

# COMMAND

Christian perspectives on life in the military

SPRING 2024 Vol. 73 No. 1

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



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OCF-

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# COMMAND

Vol. 73, No. 1, Spring 2024  
Publisher Officers’ Christian Fellowship

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©2023. All rights reserved. COMMAND is published twice a year by Officers’ Christian Fellowship. Nonprofit postage paid at Colorado Springs, Colorado, and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to COMMAND at 4050 Lee Vance Drive, Suite 330, Colorado Springs, CO 80918.

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COMMAND strives to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ in the U.S. Armed Forces by informing readers about His work through OCF to fulfill its mission “to engage military leaders in biblical fellowship and growth to equip them for Christlike service at the intersection of faith, family, and profession.”





**DALE HOLLAND**

OCF Council President

## YOU ARE QUALIFIED TO BE A LOCAL LEADER

Throughout Scripture, we see stories of people who were called by God for a certain purpose, only to be overcome by fear, doubt, or uncertainty. In his book “New Morning Mercies,” Paul Tripp says that such fear can sometimes cause us to miss that we’ve “been invited to be part of the massive history- and globe-spanning work of the kingdom of God.”

That was nearly the case for me as a junior officer in the late 1980s.

My friend and I had determined to seek God’s direction first, so the two of us met together to earnestly *pray* for His clear and unambiguous leading. We pored over Scripture, claiming God’s promises, and praying His Word back to Him; we sought to *discover* His will for our future.

Both of us felt a strong conviction to combine our efforts and start a local OCF fellowship to encourage others just like ourselves. Six months passed and the two of us were the only attendees in our fellowship—no one else responded to our sincere invitations.

What now? Had we missed God’s leading? Did we have the determination to *obey* in the face of what felt like discouraging failure?

This was my introduction to being an OCF Local Leader.

Have you felt called to be an OCF Local Leader but have yet to move out on that calling? Perhaps your fear of failure is as big as mine was. Is that preventing you from starting a local fellowship where none exists or joining an existing one that could benefit from your leadership?

I felt unqualified—no Bible degree, never formally taught or led a small group—but my friend, a fellow junior officer, reminded me that we both love the Lord Jesus Christ and desire to live out our faith in uniform,

THE LOCAL LEADER GETS TO EXPERIENCE  
THE JOY OF BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS  
AND ENCOURAGING THE UNIFORMED BODY  
OF CHRIST WHEREVER IT IS FOUND.

both in our personal and professional life. We just wanted to come alongside others with the same desire to encourage them also.

OCF is not merely a ministry to officers, but rather a ministry through officers to the entire military society. We are member-led, ministering to those in uniform by those who are also in uniform or have worn it. We depend on Christ-following believers to do the work of hosting, leading, coordinating, and communicating with the local body where they live and work.

The Local Leader is OCF’s primary touch point with the military community, and the Local Leader gets to experience the joy of building relationships and encouraging the uniformed body of Christ wherever it is found.

During our 30 years of active-duty service, I, as a single officer, and then later my wife and our 5 children, experienced many phases of life and some of the associated barriers to being a Local Leader.

Besides feeling inadequate to lead a Bible study, there is the issue of families with infants and children, not to mention preparing the home and/or snacks, food, and drinks. Yes, over the years, we experienced about every demographic makeup—singles, married, married

with children, junior officers, mid-grade officers, senior officers, retirees, civilians, and enlisted.

No two local fellowships look exactly alike, which is why a good place to start is with the Pray-Discover-Obey (PDO) model illustrated in the opening. Gathering as a group, to seek God’s solution to how your fellowship will function, and then sticking to the plan in obedience is critical to success.

What to do with children during group time usually comes up at some point, and regardless of how your group decides to handle the situation, let me encourage you to view children as part of your ministry and not a distraction to it. Yes, at times, we encouraged folks to get their own babysitter, and at other times one of the teenagers in our small group provided babysitting for the whole group.

One of my favorite experiences happened during our time at the Pentagon. Our group averaged 8-10 adults and 16-18 children, the youngest were toddlers.

