl & Christy Crabtree, USN (Ret.)

The vision God has given me is to see a multitude of officers who understand we need three relationships as leaders: 1) a Paul, that mature mentor you can call on for affirmation, encouragement, wisdom, and prayer; 2) a Barnabas, that prayer partner or battle buddy—probably the most important and that you must get with each move; and 3) a Timothy, a mentee. You have something God has shown you to share with someone else.

USMA

LTC Colin & Amy Wooten, USA (Ret.)

What is on my heart is how the Body of Christ who serve in the military can better unite and coordinate ministry for His glory. Specifically, how can the OCF team here reach out to those in ROTC and other Army locations? We have invigorated our relationships with the wonderful OCF leaders at nine installations where USMA graduates typically attend initial branch training. I was thrilled to have visited a couple of these locations and see the fruit OCF can have, such as a Bible study started by USMA 2LTs to their peers at Fort Benning, GA.

USNA

CAPT James & Juli Baca, USNR

The second semester is always a time of change in OCF as the new officers are elected and the first class midshipmen graduate. We're looking forward to sending the mids off to be local lay leaders in the fleet through the Timothy Movement. We are also eager to see how OCF works to serve the ROTC units near USNA.

White Sulphur Springs

LTC Paul & Dawn Robyn, USA (Ret.)

I love the metaphor of White Sulphur Springs and Spring Canyon as spiritual 'depots.' The military understands the role a depot plays, where units can be rearmed, refit, refueled, repaired, and sent back out ready to fight. Our conference centers are the places where OCF families can come to be refreshed, encouraged, and launched back out to continue serving as Christlike leaders. I am looking forward to continually finding fresh ways to ensure that everyone spending time at WSS leaves energized and ready for the adventure that awaits. I'm excited to see how the Lord will continue to use WSS to be a blessing. 🙌



As the 50th anniversary of OCF drew near the end of 1993, it was apparent that the Spirit of God had worked powerfully through the Fellowship during those five decades. That first small Bible study had expanded both in numbers and in its spiritual influence within the U.S. military... [It is impossible] to measure the impact of the Holy Spirit through the OCF ministry on the lives of military people...

—More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A.

'OCF played a role in my Christian life'

BY OCF COMMUNICATIONS

The 75-year history of the ministry of Officers' Christian Fellowship could very well be summed up as God working through men and women desiring to make an eternal difference, who reach out in faith to invite someone to a small group Bible study, retreat, or workplace breakfast—and forever impact a life, such as retired Army colonel Fred Stubbs. “After three short tours in five years and two children born between each tour, I found myself working up to 14 hours a day in the Pentagon. It is an understatement to say my marriage was, at best, strained,” said Fred of he and his wife, Ilene. “An OCF couple stepped into our lives, inviting us to an OCF Bible study, where we learned that a Dr. Bob Smith would be speaking on marriage at a conference in Virginia,” recalled Stubbs. “We decided to give it a try. In short, our marriage and lives began a transformation that forever changed us.” That is but one story among the innumerable, as written by others throughout the history of OCF—of the power of God to eternally change lives. Read more stories from those impacted by OCF, including a timeline of some key events in the ministry of OCF:

Susie Palm Wort

My most impactful OCF memory was attending the 1961 OCU International Conference in Berchtesgaden, Germany, at age 13 with my parents Ira and Helen Palm. I remember being moved by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit among us—all ages, all nationalities—and by the beauty of God's mountains around us, highlighted by verses from Psalm 121 in the front of our meeting room, “I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth” (vv 1-2, KJV).

Paula Spoede Halvorson

OCF has been pivotal in my life. I was born into an OCF family, and my spiritual heritage has its roots deep in the organization. That is no doubt my greatest gain—the salvation of my parents and the subsequent teaching and discipleship in my life. But I began to wonder what the purpose of our organization was. Then at one of the retreat centers, as person after person from my life walked through the doors, I realized that OCF was more than a small group, it was my neighborhood. For a child growing up in a transient lifestyle that was of inestimable value. OCF is roots, both spiritual and relational.

