



Ministry news, events, and resources to keep you informed and...

CONNECTED

FALL 2024

CONNECTED TEAM

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OCF's 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.

LTC Bob Deckard, USA (Ret.), meets with Cadets during Cadet Summer Training at Fort Knox, Ky.

Preparing military leaders: OCF expands engagement with ROTC

BY COURTNEY BURDICK

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

"OCF getting more involved with ROTC is invaluable," said 2d Lt Walter Kirkland, USSF. "After all, the sooner that you can begin your faith journey the better so that you are more mentally and spiritually prepared to tackle the obstacles you'll face and lead within your unit."

Like many cadets and midshipmen across the country's ROTC programs, Walter, who recently graduated from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, did not learn about OCF until his senior year. Walter said he had very limited knowledge of OCF throughout his years at UNCC, until a visit from OCF Regional Coordinators Col Hous and Tami Waring, USAF (Ret.), showed him that involvement in OCF would be key for his military career.

"The impact OCF had on me was eye-opening," Walter said. "It was great to

know that there was an established, reputable community of believers available to continue my faith journey even as I transition from college to active duty."

With a mission to engage military leaders in Biblical fellowship and growth to equip them for Christlike service at the intersection of faith, family, and profession, OCF now seeks to do so more intentionally at the collegiate stage of these military leaders' lives.

While OCF has continued to achieve this mission since the 1970s at the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy, the U.S. Air Force Academy, and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy through full-time staff—and with fundraising efforts in progress for the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy—a door is opening to another realm of ministry opportunities: ROTC.

"Since God has called OCF to equip and

Continued on page 4



Photo by Polícia Militar de Minas Gerais (PMMG)

COL Andy MacLean, USA (Ret.), fourth from the right, stands with the Commandant of the Military Police Academy in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Andy was asked to give a talk to the entire Corps about the geopolitical situation and ended with him sharing about how we all can have real hope in this broken world. The Military Police Academy ministry leaders are also with him.

How God's fingerprints guided a retired Army Colonel

BY JOSH JACKSON

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Ask Andy MacLean how he got here, and his short answer would be, "Via the Army."

But give him longer to share his testimony, and the retired Army Colonel would tell you how the hand of God smoothed out his paths and left what he calls five fingerprints that directed him to where he is today and strengthened his faith along the way.

For the Latin America Coordinator for ACCTS, such a retrospection of his own Christian walk also serves as a charge to others about being good stewards of what God has entrusted to them while thinking strategically about where God has placed

Andy's story of missionary kid to military officer started in France, where he was born to missionary parents who served abroad for over 50 years.

"It's a huge gift to grow up in such a setting," he said, adding that he always knew who God was and that He loved him. "I grew up with a Bible commentary and concordance as a father and all my Biblical questions were immediately answered."

A path to West Point

Citing an interest in the military throughout his life, along with a love of military movies, stories, and books, Andy applied to West Point. But as high school graduation drew near, his plans would seemingly go

"As people who have applied to service academies know, you need a congressional nomination, and there was really no way for me to get a congressional nomination [because I was living overseas]," he said.

Having already been accepted to Georgia Tech to study engineering and with no answer from West Point, Andy said he accepted that the military wasn't a realistic path and that he mentally had decided to move on. However, God's hand soon intervened in a way that would set the course for the rest of his life.

Just two weeks before summer training started at West Point, he received a letter from there with these instructions: *Call this* number within 72 hours of receiving this letter if you want to attend West Point.

Without hesitation, Andy accepted.

"I graduated high school on a Friday and reported to West Point on Monday," he said, adding that everything happened so quickly

that they didn't have enough time to print his name on any of his uniforms.

A career-shifting opportunity

During his time at West Point, he quickly discovered that he was far from being a stellar cadet. "I had a rebellious streak," Andy

Despite feeling disillusioned with West Point, Andy decided that five years in the Army in exchange for an engineering degree was doable, especially if he got to "jump out of planes and do some fun things." Little did he know then, God had much bigger plans.

As Andy's five-year service obligation ended, he was called into his brigade commander's office. The colonel asked Andy to compete for an aide-de-camp job at the U.S. Southern Command.

"I was accepted without an interview," Andy said. "God opened a door that exposed me to a part of the military I didn't even know existed."