We began our time together teaching a Bible passage to the entire group at the children’s level, complete with an object lesson to illustrate the main

Continued on next page



Photo by Colin Wooten

OCF Council President Col Dale Holland, USAF (Ret.), right, and OCF CEO/Executive Director, Col Scott Fisher, USAF (Ret.), address a crowd of more than 100 in-person and on Zoom at OCF's inaugural Global Town Hall in February. The conversation included topics such as Local Leader involvement, how and where retirees can get plugged into OCF, the impactful journey and future visions for OCF, and more. Video and audio recordings of the Zoom meeting are now available at [ocfusa.org/townhall2024](https://ocfusa.org/townhall2024).

point. While it involved some activity and visual demonstration, everyone was engaged.

Afterwards, we dismissed the children, under the care of one of the older teens while the adults continued a short, deeper discussion on the same passage. This enabled better follow-on discussion in the car on the way home for each family. The bonus was the object illustration, taught at the child level, helped the adults remember and apply the Biblical point better than any teaching I had done up to that point in my 20-plus-year career.

“Why didn’t I start doing this sooner?” I thought to myself.

The amount of churn we all experience in our military careers is amazing and at times overwhelming—moves every 2-3 years, deployments, the continual process of meeting new people, the stress on children, parents, and singles. If left up to ourselves, many of us probably would not volunteer for such a life, but as my wife often says, “Which of the many cherished relationships born out of our local OCF small groups over the years would we want to do without?”

The answer is a resounding “None!”

When we talk about OCF for a lifetime, we really mean it. Some of our strongest and most encouraging relationships today were born out of the OCF local fellowship that began with one of my closest friends back in the 1980s. Yes, God faithfully blessed what felt like certain failure after six months of no activity.

However, during the six years that followed, that one local OCF fellowship experienced significant growth by God’s grace. Many of our closest friendships to this day came from the fellowship nearly 40 years ago that God

**Get more information:**  
 Download Pray-Discover-Obey:  
[ocfusa.org/pdo](https://ocfusa.org/pdo)  
 Sign up to be a Local Leader:  
[ocfusa.org/list-me](https://ocfusa.org/list-me)

started through two inadequate junior officers who desired to live out their faith in uniform, both personally and professionally to the glory of God and come alongside others to encourage them to do the same.

My hope is that in some small way I have encouraged you to lean into becoming an OCF Local Leader.

No matter your stage in life—active duty, separated, retired; junior, field-grade, flag officer, or DoD civilian; single, married, married with children—if God is calling you to start an OCF local fellowship where you are (deployed, at sea, in garrison, in your local church or in support of your local installation chapel), then I encourage you to Pray, Discover, and Obey God’s leading.

God is in the business of using broken, ordinary people like us to do extraordinary things for His Kingdom. You are qualified to become an OCF Local Leader, and OCF stands by to help you succeed. 🙏

#### About Dale

Dale has been part of OCF since 1990 and currently serves as the OCF Council President. He and his wife, Debi, also serve on the Spring Canyon Advisory Council. During his 30-year Air Force career, Dale led multiple OCF local fellowships that encouraged spiritual growth and Christlike leadership at the intersection of faith, family, and profession.

## FROM SERVICE TO SUPPORT: HOW VETERANS CAN STAY ENGAGED IN OCF

BY STEVE & MIRIAM SHAMBACH, OCF MOUNTAIN CENTRAL REGIONAL COORDINATORS

“I WAS INVOLVED IN OCF when I was on active duty, but not since I retired or left the service. OCF was important for me when I was on active duty, but I have not been involved since leaving the service.”

We hear these kinds of responses repeatedly while we travel as Regional Coordinators for OCF. While we certainly understand this sentiment, it is disappointing how a number of our members choose not to continue serving the military community and fulfill OCF’s vision and mission:

*Our Vision at Officers’ Christian Fellowship is for 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.*

There are several common reasons why OCFers disengage from the military community when they leave the service.

For some, it is the belief that former military personnel no longer can advise active duty, Reservists or Guardsmen/women and their families because the military is different now than when they were in the military. The sense is that any advice might be irrelevant to today’s military.

Another reason given to us is that veterans are now attending a civilian church and

are actively engaged in the ministry of their local church and community, often citing the challenges from a lack of time or bandwidth to be involved in both church small groups and an OCF Bible study.

Since veterans are no longer on a military installation, even support of the chaplaincy does not seem like a possible or meaningful activity.

But what if one looked at these challenges and obstacles as opportunities? The OCF Handbook has a number of practical suggestions for continued involvement that we have also seen in our travels visiting OCFers in the Mountain Central Region. We not only visit OCF gatherings, but also ROTC detachments and chaplains.

We encourage you to consider how you can make an impact on the lives of those still serving our country. None of these various ways need take that much time but can have a significant impact on your life and the lives of others.