Bob Caslen

OCF has provided both a guiding light and an incredible fellowship for both my wife Shelly and me, throughout a 43-year career that had numerous successes and trials in both peace and war. OCF's values and principles are fundamentally based on biblical truths through the teachings of Jesus Christ, and they have been so helpful in the leadership we provided, the relationships we have made, and in dealing with both success and failures along the way. The fellowship of OCF believers has always been there, shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm.

OCF Snapshots

1851—The need for a prayer fellowship among service members is voiced by Captain John Trotter of the British Forces following a dangerous, isolated tour in India. The fellowship known as the Army Prayer Union for Officers and Men merges with the Naval Prayer Union and becomes the Army-Navy Prayer Union.

1920—OCU associate member groups begin praying for OCU members and associates to spring up in other countries, such as one in Scotland praying God will raise up an OCU in the United States.

1938—Through a British general and friend, Brigadier General Hays Kroner meets OCU's Captain Hartley Holmes. They conclude that God wants an OCU started in the United States in the early 1940s; BG Kroner opens up his Washington, D.C., home on Tuesday evenings for Bible study and prayer.

1943—Encouraged by the British OCU, BG Kroner, MAJ Gordon Nichol, and attorney Irwin Linton file documents on 31 December to incorporate Officers' Christian Union of the United States of America. OCU spreads as members serve across the globe during World War II.

1945-46—BG Kroner visits the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis after it is decided that OCU's initial efforts will be focused on the midshipmen and cadets of the service academies.

1946—Early outreach ministries get underway at Annapolis and West Point; OCU leaders begin an occasional publication, The OCU BULLETIN, which eventually becomes COMMAND magazine.

1948—The first OCU banquet of Navy midshipmen and West Point cadets takes place after the Army-Navy game in Philadelphia. *The banquet continues to this day!*



WSS photo

The ripple effect of one life changed that transforms generations to come is retold over and over again in OCF, such as in the life of COL Fred Stubbs, USA (Ret.) (right), who is pictured with his son-in-law COL Tim Wiseman, USA (Ret.), and grandson, Chris.

Emanuel Williams

I was stationed in Germany commanding a rifle company. I served as the chapel organist, but that was the extent of my involvement in military ministry. I was invited by a warrant officer to attend an OCU Bible study. That invitation led to my first experience in participating in a Bible study composed of officers and their wives. The fact that there were respected officers serving in critical assignments who openly acknowledged their faith was a great encouragement to me. My involvement with OCF drastically changed my understanding of what it meant to be a Christian officer in the Armed Forces, that serving as an officer and living a committed Christian life were not mutually exclusive.

Lorraine Pettijohn

My life is different because of OCF! My husband Paul established a personal relationship with Jesus Christ because of an OCF Bible study group. Our daughters began going regularly to OCF conference centers when they were infants. As teenagers, they served on the volunteer staffs at the conference centers. Now, my grandchildren have attended and/or served on staff. Observing and interacting with godly and accomplished OCF members in various venues has been an incalculable encouragement! Who can measure the difference that has made in our family!

Robert Van Antwerp

OCF has been my "life group" since receiving Jesus in 1977. In small group Bible studies, as a Council member, and at conference centers, I have been blessed by being in the Word, in fellowship, and mentored by those on a similar journey.

Steve Shambach

In Germany, a couple of lieutenants invited me to their home Bible study. They had a personal relationship with Him that I did not have. Since then, many mentors in OCF have encouraged my faith growth. Ray Porter and many others

Continued on next page →



Memories & Milestones

impacted my life, as well as my former boss Robert Van Antwerp, who has been a singular example of how to faithfully live out your faith.

Rob Jassey

When we think of OCF, Tami and I think of two things: the source of the friendships we built over the years via weekly Bible studies, and Spring Canyon—our family-chosen, grandparents-included vacation spot. There our boys grew into young men; we bonded as an extended family. But OCF is about the people, whether then-Major Tom and Jean Schmidt at Fort Riley, Kansas, in 1981, or the Goldsmiths, Oroszs, Prinzingers, and Bergers in Huntsville, Alabama, in 2018. It is knowing we're never alone, always prayed for, and continuously blessed.

Bill Law

I joined OCF in 1965 after COL Warren Schilling took me from Fort Bliss to Spring Canyon Conference Center. I was on pots and pans duty there when my partner at the sink introduced himself as LTG William Harrison. OCF has been important in my life ever since, and I want to help the young officers and others meet Jesus and have the same good experiences I have had.

