Are you involved in an OCF group?

If you’re not, now’s a great time to utilize our best tool for connecting Christians in the military community: the OCF Directory. Visit ocfusa.org/directory to get connected.

Introducing the newest tool for military ministry: the OCF Handbook

The transience of the military lifestyle and the geographic vastness of the duty stations to which service members and their families may be called can often leave members feeling disconnected from the broader OCF community scattered across the globe.

Enter the OCF Handbook, written over the course of the past year and a half and released earlier this summer. This 37-chapter resource casts vision for military ministry, explains OCF, discusses the military Christian life, encourages personal spiritual growth, and gives ideas for executing member-led ministry.

Connecting the body
Having received increasing requests for OCF information from members and leaders, Col Houstoun “Hous” Waring, USAF (Ret.), saw the opportunity to craft a new resource that would unite a geographically dispersed body.

“The Handbook reminds me I am connected to the whole body,” said Hous, director of field engagement and primary author of the Handbook. “It’s not just a little world that I’m living in.”

After first receiving a copy of the Handbook in early August, 1st Lt Anna Demoret, USAF, quickly incorporated its content into her own ministry as a local leader of a women’s Bible study at Wright-Patterson AFB.
“This is a really valuable resource to connect the scattered Bible studies back to the OCF,” Anna said. “The timing was a big blessing, as we had just gotten a new group of girls in, and we were preparing to talk about our statement of beliefs.”

Even the process of assembling the Handbook reflected the unity it aims to develop now in its published state. Rather than write the Handbook alone, Hous collaborated with a team of nearly 30 OCF members who represent the same range of services, ages, and denominational backgrounds represented across the rest of the OCF membership.

This year’s Handbook resembles its 1972 and 1991 predecessors, but Hous explained that those earlier handbooks were written during a different time for a different military. To serve a united yet diverse group of Christians in the military effectively, the 2022 edition needed to reflect the past 33 years of an evolving military and a growing OCF ministry.

One such example, Hous shared, was the many different home environments found in the military community today. “You have single parents in the military, you have dual military parents, and we had to update a lot of our language and expectations.”

Equipping the body

One facet that has remained throughout OCF’s nearly 80 years is its ministry focus to equip those in uniform for Christlike service, and the Handbook continues to advance that effort.

“This book was perfect for a new officer wanting to understand what it meant to live as a Christian leader in the military,” said LTG Jon Cardinal, USCG, recalling his first impressions when he received the Handbook while serving as a co-mentor during a week of Spring Canyons’ Rocky Mountain High program. Hous shared the Handbook with Jon and RMH attendees, who discussed the resource daily throughout their week of leadership development together. In the subsequent weeks, Jon has incorporated the book’s content in his own personal ministry while stationed in Kodiak, Alaska.

“lt has improved my ability to love and serve others in my own ‘mission field,’ Jon said. “And it has encouraged me to glorify God in my work and to understand my own professional calling.”

Jon noted his appreciation for the ease with which readers can dive into whatever topic applies to their personal ministry at any given time. “I am generally a little hesitant to add another book to my back- log of reading, but this was a perfect fit for it as it is a quick reference guide with applicable and directed wisdom,” Jon said.

As a resource written by service members for service members, the Handbook offers topics relevant to the various branches of the military, and the military chaplaincy are discussed in ways that encourage him and remind him of his purpose to glorify God.

“I would encourage every young officer and leader to engage this resource,” Jon said. “While in it no way replaces the need for a mentor, it provides sound, proven, biblical wisdom applied to various common struggles, questions, and skills that the military community would benefit from.”

Supporting the body

Speaking from her own experiences as a local leader who started a study, Anna said the Handbook would prove extremely helpful for someone feeling called to start a local fellowship where an OCF group does not yet exist.

“It walks you through a lot of things about starting, sustaining, hosting, facilitating, and handing off Bible studies (chapters 12-15), as well as general local biblical fellowship resources,” Anna said.

The Handbook is not only a resource for those early in OCF involvement, but it’s also a resource for longtime OCF members and leaders.

“It is also a nice accountability check for existing OCF leaders,” Anna said. “There are practical tips about running a Bible study that are easy to overlook, and I’ve been able to incorporate new additions after having the Handbook for only a couple of weeks.”

Having served as a local leader in areas such as Washington, D.C., and South Korea prior to his current role as OCF’s CEO & executive director, Col Scott Fisher (USAF Ret.), said the Handbook’s quick references can ease the burden for those who lead a ministry while also serving on active duty.