Look around, pray, and ask God how you can benefit the military through your involvement. It is our desire that all members see that “OCF for a lifetime” is a calling and not just a saying. Every challenge is an opportunity!

**The following pages offer some information, resources, and five practical ways for veterans to continue to serve OCF for a lifetime.**



OSU OCF photo

Gwynn & Kit Vaughan lead an OCF ROTC group from the Ohio State University.

### 1. Get involved in a local ROTC program

Often there is an ROTC program located close to an OCF veteran member. ROTC program cadre and staff are often not able or willing to be involved in leading or even encouraging biblical fellowship with their students.

Every service identifies spiritual fitness as a main pillar of development for servicemembers. We have found that ROTC units would welcome someone from the outside to engage with their cadets/midshipmen and even offer to lead Bible studies, something the cadre may not be able to do themselves.

At least reaching out to ROTC units is a start. Some parachurch organizations are trying to regionally support the cadets/midshipmen in running a Bible study but may not have the manpower to be physically present. Having an OCF member step up to come along side these young men and women to encourage, support, help, and mentor them would be such a blessing as they are beginning their military careers.

Also, cadets/midshipmen who attend ROTC summer training have the opportunity to attend chapel services and Bible studies. Some of them have asked for follow up when they return to their unit. An OCF member who is a veteran would be a great person to reach out to these cadets/midshipmen who are searching in their faith journey or just need encouragement.

**Action step: Reach out to an ROTC detachment near you**

## 2. Mentor the next generation of military leaders

Our experience is that younger officers really appreciate being able to talk with those who have served in the past and may feel more comfortable engaging those not currently serving. There are not as many differences as you might think. Many of the same situations and experiences we faced on active duty similarly confront today's leaders. They particularly want to know how one integrates their faith and their profession. Whether with an officer across the world or in your local church, you can offer unique mentorship, encouragement, and support to the next generation.

**Action step: Visit [ocfusa.org/mentoring](https://ocfusa.org/mentoring) for guides and resources.**

### Tony Kim on mentoring:

To be honest, I wasn't involved in OCF until after retirement. I always knew of OCF but had always already been involved in other Christian communities throughout my career. A few years ago, a friend and USAFA classmate of mine invited my wife and I to volunteer at Spring Canyon, and from that point on, we've volunteered periodically to support the work at Spring Canyon.

Being a mentor for RMH is one of those ways. Many young officers may have the wrong impression that they cannot live out their faith in uniform, that they must essentially stay quiet and practically hide their faith. How to live out their lives in the "intersection of faith, family, and profession" is so important. Retirees have the experience to share with young and mid-grade officers that others cannot provide.



Spring Canyon photo



OCF Leavenworth photo

A morning Bible study group that meets regularly at OCF Leavenworth.

## 3. Support the chaplaincy

Even though you may not attend a chapel, it is still important to check in with local chaplains and offer support and encouragement. Chaplains have an immense responsibility and often do not have the support and resources they need to do their job. Even visiting a chaplain to check in with them, trying to understand what they are going through and praying with and for them, and their families, can have a significant impact on their morale and work.

We heard one story that relates to this need from another Regional Coordinator (RC). He told us that when he visited a local chaplain, the chaplain asked him what he wanted. When the RC told him that he did not want anything from the chaplain but was there to pray for him and his family, a tear ran down the chaplain's face. What a powerful example of the importance of reaching out to our local military chaplains!

There may also be opportunities for your civilian church to help support chapel activities, such as when they have special events or activities that rely on volunteers.

**Action step: Reach out to your local chaplain and ask how you can pray for and support them.**

## 4. Be a Contact, Hospitality Home, Local Leader, and/or Area Coordinator

You can volunteer to be a Contact, an advocate for the ministry of OCF who helps others find Christian fellowship and local insights (churches, Bible studies, schools, housing, etc.), even if you are not leading an OCF Bible Study. You can also open your home to visitors for coffee, meals, or overnight stays by becoming a Hospitality Home.

Become a Local Leader or Area Coordinator and invite service men and women and their spouses to attend your OCF Bible study. So often the active-duty service member may feel they are too busy to start or lead their own fellowship. However, you, the veteran, may have more availability and time to make this happen.

Role descriptions are in Chapter 23 of the OCF Handbook and can be found on the OCF website ([ocfusa.org/handbook/chapter23](http://ocfusa.org/handbook/chapter23)).