This role took him across Latin America, working alongside ambassadors, meeting with senior military officials, and engaging in a side of the military that was entirely new to him. "It was kind of an education that you

AMCF World Conference runs 16-20 Oct.

The Association of Military Christian Fellowships (AMCF) hosts its world conference every 10 years to unite Christians globally, with the most recent gatherings held in South Africa in 2014 and Korea in 2004. This year marks the conference's inaugural meeting in South America 16-20 Oct. in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

OCF Executive Director and CEO Scott Fisher, and his wife Christie, plan to attend, calling the event a chance to unite as brothers and sisters across all national borders.

"God has enabled our family to live across five continents and has placed a deep love for our brothers and sisters around the world," Scott said. "It is a complete joy and honor to be able to fellowship with them and share about the dual calling we see in Scripture of military leaders to their nation and the Lord."

The conference aims to empower, equip, and inspire participants to advance the AMCF mission: to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the military forces worldwide. AMCF addresses the isolation often felt by Christian military personnel, offering a support network and encouragement.

To that end, OCF Field Staff Representatives to USAFA Paul and Janee Homan will give a presentation at AMCF that talks about why having a ministry at a military academy is a good investment and how one might start such a ministry in their country if there isn't one in place.

"The academies are a nexus of the right place, right time, and right uniform (officers) to make a significant lasting impact for the kingdom through the military," Paul said, adding that he plans to share the OCF model for ministry at military academies, which started in the 1940s with lay leaders and culminated with staff being put in place at all the academies in the 1970s.

FOR MORE INFORMATION on how you can attend or support AMCF and ACCTS, visit online at accts.org or worldconferenceamcf.com

can't really pay for, you know?"

Protection in combat

In 2003, Andy found himself in the thick of combat during the invasion of Iraq, part of the "shock and awe" cam-Baghdad.

As the fire support officer for an armor task force, Andy rode in the battalion commander's vehicle-the seventh in line, positioned with the lead platoon. His vehicle became known as the "commander's decoy vehicle" as RPGs and bullets whizzed past, bouncing off the road in front and behind them.

Reflecting on that time, Andy shared, "We prayed Psalm 91 over us every day. Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come. The Lord has brought me safe thus far, and I can count on Him to lead me home."

The experience gave Andy a new perspective on war. "War tends to beget more war," he said. "Going to war takes the romance out of it."

A scholarship despite the odds

to Iraq, Andy had applied for the prestigious Olmsted Scholarship, a program that selects a few officers from each service branch to study abroad in a foreign language for two years.

A key part of the selection process was an in-person interview in Washington, D.C. But once Andy deployed to the Middle East, he knew he wouldn't be able to make it back for the interview.

"I remember thinking to myself at some point on the journey to Baghdad, 'I guess I won't be getting that scholarship,' but it was only a fleeting thought. I had bigger things to be concerned about—like whether I'd even make it back home alive or with all my body parts," Andy said.

However, on the day of his scheduled interview, the selection board called Andy's wife, Grace, and informed her that they had decided to award him the scholarship anyway—the first time, as far as they could remember, that someone had received it without an interview. Andy only found out weeks later, after finally getting a chance to communicate with Grace, that they were headed to Mexico.

"Once again," Andy said, "when I saw only closed doors or no path forward, God opened something else for me."

In this case, it was an opportunity to learn a foreign language and become an expert in foreign culture.

Staying in uniform a bit longer

After returning from Mexico, Andy's career took another unexpected turn. As he approached the point of retirement, paign that would lead to the capture of his family was ready to settle down in Colorado Springs to support his aging father-in-law.

> Despite having made peace with the idea of leaving the Army, Andy was unexpectedly promoted to colonel and offered a position that allowed him to stay in one place without making additional moves.

"My bosses said they didn't like anyone else they had interviewed, and they would rather I take the job," Andy said. "It was almost like, 'Twist my arm, I'll do it for my country."

This promotion not only extended his time in the military but also provided the financial stability needed for his next chapter. "God kept me in uniform three more years and one more promotion past my expiration date. God's hand kept me in uniform when I was looking for the exit doors," Andy said.

