

MMI NEWS

SUMMER
2023

Helping military Christians in armed forces around the world follow Jesus Christ



MMI NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

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UP FRONT

Sue Millard

TEAM LEADER PRAYER AND COMMS



Dear Friends,

This Summer edition of the MMI newsletter has some amazing stories of God at work in our regions.

In our summer months the green shoots we saw in the Spring burst into flower. So it is this year with MMI, as you will see as you read the articles. We are rejoicing at the birth of the Lebanon MCF at the Middle East Gathering in April and the potential for a second MCF to form as a result of this event in and around Erbil in Kurdish Iraq. Also exciting is the continuing work of the small Turkish MCF, who held their 8th annual meeting in June. Also in June, the French Protestant Chaplaincy's annual RIMP event hosted the largest contingent yet of French speaking military Africans. In Germany the CoV (German MCF) celebrated their 125th Anniversary and the annual European Military Christian Meeting for MCF leaders took place in the Klister Želiv monastery in the Czech Republic. We were delighted that both the Apostolat Militaire International (AMI) delegation, led by Admiral Mathieu Borsboom and the AMCF President Maj Gen (Ret.) Essel Soriano were able to attend EMCN and start to develop a cooperative relationship. The news from our India co-worker is more mixed, with reports of much anti-Christian violence in the N.

East, but in Goa he found a sense of hope and a Christian heritage.

Next year, 2024, is MMI's Jubilee Year – we will be 50 !! Turn to page 18 to read how it all started. Part of remembering our history will be a series of articles over 5 MMI News, remembering a decade at a time, starting with this edition remembering the very beginning in 1974.

Our Backpack thought to carry with us over the next few months (back page) is Jesus' parable of the Mustard Seed. How the smallest of seeds grows into the largest shrub, provides shelter and safety for birds and has some healing properties. MMI is a very small organization, but its Christian reach is extensive – have a look at the areas in which we minister on page 20.

We thank God for using us in his work and hope to continue this year's programme with planned events in Africa and S Asia – particularly Table Mountain Top Interaction (TMTI), the South African event aimed at young serving Africans across the Africa South region.

However, all of this depends on our financial situation. Currently MMI, like many other charities, is facing financial difficulties. If you would like to support our ministry with a financial donation, please turn to page 23.

Sue

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125 years of the German MCF

"Corneliusvereinigung"

Christians in the Bundeswehr

MMI RTL EUROPE, REV. GROZDAN STOEVSKI
AND MMI FIELDWORKER, COL (RET) HERMANN MEYER



Grozdan presenting a commemorative plaque to CoV Chair Col (A) Sascha Zierold

On the evening of March 4 1898, a group of officers of the Imperial German Army met on a cold winter evening in a backyard building on Hohenstaufenstrasse, Berlin, for a very special purpose. Lieutenant General Georg von Viebahn gave a personal testimony as a Christian and a soldier to officers of all ranks from his command. From this point on, the veteran of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 hosted monthly meetings, at which various topics from the Bible with professional-ethical relevance for soldiers were discussed. The objective of the community was to create and promote Christian personalities deeply rooted in the Gospel within the German officer corps. This series of meetings culminated in a group of believing officers forming the Christliche Offizier Vereinigung (COV) in that year. The community developed

and remained in close contact during the following decades with its "elder brother", the OCU (Officer Christian Union), founded in Great Britain in 1851. This strong brotherly connection in Christian faith did not break off even during the two world wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45. In 1930, Germany was even one of the 4 founding nations of the Fellowship of National Officer Christian Unions - the forerunner of today's AMCF.

The first "Ruestzeiten" (a German term for special dedicated meetings with the purpose of spiritual preparation, equipping and harnessing) took place under the leadership of the later Major General Hans Graf von Kanitz. The objectives of these meetings were on the one hand: spiritual strengthening and preparation through God's Word, in a contemporary interpretation and

adaption in military surroundings, and on the other hand the building up of contact and personal relationships between the members and committed Christians. These objectives are still the focus of CoV. Immediately after the outbreak of war in 1939, General von Kanitz started to publish the "Sternbriefe" newsletters, to be spread like stars to recipients in their distant garrisons. The Sternbriefe were used by more than 400 officers for ethical orientation in difficult times of war, to strengthen and to comfort them. This work was banned by the National-Socialist rulers in 1944 and so the community continued its valuable work within the Wehrmacht underground, to provide Christian-ethical character building and commitment. General von Kanitz led the community through this period and kept it alive.