**Action step: Sign up [ocfusa.org/list-me](http://ocfusa.org/list-me) to become visible on our directory**



Photo by Hous and Tami Waring

Tami and Hous Waring, left, recently visited Hospitality Home hosts Eric and Melissa Burkett. "It would be wrong of us to not share this blessing with others," said Eric.

## Dave & Jenny Norwood on Conference Center volunteering:

White Sulphur Springs had the profound impact on our entire family. As we entered our retirement years, we knew that we wanted to give back in some way to the OCF Conference Center ministry. Every spring and fall, we join together with the WSS staff, EXSEL interns, and lots of other retirees and friends of WSS in a volunteer work session lasting several

days. While it is serious labor to help maintain and improve the grounds and facilities, the fellowship is outstanding. We have also found a tremendous amount of joy in volunteering two or three weeks as House Parents to the collection of young adults and teens who serve as senior staff and apprentices during the summer programs.



White Sulphur Springs photo

## 5. Attend or volunteer at a Conference Center

OCF owns two conference centers, Spring Canyon in Colorado and White Sulphur Springs in Pennsylvania. For decades, both locations have been homes away from home for many within the military community, and a contributing factor toward a return of that environment is the returning retired and separated individuals who continue to stay involved in OCF ministry there. The two conference centers are encouraging people to attend their conference centers and volunteer to help and serve others there. We have found this to be both meaningful, spiritually rewarding, and a source of rest and refreshment.

**Action step: Visit [springcanyon.org](http://springcanyon.org) and [whitesulphursprings.org](http://whitesulphursprings.org) to learn more and get connected.**

# A few FAQs regarding OCF involvement for retired and separated individuals

## What support does OCF offer for retired or separated military members transitioning to civilian life?

- ▶ Your own transition from military to civilian life is a great time to have someone mentor you through such a big change, and one of countless OCF members who have retired or separated before you would make a great mentor. [Learn more at ocfusa.org/mentoring](https://ocfusa.org/mentoring)
- ▶ An article on our website features Maj Gen Pete Peterson, USAF (Ret.), who is an OCF member and a transition coach with Caleb Challenge, a Christian organization that comes alongside transitioning military leaders. [Read the article \(case sensitive\): bit.ly/ocf-transitions](https://bit.ly/ocf-transitions)
- ▶ OCF is an approved organization with the DOD SkillBridge program. Separating service members now have the opportunity to intern for up to 6 months with OCF while still receiving their full military pay and allowances. [Learn more at ocfusa.org/skillbridge](https://ocfusa.org/skillbridge)
- ▶ Follow us on LinkedIn as we share resources and opportunities that might be helpful in the midst of a career transition. Just search “Officers’ Christian Fellowship” on LinkedIn.

## Can I still participate in OCF events if I am no longer in active duty?

Absolutely! You have great opportunities ahead of you both to be blessed and to be a blessing to others in the military community. God can powerfully use you, your career experiences (good and bad), and your wealth of spiritual lessons learned to impact the next generation for Christ.

## Are there any financial obligations or dues associated with joining and/or being involved with OCF?

No, we do not charge a fee to become a member and/or hold a leadership role within OCF. That said, OCF is sustained financially primarily by the donations and support of our members. It takes millions of annual dollars to run the whole of OCF ministry, hire staff, maintain more than 70 facilities owned across six states, support Strategic and Operational plans for outreach to, and fellowship in, the military community, and to operate two conference centers.

## How can I partner with OCF financially?

The ministry of OCF depends on financial gifts from ministry partners like you. In response to the Lord’s graciousness to us, you can give back a portion of His blessings in one of several ways.

You can donate using the Donate button on the OCF website, and you may be in a position to provide financial support to OCF beyond the checkbook. [Navigate to ocfusa.org/myplannedgift.org](https://ocfusa.org/myplannedgift.org) to access free resources that uncover ways to give to OCF other than cash, based on your stage of life and assets. For example, if you are at the age where you have Required Minimum Distribution of your IRA, you can give to OCF and receive the double benefit of avoiding taxes on the withdrawal and increase your charitable contribution deduction.

Please pray about you might consider financially supporting the work of OCF on a regular basis. [Learn more at ocfusa.org/donate](https://ocfusa.org/donate)

## How can I stay connected with other OCF members near me after leaving the military?

In addition to the ways mentioned in the Shambachs’ article, find an OCF small group near you by visiting our online directory. If there isn’t a group near you, contact the OCF Home Office (303-761-1984) to see if other OCFers might be near your location, and then you can contact those individuals about starting an OCF group together.