Betty Tircuit

In a recent Bible study in 1 Samuel, we were asked, "How have you seen God's protection in your life?" What came to my mind was our meeting Jim and Carolyn Groves in the first few weeks that my husband Woody was in the Air Force. Jim wasted no time in inviting us to join him in starting an OCF study when we got settled at Ellsworth. God provided us through Jim a strong biblical foundation, accountability, and a pattern to continue in our lives for the next 30 years through the Groves' examples. We thank God for the OCF, Jim and Carolyn Groves, and all the many, many Christians who impacted and influenced our lives in ways too numerous to count over the many years.

Dell McDonald

I was called to active duty as an Air Force officer in 1952. Soon after that I saw Cleo Buxton, whom I had met earlier. When we met again, he immediately recruited me as a member of OCU and encouraged my wife and me to be active in starting Bible studies among fellow officers. Realizing there were other Christian officers in the military gave us a vision and a purpose beyond living for promotion and self-improvement. Almost without exception, wherever we were stationed we either started or attended an OCF Bible study. As I look back on 24 years of active service, I am thankful for the launch OCF gave me and my family into active ministry to peers.

Early 1950s—The OCU Council is formed; Bible studies are established at a growing number of bases. Cleo Buxton is appointed OCU general secretary in 1952.

1962—Cleo Buxton forms the Rocky Mountain Association for Christian Training (ROACT) to purchase a conference center for OCU use. ROACT acquires Spring Canyon and the first full summer program begins. ROACT controls and maintains Spring Canyon; OCU plans and directs the schedule of summer and winter programs.

1963—Spring Canyon introduces a complete program of 454 "guest nights" and launches the first "Winter Sports Party"; Cleo Buxton prepares "Report and History of OCU's Summer Training Programs," which envisions OCU providing summer vacation conferences and also training for young officers.

1972—Officers' Christian Union officially becomes the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the United States of America; Paul Pettijohn becomes Executive Director; LTG William K. Harrison Jr., USA (Ret.), concludes 18 years of service as OCF Council president; OCF and ROACT jointly fund a report for future development of Spring Canyon; Fort Shine—named for the late 1LT Jonathan Shine, USA, who was killed in Vietnam—is dedicated at Spring Canyon.

1974—Hartley Holmes Lodge is dedicated on Memorial Day, 27 May, with Admiral Sir Horace Law, Chairman of the British OCU, and second-in-command of the British Royal Navy, as principal speaker.

Mid-1970s—OCF begins to appoint staff couples for the service academies and other major military education centers; OCF assists in the start-up of Christian Military Fellowship to expand outreach throughout the entire military society.

1977—After searching for years for a suitable East Coast conference center, OCF is made aware of the availability of the White Sulphur Springs Hotel in Pennsylvania and discussions begin with owners Paul and Patricia Cochran.

1978—On 17 March, stewardship of White Sulphur Springs is transferred from Paul and Patricia Cochran to OCF; formal dedication takes place on 18 June, and the first OCF summer programs begin.

1983—At Spring Canyon, LtCol Tom Hemingway, USMC, initiates Rocky Mountain High (RMH), a biblically based outdoor Christian leadership training program for cadets, mid-level, and young officers; later in the 80s, White Sulphur Springs begins Allegheny Outback!, a similar program for high school youth.

1987—Father Teen Adventure begins at Spring Canyon.

[Visit ocfusa.org/75th](http://ocfusa.org/75th) for more stories.



Memories & Milestones

1994—OCF hosts AMCF World Conference of over 1,000 delegates from 92 nations; LtCol Art Athens, USMCR, becomes OCF Executive Director upon Paul Pettijohn's retirement; Athens asks members to organize "Sound the Trumpet: A Day of Prayer for the Military."

2000—Lt Gen Bruce Fister, USAF (Ret.) becomes Executive Director. He will lead OCF in a 10-year capital campaign project to expand and improve OCF's conference centers.

2004—OCF launches a 40-day prayer vigil seeking God's guidance about expanding the facilities at the conference centers.