Since the founding of the Bundeswehr in 1955, a successful cooperation between the military Christians of COV and the Protestant Military Chaplaincy began. At this same time Centurion Cornelius (see Acts 10) was chosen as the patron saint with a renaming to "Corneliusvereinigung - Christen in der Bundeswehr" (CoV). And CoV opened up to all ranks in both the uniformed service and civilian officials in the military administration. The strong involvement of the German MCF with European MCFs from 1930-39 was also interrupted for the duration of the Cold War for 40 years before a second phase of major international cooperation started in 1980, reinforced by the hosting of the European MCF-Conference in Dassel, Germany, in 1984. International work was extended with the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact and the opening of Eastern Europe by God's action and guidance,

and by the foresight of political leaders.

Within CoV, LTC Gerhard Keiser, LTC Rainer Thorun, LTC Wilfried Kissel, LTC Georg Friedrich Prinz zu Waldeck-Pyrmont were spirit-filled drivers of the Christian-brotherly connection, especially to the Christian soldiers in the now freely accessible nations in Eastern Europe, after the fall of the Iron curtain. Until his death in 2017, LTC Rainer Thorun was part of the European team at MMI in various ways and in 2014 introduced Col Hermann Meyer to MMI, who has been a fieldworker in MMI's Africa team since 2015.

One of the excursions during the weekend in Berlin included a visit to the special place where the first meeting of German soldier Christians, meeting in the name of Jesus, took place in Hohenstaufenstraße. Today, 125 years later, it is the home of an Evangelical Free Church which served the group of



Grozdan, Igor (Polish MCF) and Hermann

CoV members and guests as a place of remembrance of the founding of the world's second oldest Christian soldiers' association.

MMI RTL Europe, Rev. Grozdan Stoevski, met other international guests in Berlin: former MMI co-worker Col Dr. Igor Sawicki, had come from Poland. When Igor was attending a CoV-Retreat in Germany more than 25 years earlier (1997), he was inspired to found the Polish MCF "Korneliusz" by LTC Rainer Thorun, at that time CoV chairman. Another international guest, Ms. Hilal Tekin, the daughter of the President of the Turkish MCF, Bulent Tekin, came to the 125yrs-retreat. Ms. Tekin started her studies in Germany a few years ago with the support of CoV and has been living in Berlin ever since. SSgt (ret, US Army) Roger Hogan and his wife Margaret have been the guests of CoV for many years and work together with German military Christians of CoV and with military chaplains throughout Germany, in particular with their "Op Centurian" project of distributing camouflage Bibles.



Grozdan and Protestant military Bishop Dr. Bernhard Felmbert.

RTL Grozdan was invited by CoV-chairman, Col Sascha Zierold, to inform the attendees about MMI's vision and ministry on God's international vineyard in the armed forces. Grozdan and Hermann, who himself has been a long-time CoV member, were very

happy to respond to this request and reported on their MMI work in Europe and in Africa describing the challenges and obstacles in spiritual warfare in their respective areas of spiritual operation.

A main focus of the time together was a workshop in which several working groups considered in detail the assessment of the spiritual situation in the Bundeswehr and the conclusions for the upcoming path "CoV 2030". This generated a variety of topics, which for the next months will be a main prayer issue in CoV's standing prayer group, for discernment and for guidance.

The highlight of the anniversary event weekend took place in the form of a big thanksgiving service, at which the Protestant Military Bishop, Dr. Bernhard Felmbert, preached and Rev. Grozdan Stoevski and Military Dean, Otto Adomat, performed liturgical tasks. The sermon took Paul's Areopagus-speech (Acts 17: 16-34), considering faith between piety and superstition then and now, Paul's subsequently changed mission-concept and the ramifications for the service of the CoV and the Military Chaplaincy in present time.

MCF CoV currently has around 110 members. In recent years, the proportion of soldiers on active duty has increased to around 40%; in particular, the proportion of the "Joshua generation" (approx. 20%) in the CoV has grown steadily.