## I’m no longer on active duty, and I don’t live near a military base, OCFers, and/or a ROTC detachment. How can I still be involved in OCF ministry?

- ▶ Prayer is a vital means of involvement accessible from anywhere. You can download the Power in Prayer newsletter each month or sign up to receive that newsletter via email for OCF-oriented prayer requests. [Learn more at ocfusa.org/pip](https://ocfusa.org/pip)
- ▶ Volunteer via one of our remote openings. OCF’s volunteer needs are constantly evolving, but there are often roles such as those of the copy-typist and transcriptionist that can be done from home. [Learn more at ocfusa.org/volunteer](https://ocfusa.org/volunteer)
- ▶ Share your story and experiences via one of our communications channels, such as Crosspoint podcast, Connected newsletter, an online article, and more. [Visit ocfusa.org/podcastguest](https://ocfusa.org/podcastguest) or [contact comms@ocfusa.org](mailto:comms@ocfusa.org)

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► Christian mentoring is one powerful means of growing disciples of Christ in the military. You can become a mentor and make an impact on a younger officer by meeting over the phone, Zoom, etc.

[Learn more at ocfusa.org/mentoring](https://ocfusa.org/mentoring)

**How can I as a retired or separated member balance/integrate OCF involvement with commitment to the local church?**

Establish a relationship with your local church staff and see if the church would recognize your OCF group as part of their military outreach, if they would set up volunteer teams to assist PCS transitions, and more.

[Learn more at ocfusa.org/handbook/chapter22](https://ocfusa.org/handbook/chapter22)

**Steele & Natalie Sessions on giving back to the fellowship:**

During our time in the Army, between USMA, separate BOLCs, a deployment, and returning to Fairbanks, Alaska, cumulatively, Natalie and I were involved in seven to 10 church congregations over the course of nine years. During that time, however, when things were difficult, we always reached out to our OCF fellowship first. We weren't choosing to do

so to be exclusive, it was simply a matter of the closeness of heart developed in and out of weekly raw fellowship and study of God's word. As we prepared to exit the Army, God directed our steps to White Sulphur Springs and we couldn't be more thankful to live in, give back to, and serve this community that served and still serves us so faithfully.



White Sulphur Springs photo

**YOUR GIFT MATTERS**

Leave a legacy through your estate plan



DVIDS photo

**OCF has partnered with PhilanthroCorp** to provide comprehensive estate planning services to our members. PhilanthroCorp offers wise, confidential, no-cost services to you because OCF has retained them on our members' behalf. Their estate specialists are available to review your existing plan or assist in creating a new estate plan, and they will ensure that your will and/or estate plan reflects your Christian values. Should you decide to finalize your plan with an attorney, your cost is limited to the drafting fees of the attorney you choose.



Several OCF members have taken advantage of this opportunity. We ask that you would prayerfully consider doing so as well. For more information, please scan the QR code to fill out a questionnaire, and then a representative from PhilanthroCorp will follow up with you. We pray this service will be a blessing to you and your family.

**Questions? Contact our Resource Development Team at [ocfplannedgiving@ocfusa.org](mailto:ocfplannedgiving@ocfusa.org)**

# HOW ONE MARINE'S ENCOUNTER REVEALED A CHAPLAIN'S LEGACY

BY BOB PHILLIPS

RETIRED ARMY CHAPLAIN AND OCF COUNCIL MEMBER

There are only three things in my life that I have been certain about.

First, I knew that marrying my wife, Tracy, was a part of God's purpose for my life. I have never doubted that she was the right person and that marrying her the day after my college graduation was the right time.

Second, I have never questioned that God called me to be an Army Chaplain. After serving on active duty for 26 years I can say that the Army was very good to me, and that God showed his favor to me and my family countless times.

Third, after retiring from the Army I had the amazing privilege of serving as the Chaplain to the Corps of Cadets at my alma mater, the Virginia Military Institute. Next to my family, serving at VMI has been the greatest blessing of my life.

Recently, we sensed the Lord leading us into our next phase of life and ministry. So, in June of 2023 we became full-time RVers. We have traveled around the country reconnecting with each other, visiting our family, seeing old friends, and exploring new places.

Continued on next page

CH(COL) Bob Phillips, USA (Ret.), and his wife Tracy at Yellowstone National Park.