Before his unexpected deployment A journey of faith and service

Looking back, he sees how God orchestrated these steps to prepare him for the work he's now doing with ACCTS-even when he was unaware of it at the time.

"There's no shortcut I could have taken to get here, and I'm grateful for His leading," he said. "But I want young people to know that I was oblivious to all of this while I was trudging through the dirt in my Army boots-black boots at the time."

Now at ACCTS, Andy continues to serve by encouraging Christian leaders in military communities around the world. His story is a reminder that God is always at work, even when we can't see the full

Andy poses two questions to challenge others on their own journeys: "Are we being good stewards of what God has entrusted us with to date? And are we thinking strategically about where God has placed us?"

After all, as good soldiers of the Kingdom, "we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

READ MORE of Andy's story online at ocfusa.org or listen to his story on our podcast at ocfusa.org/crosspoint.

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encourage Christlike leaders in the military community and over 50% of all U.S. active-duty military officers receive their commission each year through ROTC programs, the need to more deeply engage in this ministry field is undeniable," said Col Scott Fisher, USAF (Ret.), who currently serves as OCF's Executive Director and CEO.

The immense impact to be had within ROTC ministry is not merely due to the quantity of officers who will receive their commission through the program but also due to the quality of growth that often takes place in a student's typical four years.

"College years are often the most formative time for spiritual development in a person's adult life," Scott said. "We are seeing a strongly growing hunger from Cadets and Midshipmen to dig into His Word and [be part of] vibrant Christian fellowship."

Volunteers across OCF have seen this same hunger for Bible study and fellowship for years and have poured into these officer candidates.

LTC Bob Deckard, USA (Ret.), and his daughter Janell at Fort Knox, Ky., and LTCs Greg & Lucy Lane, USAR (Ret.), at Fort Campbell, Ky., are just a few of these volun-

"ROTC campus Bible studies, along with those conducted at Summer Training, are truly the gateway ministry for effectively reaching our future military commissioned officers with the gospel of Jesus Christ," Bob said. "This provides a conducive environment for introducing them to Christ, fortifying them in their faith, along with equipping them to become ambassadors for Christ worldwide."

Similar to the importance of sharing the gospel with countless Cadets and Midshipmen-likely for the first time-the Lanes emphasized the formative nature of collegiate years for those who grew up in the faith as well.

"Surveys indicate many college students leave their 'home faith' when they leave home. Family ways are replaced by peer pressure," the Lanes said. "Cadets are making individual choices without the usual counsel; they need to know truth in order to have wisdom."

Regardless of an officer candidate's spiritual background, salvation in Christ and the Biblical fellowship with other officers for years to come has an impact beyond just the individual.

"Establishing a Biblical world perspective

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Lt Col Larry Sherbondy, USAF (Ret.): "We need people who will stand with us—in prayer, in finances, and in personal engagement-in developing men and women of that conviction who will lead our military forces."

- · Pray for Cadets, Midshipmen, ministry partners, and OCF staff and volunteers.
- Find a nearby campus with an ROTC program and get involved with ongoing ministry or begin mentoring, leading a Bible study, and more.
- Donate to ongoing and future ROTC outreach efforts.
- Get involved with an upcoming regional ROTC retreat or start one.

ROTC REGIONAL RETREATS

Eastern ROTC Retreat Manns Choice, Pa.

14-16 Feb. Riverside Bible Camp Story City, Iowa

Rocky Mountain ROTC Retreat 14-16 Feb. **Spring Canyon Conference Center**

KEEP AN EYE on ocfusa.org/rotc for details and registration links.

is critical for solidifying a Cadet's leadership ethos," Bob said. "Doing so will ultimately determine the philosophy of our next generation of military leaders."

On the heels of a long summer of OCF outreach to thousands of Army ROTC Cadets at Fort Knox, Ky., Bob shared that 621 of these Cadets requested info about Christian groups at their respective campuses. As those same Cadets return to school for the fall semester, the prayer is that those same Cadets and their thousands of peers across the country are indeed finding that vital

Christian fellowship.

Those thousands attend one of 460 hub campuses where ROTC is offered or one of more than 1,000 crosstown, cooperating campuses, creating an immense ministry field.