**Praise and thanks be to God -
all for His glory.**

Rassemblement International Militaire Protestant (RIMP)

RTL FRANCOPHONE AFRICA - ERIC MANDILLE



Neils Woudstera (NL) and Eric Mandille

This is the 72nd year that the Christian soldiers and chaplains have met at Méjannes le Clap in Southern France to attend RIMP (Rassemblement International Militaire Protestant, the yearly international gathering organized by the French Protestant Chaplaincy. There were approximately 450 people from 14 countries over two continents, Africa and Europe, which was an increase on previous years. The attendees vary every year, allowing new encounters.

Eric Mandille was the MMI representative together with Niels Woudstra, head of the Dutch delegation. Eric presented the ongoing MMI projects in Africa to various African delegations. RIMP is not a single francophone gathering but a truly international gathering with non-native French speakers including Dutch, Germans, Austrians, Slovaks, Zambians and Czechs.

The African contingent (Gabon, Ivory Coast, central Africa, Cameroun, Burkina Faso, Madagascar and others) continues to grow and makes the RIMP a unique platform to gather representatives who work with MMI. African requests for support, for visits, prayers and Chaplains training provides topics for pray and plan sessions for the coming years.

This year's theme for the gathering was **Psalm 103.1, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name"**. It highlighted the true meaning of blessing, as opposed to frantic, individual confusion or complete

distraction. This topic was developed in four workshops in one day and was focussed on the different ways of blessing the Lord: by praying, walking, dancing, and singing.

As well as the workshops there were two excursions, times of worship and a musical evening accompanied by a French Army brass band. This allowed for more personal exchanges in the aftermath of the concert and for MMI rep, Eric Mandille, this was a great occasion to share MMI's vision with the African delegations.

The main point that Eric has taken from RIMP 23 is the need to broaden the relationship between MCF/Chaplaincy delegations and MMI using the opportunity of this annual RIMP event provided by the French Protestant Chaplaincy.



Chief Chaplain Etienne Waechter



A representative from Cameroon

MMI SUPPORTERS DAY 2023

Location: The Franciscan centre, Ladywell convent, Godalming

Times: 09:30 for 10:00 with coffee on arrival; bring your own packed lunch
17:00 departure.

The delegate fee is £10 per person (includes tea and coffee). We will be able to pray and picnic in the gardens as well as in the indoor facilities.

Bed & breakfast and evening meal are available for £89 per person, by private arrangement.

To reserve your place, please e-mail it@mmi.org.uk stating the number of attendees and if you will travel by car or if you will need a lift from Godalming station.



"SIT, WALK, STAND"

THE EUROPEAN MILITARY CHRISTIAN MEETING

MMI SECRETARY - MARK HIBBERT-HINGSTON



The EMCM attendees outside the monastery.

This Spring, for only the second time since 2019, the European Military Christian Meeting (EMCM) was able to meet in the beautiful, baroque Klister Želiv monastery in the Czech Republic. The hard work before and during the weekend by members of AKA (the Czech MCF) ensured that the event ran smoothly. EMCM was coordinated and led by the two AMCF VPs for Europe (Mike Terry and Timo Vehvilainen), in a spirit of shared leadership. The three main components of the Bible teaching were drawn from the epistle of the great apostle Paul to the Ephesians and inspired by the well-known and widely acclaimed book "Sit, Walk, Stand" by the Chinese evangelist Watchman Nee. Each delegate received a copy of Watchman Nee's book on arrival. Timo prepared the ground with foundational teaching on "Sit", Mike developed the theme of "Walk" and Grozdan focused on the

spiritual warfare in "Stand", which was followed by a brief sharing time in small groups. The notes for these talks are available at the link below or by contacting the MMI office:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1MlthSep-yNJRulr-jsJNc-GysiJb7iSb?usp=share_link

In addition, Phil Exner (Director of ACCTS) spoke on "Issues Facing Military Christians", looking at the magnitude of recent changes in the military ministry environment, and encouraging us start to identify deeper causes and so be able to build a biblical response that will provide salt and light to a fast-decaying world. His full ppt for the talk is on the link above.

Another highlight of the conference was the talk by AMCF President Maj Gen

Essel Soriano, who used various Bible verses to encourage us to live in the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the gifts of the Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit for witnessing and fulfilling the Great Commission.