Photo by Bob Phillips

It has been a great experience and everything we hoped for. Along the way we have met some fantastic people, made some new friends, and learned some unexpected things. We also adopted a new philosophy that “Ministry is Life and Life is Ministry” (borrowed from Seth Barnes).

With that in mind, we simply look for opportunities to share our faith with the people we meet and to be encouragers. Like George Müller, we seek to display that God is real, He is trustworthy, and He answers prayer. Though it is unlike the very structured ministry of the chaplaincy, it has been refreshing and reassuring that this is where the Lord wants us for this time.

One of the most memorable experiences I have had was at the Badlands National Park. As we pulled into our campsite, I immediately saw the camper next to ours. It was clear from the license plate, bumper sticker, and flag, that the family was a very proud U.S. Marine family. By the “grown-up toys” they were hauling and their jacked-up Jeep, I imagined the owner was a rugged outdoors manly-man. Stereotypical Marine.

As we set up our rig, I got a glimpse of my new neighbor. He was exactly what I had envisioned. Big, burly. A bit intimidating. Even from a distance I could see he had a commanding presence. By his age I could tell he was retired but I could also tell that retirement had little impact on his level of physical fitness (unlike me).

It wasn't until a couple of days later that I actually spoke with him. As he was walking by, we struck up a conversation. We exchanged the typical small talk. He and his family were from Virginia. He spent a career in the Marine Corps and retired as a Sergeant Major. I told him I spent 26 years in the Army.

I will never forget what happened next. He asked me what I did in the Army. When I told him I was a Chaplain, his demeanor immediately changed. His eyes welled with tears. His voice quivered a bit. He simply said, “A

Chaplain?” It was kind of a statement and a question at the same time. I could tell that though he was standing in the Badlands, his heart and mind had been instantly transported elsewhere.

He looked me in the eye and said, “I cannot begin to tell you how much my chaplain helped me and my guys in Iraq.” His sincerity and transparency were unquestionable. He stepped forward, hugged me, and whispered, “Thank you, Chaplain.”

Clearly, I was receiving the affection and recognition deserving of a Navy Chaplain whom I have never met. It was a powerful moment for both of us. Almost sacred.

I sensed that this rugged warrior and combat veteran was a little embarrassed by his unexpected display of emotion and he intentionally curtailed the rest of our conversation. He once again said thank you, then he turned and walked back to his rig. I stood there for a moment trying to process what just happened, and wondering what, if anything, I should do.

I sensed the Lord's presence in that moment. I was humbled and thanked God that He put me in that place; I sensed that my new friend needed this encounter to help him on his journey of healing, wholeness, and faith.

It also made me wonder if the Navy Chaplain who so vividly and quickly came into the Sergeant Major's mind has any idea of the impact his ministry had on this old Marine. I wonder if he did know, how might that help him heal his own wounds and bring wholeness and deeper faith to him. If that Chaplain knew the impact he had, would he be refreshed, encouraged, or affirmed?

This encounter also reminded me of a conversation I had over thirty years ago. At the time I was a young Field Artillery Lieutenant, trying to discern God's call to seminary and to the chaplaincy. I had been having conversations with my Battalion Chaplain, CH(CPT) Tom Kilgore. Tom was a spiritual giant in my

eyes and someone I aspired to be like. The Lord used Tom more than any other person to confirm my calling to the chaplaincy and to influence me to trust God and to step out in faith.

I vividly remember Tom telling me the unique aspects of the chaplaincy. He told me that chaplain ministry is crisis ministry. No one calls the chaplain to tell him that their life is great. In fact, it's just the opposite almost 100% of the time.

The chaplain gets called when there is a crisis, and the soldier has exhausted all his/her resources and needs help. Often the crisis is intense, and the soldier is so focused on resolving the problem that he/she is unable to hear any spiritual guidance the chaplain provides. The chaplain steps in as best as he can, walks a portion of the journey with the soldier, and tries to help resolve the crisis. Given the transient nature of the military, it is not long before the chaplain or the soldier moves on. The nature of their relationship is short, focused on a very specific concern, and often limited to this one crisis.

Here's what Tom told me: “If you are the kind of minister who needs affirmation in your ministry, or you need to develop long-term relationships with people so that you can see the fruits of your ministry, then the chaplaincy is not for you.” He said there will be many times when you will not know if you made any positive impact. In fact, there will be many times when you won't even know if the soldier was able to fully resolve the crisis.