“The intent is to be prescriptive but to be informative and supporting,” Scott said. “We’re not trying to prescribe how someone has to do something at the local level, but the Handbook is meant to show them how Jon and Scott both do it if they are looking for guidance.”

“The revised Handbook is a major step toward ensuring local leaders and members understand ‘Why OCF?’ and ‘How do I lead a local Bible study?’” said COL Paul “Ric” Schumacher, USA (Ret.), president of the OCF Council. “That has been the heart of OCF for our entire existence.”

Organizing the body

Throughout the life of the ministry, OCF’s members and leaders have amassed an extensive library of resources. Hous saw the Handbook as a chance to consolidate that vast collection of OCF content in a user-friendly, accessible way, noting that the Handbook in its print and online forms now provides a quick connection to OCF’s many ministry tools.

“We finally have a concise resource that not only describes who we are, but is also an extremely practical resource for how to do ministry,” said LTC Jim Harbridge, USA (Ret.). As OCF Field Staff Representative at Fort Leavenworth, Harbridge has distributed the Handbook to soldiers as they’ve gotten involved with OCF and Scott both depend on it.

Scott tied this desire to align and steward back to OCF’s local leaders. “This is a resource to let local leaders know what is available to them so that they don’t have to create everything on their own,” Scott said. “It not only improves their effectiveness by God’s grace, but it improves their efficiency as a local leader.”

An additional facet of this strategic goal is to partner with local churches and other like-minded ministries, and Hous said he’s seen the Handbook meet that goal as he distributed copies to pastors and elders whose flocks include men and women in uniform.

“I’ve used this resource for those trying to understand why a parachurch organization like OCF is coming along-side the bigger church,” Hous said, adding that sister ministries will also benefit from a resource that comprehensively explains OCF. “It’ll help others really understand how to partner with OCF so that we do things together.”

The way forward

Regarding the future of the Handbook, OCF Leavenworth photo

Scott noted handing back copies to pastors was well-received for subsequent editions of this ministry tool. “We don’t want people to feel like they have an old copy that’s no longer relevant,” Hous said. “But we’re looking to keep it relevant to the time and place where people are serving.”

Scott described the latest edition of the Handbook as not only “the beginning” of a new dialogue with leaders and members, but also as a means to enable the ministry’s short-term strategic goals. “Our only real desire with this book is that it will be a part of equipping, encouraging, and emboldening our local leaders and our members at large,” Scott said. “We want to hear how we can continue to do this better.”

Download your copy of the OCF Handbook

Visit ocfusa.org/handbook to download a copy of the Handbook. You can also view individual chapters (shown below) and download PDF versions of each chapter. Browse the various sections and appendices of the Handbook to apply to your own military ministry area and provide feedback via the form on that webpage to help us shape future editions of the Handbook.

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Summary of Spring 2022 OCF Council Meeting

Sixteen regular and special OCF Council members, 16 OCF staff members, and two future Council members gathered at White Sulphur Springs in April for the annual spring Council meeting.

With all proceedings thoroughly saturated in prayer, Council members had the privilege to receive updates on the excellent Spirit-fueled work carried out over the past months. We were reminded that “every forward leap of the Kingdom is founded upon individual steps of obedience by His soldiers.”

Executive Director Scott Fisher and new Director of Finance David Punt reviewed the FY22 Financial Update, outlined the FY23 Priorities and Goals, and presented the FY23 Operating Budget, which was approved. ROTC ministry leader Larry Sherbondy closed out the first night by describing the rich history of ROTC ministry driven by inter-ministry cooperation and detailing vision for the future of a thriving ROTC ministry.

Notably, a motion was passed to move Council nominations to August and elections to November, in order to more effectively onboard new Council members. Comprehensive candidate information will be available at our election website on 1 November when voting goes live. For more information, contact tori.mcdaniel@ocfusa.org or 800-424-1984.

—LTJG Brigit Jogan, USCG

CLASS OF 2025 ELECTION RESULTS

The OCF Council reported the election of the Council Class of 2025 at its spring meeting in April. New council members who started a three-year term on 1 June are: Capt Katherine Ashton, USMC; RADM Donna Cottrell, USCG (Ret.); LTJG Cara Edwards, USN; Maj Moses George, USSF; COL Laurence Mixon, USA (Ret.); CH(COL) Robert Phillips, USA (Ret.); and COL William Smoot, USA. OCF Council officers are: COL Ric Schumacher, USA (Ret.)—President; LTC Steve Schmidt, USA—Vice President; LCDR James Rader, USCG—Secretary; and COL Rob Jassey, USA (Ret.)—Treasurer.