2006—OCF's capital campaign, "Growing Together...Building the Future," is launched in the fall. Its goals: a new lodging facility at White Sulphur Springs, and two new lodges and expanded dining and outdoor facilities at Spring Canyon; and to establish an endowment for conference center scholarships.

2010—Brig Gen David Warner, USAF (Ret.), becomes OCF executive director.

2011-2017—Construction at the conference centers results in the dedication of several facilities, including Heritage House at WSS (2011); Hemingway Operations Complex at SC (2011); Veterans Memorial Lodge at SC (2013); Fort Shine Lodge at SC (2014), with the former lodge recommissioned as Cornerstone Lodge; Hartley Holmes Lodge dining room and construction of new classrooms at SC (2017).

2014—Warrior Connect (see page 18) is launched.

2015—The EXSEL Discipleship Program, a yearlong Christ-centered discipleship program for young adults ages 18-24, begins at White Sulphur Springs.

2017—The 2018-2022 Strategic Framework, a living document collaboratively developed by council and staff, is launched.

2018—The first episode of OCF Crosspoint, a biweekly podcast program sharing stories of military life at the intersection of faith, family, and profession, is released in early 2018; the Integrated Faith Project (IF Project), an online resource that provides a biblical framework for all aspects of military life, is launched on 1 July.

2019—OCF launches the "The Timothy Movement" with the objectives of preparing aspiring leaders to thrive in their early post-commissioning years, connecting them with authentic OCF fellowship, and engaging mid and senior-grade leaders, and retirees as partners in development.

OCF Vision and Mission

Our Vision is the military community positively impacted through Christlike leaders.

Our Mission is to engage military leaders in biblical fellowship and growth to equip them for Christlike service at the intersection of faith, family, and profession.

Spiritual Pillars

Article IV: Spiritual Pillars (From Governance Manual)

The pillars of OCF, as well as its mission and vision, rest upon the foundation Jesus Christ has laid and upon His person, leadership and Lordship.

Centering on Scripture. We believe the Bible is God's Word written and stress the importance of studying and applying its teachings both individually and corporately.

Uniting for Fellowship. We consider authentic biblical fellowship essential for individual growth and the advancement of God's Kingdom within the military.

Engaging in Prayer. We recognize our dependence on the Holy Spirit and are committed to pray.

Lay-Led. We are a lay-led movement of Christian officers within the U.S. Armed Forces.

Integrating Faith and Profession. We call Christian officers to integrate biblical standards of excellence into their professional responsibilities.

Nurturing the Family. We are committed to encouraging, supporting, and assisting military families as they implement the biblical principles of marriage and parenthood.

Equipping to Serve. We are committed to the spiritual development of each person in our movement by helping him or her in ways that find expression in godly service and outreach to the military.

Supporting the Chaplaincy. We seek to support and encourage chaplains.

Statements of Faith and Participation

Inasmuch as I am a sinner and deserve the wrath of God, and since Jesus Christ died for my sins, was buried, and has been bodily resurrected, according to the Scriptures, I have accepted Him as my own personal Lord and Savior and am saved by His Grace alone.

I am committed to the purpose of OCF: To glorify God by uniting Christian officers for biblical fellowship and outreach, equipping and encouraging them to minister effectively in the military society. As an expression of my commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and to His work in the military society, I will participate actively and prayerfully in the ministry of OCF with my time, talents, spiritual gifts, and financial resources. I further commit, by God's grace, to live my life as an example consistent with biblical guidelines.



Thankful for the Giver, and the gift

BY OCF COMMUNICATIONS

For every beam and board of buildings, or brick and concrete slabs of walkways and foundations at OCF's two conference centers, someone gave of themselves—gifts of time, talents, and treasure. Same thing too with facilities where OCF Bible studies or fellowship activities have long taken place, whether at USMA OCF's Fellowship House or USCGA OCF's Shepherd's Fold. Someone gave.

Whether sharing engineering expertise, mentoring a couple about to be married, hemming curtains for a conference center room, or negotiating with contractors and city officials about the ongoing repairs at USNA OCF's Maranatha Mansion—or donations given for that project—someone gave. It's giving back to God for what He has so lavishly given each of us—the time to lead a small group Bible study, the talent to build a retaining wall. It's the treasure that provides scholarship money so a hurting soul can encounter God in a powerful way at a retreat.