For this reason, you must be certain of your calling to the chaplaincy and this unique ministry. Holding firmly to your calling may be the only assurance that you will get through the tough times. It may be the only way of knowing that you are where the Lord wants you.

I have reflected on Tom's words many times throughout my career. When I was deployed, when I was tired, discouraged, missing my family, uncertain, or doubting, Tom's wise

words about being sure of my calling were the reminder I needed. It was the source of great strength. It helped me through my own crises. It turned my eyes back to the Father and away from myself.

That old Marine Sergeant Major I met in Badlands was deeply impacted by his chaplain in Iraq. That chaplain may never realize the impact he made. I hope that he does know, or that sometime in the future he will. But more importantly, I hope that he is so sure and confident in his calling that it doesn't really matter. I hope that his affirmation comes primarily from being obedient to the call God placed on his life.

If you've had a chaplain walk with you through a crisis or a dark time in your life, offer a short prayer of thanksgiving to God. Thank Him for the calling He placed on that chaplain's life and for the faithfulness of the chaplain to be willing to fulfill this kind of ministry. Pray for that chaplain. Pray for the chaplain's family. Pray that they never doubt the calling the Lord placed on their life.

To all my brothers and sisters who have answered God's calling to chaplaincy— those who go to the ugly places that the church and pastors cannot go, who commit to a ministry dominated by crisis, whose families are required to sacrifice because emergencies, accidents, and deaths call them away from home at the most inconvenient times—from this old soldier, THANK YOU. You make a difference. I am proud and honored to have stood among your ranks. 🇺🇸

### About Bob

CH(COL) Bob Phillips, USA (Ret.) is a 26-year active-duty veteran of the U.S. Army. After retiring from the Army he served seven years as the Chaplain to the Corps of Cadets at the Virginia Military Institute. He and his wife Tracy have been married 36 years, they have five children and seven grandchildren.



White Sulphur Springs photo

**▲ Parents and kids make memories during simultaneous conference center youth programs**

The weekend featured a parent-youth program at both of our conference centers. Pray God’s favor, protection, and blessing upon the parents and kids who participated in Climb Together at Spring Canyon and Horse Adventure Weekend at White Sulphur Springs. Ask Him to enrich their time of being with each other and with God in the glory of His creation.

**Fort Moore OCF studies Jesus’ example of being present**

“How as soldiers and leaders can we be more present in our day-to-day without being consumed in our purpose (end state) so God can powerfully use us?”

That’s the question that Anthony Randall and his OCF fellowship group at Fort Moore were wrestling with last fall. “Last night, in Mark 5, we looked at Jesus healing



OCF Fort Moore photo

the woman in the crowd and the synagogue leader’s daughter because of his presence, power, and purpose,” said Anthony. “Jesus’ presence was key. Jesus didn’t rush to his purpose so quickly that he missed out on being present for God to use His power in multiple ways.”

**Are you following @OCFUSA on social media?**

Follow us on Instagram and LinkedIn, tag us, and chat with us about how ministry is going in your area.



OCF USCGA photo

**▲ USCGA OCF cadets and alumni connect at MLK retreat**

From USCGA OCF Field Staffer Carl Crabtree: “This year’s MLK retreat may have been the best yet! Why? Because of the maturity of the community and the way they want to minister to one another. There are more folks with the vision that they are full-time ministers for the Lord. So many alumni came back, and cadets were engaging with others in small groups and 1-on-1. It is so encouraging to see the Holy Spirit move.”



OCF Furman photo

**▲ Furman University ROTC OCF kicks off semester**

“Who is our true family? And how can we carry out the will of our Father?” These were the questions posed during Furman University ROTC’s OCF Bible study while diving into Matthew 12:46-50. “We recognize that the human or ‘nuclear’ family is a beautiful and necessary blessing, one that God created and provided. In this passage, our cadets discovered that Jesus is emphasizing that obeying God’s will and having the right relationship with Him is most important,” shared Local Leader Chase Kuhlman.

“CAPT Rob Warren, USCG (Ret.), did a great job with teaching the cadets godliness. The gestalt of the retreat was the community becoming the Acts 4:32-35 church. Alumni and cadets are connecting and staying connected more than ever. A true OCF community in the fleet and putting White Sulphur Springs as a landmark for fellowship.”