During the separate women's session led by Slavica Stoevska, Captain Alexandra Nebunu, a serving officer in the Romanian Army, gave her testimony and talked about developing a thriving group of cadets and young officers within the Romanian MCF.

There is a lot to process, pray about and think about from each presentation and to see what follow-up and spiritual fruit they will yield.



Marcus RNLN Retd, Ernie Borsboom, Maj Gen Essel Soriano, Adm Borsboom, Niels Woudstra

Several MCFs shared highlights of their ministry, which were a great encouragement to all participants and provided many prayer points, particularly:

- Mariana Rosca (Moldova) gave a briefing about the Moldova MCF and how it has continued its mission and work building on the spiritual legacy and work of the late Eduard Rosca.

- Vasili Khimich (Ukraine) shared in detail about their intensive and dramatic volunteer chaplaincy work in combat conditions, as well as the special care they provide to widows and orphans of soldiers killed in action, POWs or missing in action.

- Sergey Lysenko (Ukraine) shared about the legal process of establishing Chaplaincy. On 17 Dec 2021 President Zelensky finally approved and signed a law, which allows for 738 chaplains to be appointed in the Armed Forces, 141 in the National Guard and 86 in the Border Guard of Ukraine. However, currently only 30 official Chaplains have been trained and formally appointed. Another 30 are in the pipeline.

Besides the plenary sessions, God worked powerfully during the fellowship time. Over a working lunch, the The Apostolat Militaire International (AMI) delegation, led by Admiral Mathieu Borsboom, and the AMCF/MMI team considered how the two organisations could better partner across the whole continent of Europe.

On behalf of the AMI delegation I would like to express our gratitude and compliments to the organising team. It was a wonderful, inspiring, content-rich and beneficial conference. Full with friendship, hospitality and the presence of the Holy Spirit (running up to Pentacost). Thank you so much to all involved in the preparation and execution of the conference!

Admiral Mathieu Borsboom

There are several thriving MCFs which are interconfessional or have a predominantly Catholic membership

who may not be aware of AMI, as well as possible collaboration with countries which do not have an MCF but do have a strong Catholic Chaplaincy, such as Latvia and Lithuania were discussed.

A cultural diversion was provided one evening by a local folk-dance troupe demonstrating a variety of dances in traditional costumes, accompanied by folk musicians. The dancers were skilful and engaged many of the delegates in the whirl of the dance.

EMCM did not pass unnoticed by the spiritual enemy in the heavenly realms. There were some manifestations of spiritual attack, such as AMCF VP Timo cracking his kneecap soon after arriving, and so spending the rest of the conference on crutches and wearing a knee brace.

On the Saturday, Dick Barnes fell in



Adm M Borsboom folk dancing

his room and cut his head (not seriously, thanks be to God), but was monitored overnight in the local hospital. Dick stayed for the rest of the event and returned home safely to the USA where check-ups have given him the 'all clear. Timo was told he must take it easy for 8 weeks. On return to the UK, AMCF VP



Praying for Vasily and Valya

Mike Terry slipped down the stairs at home – breaking his hip, but remains determined to attend AMI in September!

Overall, God blessed the EMCM and despite these and many other challenges, it turned out to be an encouragement for all involved. Praise be to God's mighty Name!

I am particularly in awe of how God worked with the AMI delegation who were bowled over by their reception as well as by what they saw and heard. I think they finally understood our structures, and Admiral Matthieu's reaction felt to me as if the clouds had parted and an opening had appeared in the heavenly realms for concrete cooperation at last, between AMCF and AMI – the fruit of over 20 years work by Mark Fillingham and Brian Parker. Rev Mike Terry (AMCF VP)

Turkish MCF "The yeast in the dough"

MMI RTL EUROPE - REV GROZDAN STOEVSКИ



Mersin is a city of 3 million people, about an hour's drive from Tarsus, the hometown of the great Apostle Paul. It is here, in Mersin, that the 8th meeting of the Turkish MCF took place. Founded in 2015 by a retired Sergeant Major (Army) Bulent, as a direct result of the AMCF World Conference in 2014, the Turkish MCF has proved to be strategic for the Christian witness in this difficult part of the world. Bulent himself has been very active in participation in various MMI events across Europe, such as SAR (several times), Adria Interaction, Supporters Weekend (pre-Covid days), EMCM and most recently he took part in the Middle East Retreat in Byblos, Lebanon.