The giver and the gift make ministry possible—starting with the Heavenly Father, the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). Without the giver and the gift, there is no celebration of what God has done for the past 75 years through the ministry of OCF, nor any eager anticipation of what He is doing now and in the future. The gift and the giver are a sacred partnership in a kingdom work that's bigger than us, for it is eternal—bringing others to Jesus Christ.

"As I reflect on my first three months in my new role at OCF during the year of celebration of its 75th anniversary, I am awestruck by the incredible history, heritage, and legacy of OCF's faithful service to and investment in military leaders, families, and fellowships," said Royce Bervig, OCF Director of Resource Development. "The ministry heartbeat and pulse that started out as Officers' Christian Union and continues today as OCF is stronger than ever.

That is very good news worth celebrating as OCF presses on for the next 75 years at a time in our culture when the need is greater than it has ever been before."

Personal growth in faith, as well as seeing those in the military community positively affected by "wise as serpents, but gentle as doves" Christlike leaders who integrate their faith and profession, are key factors others have embraced in stepping forward to partner with OCF in the kingdom work God has entrusted to the ministry. Says LTG Robert Van Atwerpt Jr., USA (Ret.), who led OCF as Council president from 1992 to 2004, "OCF's purpose of 'Building Christian leaders, family, and fellowships...for a lifetime' motivates me! OCF provides the 'Christian community' crucial to a transient military, helps leaders grow spiritually, and stand firm in the faith. OCF motivates me to be faithful and honor Christ with my whole life!"

As a major stationed in Germany, COL Steve Shambach, USA (Ret.), was invited to a Bible study by "a couple of lieutenants" who had "a personal relationship with Christ I did not have." From that starting point to today, where he and his wife, Miriam, organize and oversee the Aspen-time Retreat each fall at Spring Canyon Conference Center, Shambach says, "I see how my active involvement in OCF ministry encourages and supports others.

"The relational part of OCF ministry is most rewarding. When you give to others, you receive 10-fold back from others. I believe my intentional effort to support and

encourage military leaders, from cadets to senior officers, has a faith impact on the lives of those in their care. Working through others, I am confident that my impact can be multiplied to affect those I will never see."

LTC Calvert Benedict Jr, USA (Ret.), comments, "As a young Christian officer, I was connected by the Lord with His vision for the military harvest through an OCF Bible study group. Sent to France, I found mentoring in a French church, grew spiritually, and then returned stateside commissioned as a 'missionary to the military,' my lifetime calling.

"As my wife and I grew spiritually through leading OCF Bible study groups, we embraced Christ's commission to 'go into the world and make disciples.' I also experienced the leadership value of maturing in Christ. Since these were two fundamental purposes of OCF ministry, it made a perfect ministry fit for us," said Benedict.

For more than 10 years, Col Steve Hannah, USAF (Ret.), has driven down from his mountain home to the OCF home office in metro Denver to participate in the weekly strategic communications meeting, where ideas and plans of communication efforts via marketing, print, and other venues including social media are discussed. Hannah creates postings for OCF's Facebook page, such as the most-liked and/or shared among the Facebook audience—national or military holidays and events.

"I have the privilege of 'working' in an



White Sulphur Springs photo

From God as funneled through others, gifts of time, talents, and treasure have helped make 75 years of OCF ministry efforts possible. The gift and the giver are a sacred partnership of co-laboring that culminates into the eternal: loving others with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What can OCF do, individually or corporately, to impact future military leaders?

COL Steve Shambach, USA (Ret.): OCFers need to seek out people in their work, neighborhood, church, and other areas of involvement to encourage their growth in the Lord. For those who do not know Him, to provide testimony in word and actions. To those who do know Him, to encourage their growth and apply what they know in their daily lives. Be vigilant for opportunities the Lord provides for your witness.

COL Al Shine, USA (Ret.): By fellowship, teaching, and example, encourage and enable officer-Christians to live their faith on and off duty, serving the nation with dedication and the utmost integrity while actively carrying on the Great Commission as Ambassadors for Christ in and out of uniform, especially in the unique society and culture, which is the military.

organization that combines two of my favorite things in life, military families and Christian brothers and sisters. Serving at OCF these past 10 years has never been a 'job' or 'work.' It has been pure joy and one of the highlights of my life," said Hannah. "The OCF staff I have the pleasure of working with, both at the home office and in the field, love the Lord and shower me with genuine love and kindness that I never

expected and certainly do not deserve. Through them, my faith has been strengthened, and I grow in the Lord Jesus every day I interact with my dear friends."