Spring Canyon photo

**▲ OCF announces newest class of Council members**

Please join us in praying for the newest additions to the OCF Council as they prepare for their year ahead! Introducing the OCF Council Class of 2027, whose term will begin officially on 1 June: MAJ Jane Baer, USAR (Ret.); Col Dale Holland, USAF (Ret.); LTJG Brigit Jogan, USCG; Col Scott Johnson, USAF; LTC Joseph “Chris” Rheney, USA (Ret.); COL Steve Schmidt, USA; Capt Robert “Bobby” Uebelacker, III, USAF.

**Regional ROTC retreats equip officer candidates for service**

From OCF ROTC Field Staffer Larry Sherbondy: “Three hundred cadets and midshipmen gathered from 45 campuses across the nation to attend four regional, multi-ministry ROTC retreats at White Sulphur Springs, PA; Camp of the Woods, NY; Spring Canyon, CO; and Riverside Bible Camp, IA. These



OCF photo

annual retreats were the result of the combined efforts of OCF, Navigators, Oaks International, Cru Valor, and InterVarsity ROTC Ministries. Speakers included RDML Carey Cash, CHC, USN, Deputy Chief of Chaplains; Edward Graham, former Army officer and Chief Operating Officer of Samaritan’s Purse; LTC Todd Plotner, USA (Ret.), Operations Director at Spring Canyon; and CH(LTC) Philip Jeon, Command Chaplain, US Army Cadet Command.”



Get more info or register at [whitesulphursprings.org](http://whitesulphursprings.org)

**Summer R&R:** With a variety of ways to tailor each experience, guests have the opportunity to experience God’s rest in many exciting ways. Choose from one of eight weeklong sessions, each with a unique speaker and theme!

**Allegheny Outback!:** Throughout this six-day adventure camp program, high schoolers enjoy a variety of activities and devotions to challenge and develop their very own personal knowledge of God by modeling Christ in real-life situations.

**Camp Caleb:** Designed for rising 3rd-8th graders, campers experience the high ropes course, riflery, archery, canoeing, fort-building, and so much more! Time with God through devotions and worship makes this more than just a fun week at camp.

**Summer Discounts:** This summer, we’re giving first-time guests one **FREE NIGHT**. All guests may be eligible for a variety of other discounts. For more information, visit [whitesulphursprings.org/summer-rnr](http://whitesulphursprings.org/summer-rnr)





PLEASE MEET

# CAPT BOBBY & HOLLY UEBELACKER

United States Air Force

**How did you first get involved with OCF?**

I was recommended to join OCF from an acquaintance when I arrived at the Air Force Academy in 2013. After the first retreat to Spring Canyon, I was sold!

**Why OCF?**

The people. The mentors that poured into us over all these years, especially during the formative college years.

**Why a military life?**

God directed me to join the military at the end of high school and since then God has used mentors, relationships, and the mission to reinforce my desire to serve Jesus in the military.

**What's on your bucket list?**

A trip to Alaska.

**What excites you about serving on the Council, and what do you hope to achieve?**

Seeing how so many have been blessed by OCF members who give of their time, talents, and treasures, I am excited to help OCF reach more people while serving on the Council.

**What has the Lord been teaching you?**

To be patient while continuing to daily serve the Lord.

**What tunes are you listening to?**

Bobby: Andy Mineo, Shane & Shane  
Holly: Phil Wickham, Cory Asbury

**What's the best advice you've received?**

"Stop asking God what His will is for you. God is working everywhere... serve Him where you are." -Experiencing God by Henry Blackaby

**What's your life Bible verse?**

Philippians 4:6-7

**More about Bobby**

Bobby will begin a three-year term serving on OCF Council starting 1 June. He accepted Christ at a young age and rededicated his life to Him in middle school, but it was during college that his faith was significantly challenged and grew. OCF at USAFA provided him with the foundation for starting and seeking out biblical, gospel-based studies, which he continues to do in his current assignment. Discipleship has been a crucial part of his walk with Jesus, and he and his wife are committed to fulfilling the Great Commission through OCF by emulating Christ in their marriage and leadership decisions on the Council, bringing context, a junior officer perspective, biblical truths, and a strategic focus.

# Have you updated your member information?

If it's been a while since you last updated your OCF member account, take 30 seconds to let us know about a new mailing address, new rank, and/or any other information.

FILL OUT THE "UPDATE MY INFO" FORM LOCATED ONLINE: [ocfusa.org/update](https://ocfusa.org/update)