It was in 2019 that Grozdan and Slavica, accompanied by Richard and Rosalind visited Bulent and the Turkish MCF. Since then, there has been a standing invitation to attend their national gatherings but due to Covid, it had to wait until this year. In June

Grozdan, Slavica and their daughter started a two-day journey to Mersin, about 1000 km southeast of Istanbul, on the Mediterranean coast. The first leg of the trip was a 6-hour drive from Sofia to Istanbul, where the family spent the night at the home of a friend, on the Asian side of the Bosphorus. The friend is a former member of the Albanian MCF, who with his wife is now serving special needs people in Istanbul. The following day the Stoevski family took a small, domestic flight to Adana, where they were met by Bulent. The last leg of the journey consisted of a 2-hour slow drive on a very busy road with crazy traffic from Adana to Mersin.

Over the next two days Bulent and his family hosted the Stoevski family on a cultural tour. The tour included a visit to a Roman Amphitheatre, part of the ancient Roman town of Elaiusa-Sebaste, about 50 km west of Mersin in the direction of Silifke (modern name of

ancient Seleucia, Cilicia region). The town existed from the 3rd century BC to the 9th century AD. While exploring the ruins, Grozdan identified the ruins of what looked like Byzantine basilicas, some of the others found a carved cross as well as a baptistry in the shape of a cross. Surprisingly, there were no signs to indicate these buildings.

After doing some on-line research, the thrill of an archaeological discovery was confirmed by finding the reports of the University of Rome archaeological expedition there in 1995. There was not one but two basilicas from the early Byzantine period and one of the bishops had even taken part in the Third Ecumenical Council of 431 AD, in Ephesus. This whole episode provoked a discussion with Bulent about the strategic importance of the ministry of the Turkish MCF members, pointing the local people back to the times when their land was Christian and giving them an opportunity to share the Gospel.



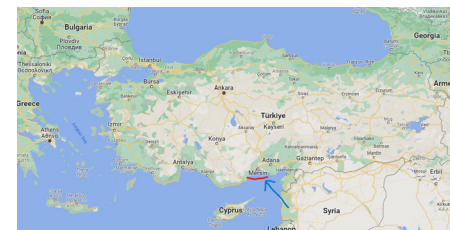
The meeting with the Turkish MCF took place in Bulent and Ayla's home. It was attended by brother Haluk (former reserve officer) and his wife, as well as brother Kemal (Roman Catholic, teacher and translator), his wife and children. The meeting started with prayer and worship, led by Haluk.

Bulent gave a formal presentation of the ministry of TMCF, emphasizing their active involvement in providing relief during the recent catastrophic earthquake in Antakya and the Hatay region, about 2 hours drive east of Mersin. Several of the European MCFs had donated funds to the TMCF, who on their behalf, had sent the funds on to Evangelical churches and mission agencies in the affected region.

Grozdan gave an update on MMI and especially on the work in Europe. At the end of the gathering brother Haluk did a short reflection on the Beatitudes passage (Mat 5:3-12).

The same day, the three families visited and met with the priests of the local Roman Catholic Church and the old Orthodox church in the Centre of town. Fr Teymur, the presiding priest of the Orthodox Church invited the guests for a cup of coffee, followed by an encouraging conversation about the Christian faith, unity and witness in the region. Later Bulent told us the priest is popular, a frequent speaker on the local TV and well respected in the community.

Although small, the Turkish MCF is very strategic in the Kingdom of God, since its members are committed witnesses of Christ in one of the most closed and difficult parts of the world, in terms of ministering to the military community.



Map of turkey showing Mersin

OUR WEEKEND IN HEAVEN

RTL MIDDLE EAST CAPT (RN) RICHARD MERYON



Delegates outside the St John-Marc cathedral, Byblos

Our weekend in Heaven.....

opened up heavenly developments on Earth as well as for Eternity. The Lord had led MMI to Lebanon as that lovely land deserved the encouragement of our spiritual and financial investment, and the Heaven hotel near Byblos was an ideal base. Over the 4 days before Easter 2023, about 50-60 participants attended the first Middle East gathering for 8 years, 38 being guests staying in the hotel, the rest being mainly Lebanese serving officers and soldiers as day visitors.