Bervig, whose previous leadership roles include CEO at Christian Service Charities, Vice President of Development at Family Policy Alliance, and Senior Development Officer at Focus on the Family, emphasizes that OCF's greatest ministry resource over

the past 75 years has been and will continue to be "each of our OCF members whose sacrificial gifts of time, talents, and treasure have equipped and transformed members, their families, and the military community for Christ. They are men and women of authority and responsibility whose response to a personal calling to biblical service modeling Christlike leadership is great news worth celebrating."

Bervig cites "...be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!" (2 Chronicles 15:7, NASB) as a way to engage members to take stock of what God has done while joining in with Him for what He has ahead in the future.

"As we take time to reflect and celebrate OCF's amazing history, heritage, and legacy, may we encourage one another to remain faithful—first, through our prayers for one another and OCF, and then through our sacrificial gifts of time, talent, and treasure," he said. "May we be the ones over the next 75 years who extend OCF's Mission to 'engage military leaders in biblical fellowship and growth to equip them for Christlike service at the intersection of faith, family, and profession.'" ✝

Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Wort

UNITED STATES MARINES RESERVE, RETIRED

Why a military life? Our country was becoming involved in the Vietnam War and all healthy males were being drafted into the Army. As a boy I liked military history and activities, and our family had often visited West Point where we had several close friends. These young patriots influenced me greatly. When Vietnam became a major conflict, I joined the Navy to fly a jet off an aircraft carrier. After 8 years of active duty, I decided to continue to serve my country by transferring to the Marine Corps Reserve.

Life Bible verse? "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9, KJV). It has great meaning for me—my parents wrote this verse in my first Bible (birthday present at age 7).

Your OCF legacy? Our family entertained USMA cadets in our home in the late 1950s and continued when I began active duty in 1970. I participated in Bible studies. Additionally, God blessed me with a very special wife, Susie Palm, whose father and mother, Colonel Ira "Teen" and Helen Palm, were extensively involved in OCF.

Why OCF for you? OCF blessed me by providing a way of finding other disciples with whom to fellowship wherever I was stationed. OCF stands true to God's Word, and its members are committed to growing in the knowledge of Him.

Why OCF for others? OCF's commitment to carrying out God's "Great Commission" to share the Gospel with the world, studying His Word, and meeting in fellowship and prayer regularly are the reasons why this ministry is so helpful to a Christian officer. God calls us to be lights for Him in this dark world, and OCF is a true beacon for His glory.



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Major Joshua Wort
UNITED STATES MARINES

Why a military life? Growing up, I was surrounded by a military legacy. My father (see page 30) drilled several times a month as an aviator in the Marine Corps Reserve. Visiting my grandmother, Helen Palm, in Virginia, and seeing my Grandpa Teen Palm's retirement shadowbox was a tangible reminder of the tradition of service in my family. I decided early on that I wanted to follow in their footsteps.

What's on your bucket list? I wouldn't call it a bucket list, but a few things I'd like to do in the not-to-distant future: take the family skiing in the Rockies, teach at least one of my kids to fly, and take my bride on a trip to Europe.

Life Bible verse? "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33, NIV).

Your OCF legacy? I don't remember being aware of OCF until I went to the U.S. Naval Academy. I very quickly discovered my extended OCF family, which had formed through the ministry of my grandparents. It's been humbling and challenging to hear the impact that they had on so many lives during Grandpa's career and after his death.

Why OCF for you? I started because my mother, Susie Palm Wort, connected me with the staff at USNA OCF. I stayed because of the dedicated study of God's Word, fellowship with brothers and sisters, and the mentorship and example of Christian officers who had gone before me.

Why OCF for others? The expository study of God's Word is invaluable, and the network of friendships around the country is such a blessing as the military moves you from duty station to duty station.



Dedicated to sharing stories
of military life at the intersection
of faith, family, and profession

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