"The opportunity and need for an ROTC ministry presence at these locations is huge, and frankly, beyond what OCF can hope to offer," said Lt Col Larry Sherbondy, USAF (Ret.), who serves as the OCF Director of ROTC Ministry. "However, there are other ROTC ministries in addition to our own, most notably (Cru) Valor and Navigators."

These like-minded ministries have been invaluable co-laborers for outreach to and discipleship of those in ROTC programs on campus and at several annual, regional ROTC retreats.

"We have found we have remarkably similar ministry objectives, and we continue to share and learn from one another better ways to reach and disciple this remarkable group of young men and women," Larry said. "With our partner ministries, we have found retreats to be of enormous benefit to ROTC Cadets and Mids, who find them a great relief from the daily 'grind' of scholastic and military responsibilities, and a wonderful 'oasis' of spiritual refreshment and challenge."

The Deckards' ministry efforts at Fort Knox illustrate the benefit of multi-ministry collaboration.

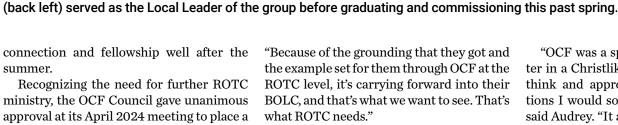
"Being able to partner with ministry-minded chaplains during these past 13 years at [Cadet Summer Training] has enabled OCF to effectively labor together alongside like-minded ROTC campus ministries such as Navigators and Valor," Bob said.

The collaboration within OCF is just as impactful, too.

The Lanes explained that the Deckards "work to alert Cadets attending their summer training there of our ministry at Fort Campbell if Bob and Janell find out those Cadets are headed our way."

Regarding involvement from "sister ministries," the Lanes said representatives from Valor and Navigators "alert their Cadets to the opportunity we offer for chapel attendance and Bible study," sharing such examples as "Navigator ROTC reps at Cedarville University Larry and Julie Mathews, Valor rep for the lower Midwest John Cross, and former Valor rep for the upper Midwest Bob Holthouse."

info to various Navs ROTC, Valor, and OCF points of contact of our Cadets in their areas upon completion of the summer Air Assault School classes," thus enabling longer-term



Cadets involved with the Furman University ROTC OCF group gather for Bible study in the spring of 2022. 2LT Chase Kuhlman, USA,

Others who learned of OCF earlier in college spoke to the impact of those few extra years of involvement.

"From Rocky Mountain High to ROTC spring retreats, OCF cultivated an environment where I could learn and develop new ideas on how I can best meet my Soldiers at the intersection of faith and profession," said 2LT Chase Kuhlman, USA, who graduated from Furman University earlier this year and served as the Local Leader of the ROTC OCF group while a Cadet. "[OCF's increasing involvement in ROTC ministry] excites me! OCF does a great job at opening doors for Cadets and Midshipmen, especially when it comes to finding community at your first duty station or officers' course."

Audrey Dillman was also involved in OCF as a cadet in ROTC, recently separated from the Army, and is stationed with her husband in Hawaii, where they now volunteer as ROTC Local Leaders at the University of Hawaii.

"OCF was a space to develop my character in a Christlike manner, learning how to think and approach uncomfortable situations I would soon face as a young leader," said Audrey. "It also afforded me a platform to network and build community across the region. Regardless of where my family has been stationed, I've always run into a friend or two from OCF."

Photo courtesy of 2LT Chase Kuhlman, USA

While excitement about OCF's expanding ministry efforts is clear, so is the need for members across the OCF community to get involved.

"With so many locations, there is a desperate need for volunteers who will offer themselves as God's 'agents of grace' at an ROTC campus near where they live," Larry said. "All it takes is Christians with a willingness to engage with cadets perhaps five hours per week, getting them into the Bible, praying with them, welcoming them to their homes, and sharing what Christ has taught them, so they in turn can reach others."

VISIT ocfusa.org/rotc or email Larry at rotc@ocfusa.org for more information, resources, and ways to get involved.



7-9 Feb. White Sulphur Springs Conference

Midwest ROTC Retreat

Buena Vista, Colo.