OCF Ministry News

Chiaravallottis new Mid-Atlantic Regional Coordinators

CDR Joe & CDR Kristi Chiaravallotti USN (Ret.), longtime OCF members who have served in multiple ways, will become OCF’s Mid-Atlantic Regional Coordinators starting this fall. They will coordinate the Washington, D.C., region, which encompasses Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, southern New Jersey, and southeastern Pennsylvania, including Carlisle.

Joe served as a surface warfare officer and transitioned to Naval Sea Systems Command in the Washington Navy Yard, where he currently serves as a contractor. Kristi is an occupational health nurse with Lockheed Martin after having served both on active duty and reserve as a Navy nurse, and later as a civilian nurse for an endocrinologist.

The Chiaravallottis, who serve on the White Sulphur Springs Advisory Committee, reside in Silver Spring, MD. They have three adult children.

Area Coordinators changes:

• Central Oklahoma-Southern Kansas-North Texas: Col Tim & Jennifer Hale, USAF (Ret.)
• Fort Benning: CH(LTC) David & Marie Baum, USA (Ret.)
• Charleston, SC: Lt Col Doug & Mary Dickson, USAF
• Carlisle, PA: COL Mark Haseman USA (Ret.)

Courtney Taylor hired as Assistant Director of Communications

Courtney Taylor began a new position on 8 February as OCF’s Assistant Director of Communications. Raised at Army posts across the world by parents who met at an OCF Bible study at USMA in 1991, Courtney’s personal involvement in the ministry began as a summer staffer at Spring Canyon. Following her graduation from Penn State in 2019, she completed White Sulphur Springs’ EXSEL Fellows Program and stayed on in a full-time role as WSS’ public relations & events specialist. Courtney now assists with OCF communications efforts ranging from social media to print publications to the Crosspoint podcast.

Are you following OCF on social media?

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to keep up with OCF ministry efforts around the world, hear from other Christians in the military, and learn about ministry resources. Be sure to tag us and chat with us about how ministry is going in your area, too.

Find us on both platforms: ocfusa
Upcoming ROTC events

OCF’s ROTC Ministry is driven by a deep desire to build up, encourage, and equip tomorrow’s military leaders for Christlike leadership right now and as you enter your military career! Check out the OCF ROTC Ministry page for existing campus ROTC fellowships, resources to help you start an ROTC fellowship at your campus, and info about upcoming ROTC Regional Retreats: [ocfusa.org/rotc/](http://ocfusa.org/rotc/)

- **Northeast Academies and ROTC Retreat (NEAR-R),** 27-29 Jan., Toah Nipi Retreat Center (Rindge, NH)
- **Eastern ROTC Retreat,** 3-5 Feb., White Sulphur Springs Conference Center (Manns Choice, PA)
- **Rocky Mountain ROTC Retreat,** 17-19 Feb., Spring Canyon Conference Center (Buena Vista, CO)
- **Midwest ROTC Retreat,** 17-19 Feb., Riverside Bible Camp (Story City, IA)

Upcoming events for women in uniform

Save the date for three weekend retreats with other female service members! Be encouraged, equipped, and inspired in your Christlike service and leadership through Bible-based speaker sessions and time to build relationships with peers.

- **Women in Uniform Conference,** 7-10 Oct. at Ridgecrest Conference Center, NC; in partnership with Navigators Military, Cru Military, Planting Roots, and Women in Love with the Lord
- **OCF Leading Women,** 4-6 Nov. at Spring Canyon
- **OCF Leading Women,** 17-19 March at White Sulphur Springs

> [Visit ocfusa.org/events](http://ocfusa.org/events) to learn more and register

Conference Centers to host OCF Local Leader Conferences

Gather with current and potential leaders of OCF local fellowships to advance God’s kingdom within the military community. The OCF Local Leader Conference, hosted at OCF’s two conference centers 31 March-2 April, is a hands-on experience in which attendees are participants, not just recipients. Rediscover how your grassroots ministry connects to the broader OCF community, attend workshops led by your peers, and exchange lessons learned for ministry efforts.

> [Sign up to receive email notification once registration is open: ocfusa.org/llc-info](http://ocfusa.org/llc-info)