The Lanes said they then "funnel contact

connection and fellowship well after the

Recognizing the need for further ROTC

ministry, the OCF Council gave unanimous

approval at its April 2024 meeting to place a

full-time OCF staff couple at The Citadel, in

Charleston, S.C. As one of six senior military

colleges, The Citadel commissions a higher

number of officers each year than the typical

entrance points," MAJ Jane Baer, USAR

(Ret.), now a current member of the OCF

Council, said. "The earlier you get an officer,

the earlier the impact upon their leadership

style, upon their own troops, and upon the

Jane and her husband both received their

commission through ROTC programs but

didn't hear about and get involved with OCF

until 10 years into their careers. The Baers

have watched a very different story of minis-

try involvement and impact unfold for their

son and his peers during their time at the

Fort Sill] right now, have come together to

start Bible studies of their own," Jane said.

"The group of VMI grads that are [at

families that they're dealing with."

Virginia Military Institute.

"That's critical to man those major

ROTC program.



White Sulphur Springs photo

Summary of Spring 2024 OCF Council Meeting

Our regularly scheduled spring Council meeting was held this past April at White Sulphur Springs (see photo above). On the first full day we started with a Pray-Discover-Obey as a late snow fell on the blossoming tree branches outside. This meaningful time spent together set the tone and intent for a weekend focused on carrying out God's will for the ministry.

The PDO was followed by a full day of ministry and financial updates from Scott Fisher, Chet Arnold, and David Punt. During this time, the Council approved the FY25 budget and the creation of a new ROTC Field Staff position at The Citadel, a decision reflecting the passion of OCF for expanding our ministry to ROTC Cadets and Midshipmen. The day ended with a time devoted to small group prayer and fellowship, where the Council members learned how we could better serve each other and the ministry.

The next day, a significant decision was made as Council voted to approve the purchase of the Meaders Home to increase staff housing at Spring Canyon. This year we also incorporated a Council-based fellowship activity led by Lars Tormey. During that activity we broke into several groups and walked and hiked around White Sulphur Springs, praying for the staff members and for all of the members and guests of OCF whose lives would be touched in various ways through their time at the retreat center.

-LT Cara Edwards, USN

Council elections start in November

The OCF Council Class of 2028 elections will take place this November. All regular members are eligible to vote in the monthlong election. Those elected to the 2028 Council class by OCF members will serve a 3-year term starting 1 June, with onboarding beginning in January. Candidate information will be available at our election website on 1 Nov. when voting goes live. For more information, contact Council Member Keith Purvis (keith. purvis@ocfusa.org)

OCF Ministry News

Volunteer to be a Mentor

Since 2020, OCF has received several requests for Christian mentors. As part of our Mentoring Campaign initiative, we are working to build a "stable of mentors" that are able to minister to others both locally and virtually. If you're a seasoned mentor, we would very much appreciate your volunteering. If you would like to be trained as a mentor, we have the resources to help you with that, as well. Visit ocfusa.org/mentoring or contact Bill Rue (bill.rue@ocfusa.org) to

Special retreat for those in Mid-Atlantic & Northeast

Mid-Atlantic Regional Coordinator couple Joe and Kristi Chiaravallotti are coordinating a retreat for OCFers in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast Regions. The retreat will take place 15-17 Nov. at White Sulphur Springs Conference Center, located in Manns Choice, Pa.

The goal of this retreat is to both encourage attendees in their faith and focus on fun and fellowship, which will include assorted group and individual games, competitions, and activities as well as typical White Sulphur Springs activities throughout their 1000+ acres. Visit whitesulphursprings.org/events to learn more and register, or reach out to the Chiaravallottis (midatlantic@ocfusa.org) if you have any questions.

Retreat planned for women in uniform

Women in uniform are invited to attend the next In His Service Retreat, coming up 8-11 Nov. later this year at Shepherds Pasture in Texas. This will be a weekend to rest, recharge, and connect with others who serve. OCF is delighted to sponsor this event alongside Olive Branch International, Planting Roots, Women in Love with the Lord, Cru Military, Military Ministry, and Navigators Military. To learn more and register, visit bit.ly/his-service-2024 (case sensitive).

New Hires

Sherry Greenleaf joined Officers' Christian Fellowship on May 28 as the Assistant Director of Finance. Sherry brings 30 years of in-depth corporate and nonprofit accounting experience, leadership, and a passion for the Lord to the OCF team. Sherry and her husband, John, have four college-aged children. Sherry feels very blessed and inspired to serve the Lord in her new



role at OCF and looks forward to connecting with each of you.

LTC Ted and Beverly Kaiser, USA

(Ret.), will serve as our Europe Regional Coordinator couple, with additional coverage of Bahrain, Qatar, and members in Africa. They have been active with OCF for over 30 years and leading local Bible studies with OCF since 1998. They have served together as a Local Leader couple multiple times and as the USMA OCF OIC couple.



Ted and Beverly reside in Sembach, Germany, near Ramstein and look forward to serving OCF members.

CH(COL) Bob and Tracy Phillips, USA (Ret.) will serve as our interim Field Staff couple at the U.S. Military Academy. Longtime OCF members, Bob and Tracy ministered to

soldiers and their families for 26 years in the Army. After their military retirement in 2016, they went to the Virginia Military Institute where Bob served as the Chaplain to the Corps of Cadets.

CAPT Patrick and Jill Ropp, USCG (Ret.), are longtime OCF members. Pat is a 1991 USCGA graduate and was involved in OCF throughout his Academy years. Pat and Jill served alongside Coast Guard members and their families for over 25 years across the nation from Kev West, Fla., to Alaska. In 2015 they played a critical role in acquiring OCF's hosting home, Shepherd's Fold, for the CGA Cadet ministry.





Want to get the word out about your local

small group? Visit ocfusa.org/list-me to

complete the List Me form online so that

Member Care team will add/update your

and permanent party personnel. Our

group's directory listing as needed.

you're visible to temporary duty, incoming,

July 2024

Modeling Biblical humility; Christian chaplain challenges; and OCF ministry

Featuring Brig Gen Jeff Hurlbert, USAF (Ret.), and CH(COL) Doug Ball, USA

August 2024

Seeing God's hand during hardship; enlisted involvement in OCF; and OCF ministry news

Featuring CH(CAPT) Michael Will, USA (Ret.), and TSgt Ryan Padgett, USAF (Ret.)

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20 Dec.-2 Jan.: Winter Retreat > whitesulphursprings.org/winter-retreat

18 Dec.-3 Jan.: Winter Retreat

> <u>springcanyon.org/winter-retreat</u>

Since Our Last Issue

April: The OCF Council gave unanimous approval for placing a full-time OCF staff couple—for the first time ever—at The Citadel, in Charleston, S.C. They also approved the purchase of the home of COL George and Dot Meaders, USA (Ret.). The house is located less than five minutes from Spring Canyon and will become the home of the current and future OCF Center Director families.

May: Hundreds of cadets and midshipmen graduated from a variety of academies and colleges, commissioning into the U.S. military. The OCF ministry at the U.S. Air Force Academy shared that its annual spiritual commissioning event at Spring Canyon sent out 22 new officers, including one to the Space Force and two international cadets from Singapore and Taiwan.

May also marked one year that the OCF Home Office team has operated out of the new office space in the David C Cook building, located in

Robins AFB OCF group took their fellowship on the road as they attended the first week of Summer R&R at White Sulphur Springs. These and other attendees from around the military community enjoyed speaker sessions about "Science and the Bible," which OCFers from Robins

June: Several families from the

Colorado Springs, Colo.

July: OCFers at Fort Knox and Fort Campbell conducted ministry, partnering with chapels and similar ministries along the way, to hundreds of cadets who passed through for Cadet Summer Training.

appreciated as their group recently

studied Genesis together.

August: White Sulphur Springs and Spring Canyon concluded eight weeks of speaker, adventure, and youth programs, hosting hundreds from across the military community. Follow them on social media to keep up with their ministry efforts and find out about upcoming opportunities.



Are you following us on social media?

Follow us on Instagram and LinkedIn to keep up with OCF ministry efforts around the world. Find us on both pla



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What opportunities are there for retirees who aren't near an OCF group?

What is a local leader?

What are the challenges that our Christian Military Chaplains are facing?

Is OCF only for officers?

Got questions? OCFers have answers

The new format of OCF Crosspoint now features a brief "Ask OCF" segment to answer FAQs from across the ministry. Listen via your favorite podcast platform.