Beside attending two churches on the Sunday (BGen Jobran Maisi from Syria preached in the morning, and Richard in the evening), each of our three conferences days started with 'SUNRISE', MMI-type prayer walks focussed on 5 Bible aspects of Lebanon's shoreline; our local leaders

reported on all 7 ME countries on the military ministry challenges of their country (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Romania, Syria and Turkey); we had a range of great teachings on varied, and relevant topics like 'Outreach to Moslem soldiers' (Pastor Amal), 'Women in Action' (Captain Alexandra Romanian Army), Lebanese BGen Sami spoke about "Christian Witness in Army Service". An added dimension was LtCol Jan Ransom introducing Flame International teachings on Forgiveness and Trauma Healing, both so pertinent for the war-experienced Middle East. Considerable discussion followed all this teaching with significant opportunities for prayer.

God was manifestly 'on the move', with clear touching of men's and women's lives as Alexandra spoke, and also in response to Jan's teaching. The

Holy Spirit was at work through these talks and throughout the conference and lives were changed. This was a milestone for the two ministries working together.



Drawn by Yusuf during the conference

Each day finished with 'SUNSET' – a look at how God in the Bible had used Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria in His Master Plan.

Four years ago we had no contacts in Lebanon; now, by the good Hand of

The Lord, we have birthed the next MCF in an Arabic land; the MCF(Lebanon) was commissioned with messages from AMCF President Gen Essel Soriano, MGen Clay Buckingham USA (former AMCF President) and BGen Isam Oumeish (Jordanian Army and Middle East AMCF VP).

It really was an extraordinary gathering with so much goodwill among our regular countries, and a huge groundswell of excitement from Lebanese soldiers and police who over the weekend 'caught the fire'. I am in no doubt that the work in Lebanon will expand, with some animated discussion by the Lebanese on where to go next; and those from other lands were surely reinvigorated to develop their own military ministries.

MMI is indebted to the financial support of our supporters including ACCTS in the USA. Let us pray the delegates really capture the vision for MCF in their own nations. Two countries now want their own national gathering and another MCF may just have been conceived, to be born soon



More delegates on a sight-seeing trip. How many MMI ME supporters do you recognise?

"From death and destruction in Manipur to sunshine and hope in Goa and Gujarat"

MMI CO-WORKER INDIA

The following is an update from our co-worker, an Indian Pastor who travels in India on behalf of MMI.

In my last report, on the 2022 Road Trip, mention was made of our time with the Assam Rifles in Manipur, NE India. Since then, the situation for Christians in Manipur has plummeted into the absolute depths of depravity. "Religious cleansing" has left 75 Christians dead, over 30,000 displaced and around 400 church buildings burnt.

Allegedly this is some of the worst anti-Christian violence ever seen in India. The official Government narrative is that the problem is tribal and not religious.

Our Christian contacts in Manipur say the recent wave of destruction was sparked off by Hindutva nationalists from a particular indigenous community in NE India, in retaliation to a protest march by Christian students.

Under the guise of inter- community conflict between the majority tribe in Manipur (the Meiteis) and the minority tribal people known as Kuki, an anti- Christian campaign was initiated.

Most of the destruction occurred 3-6 May 2023 in Imphal, where nearly all the churches in the extended Imphal valley were burnt or vandalised by BJP government backed Meiteis.

Some of the Christians formed themselves into armed militia and fought their oppressors. The Assam

Rifles were used to restore law and order in Manipur. At a prayer zoom meeting in June 2023 a Kuki pastor was able to give the Kuki side of the fighting. Hundreds of Kuki families have fled the Imphal Valley and are seeking refuge.

Away from the awful situation in the NE, I left Gaya, Bihar (where I live with my wife and two children) and went South in April 2023. Leaving my family in Kerala, I went to Ahmedabad in Gujarat to meet Military Christians.

My wife had been posted to the military Hospital, Ahmadabad in 2000 and we had enjoyed fellowship with a vibrant church there. Now this same church is led by a retired Indian Air Force (IAF) Sergeant. He helped me to find two more NCOs from Ahmadabad. I was able to meet with them and encourage them to start praying for and meeting with, military Christians in their area.

From Ahmadabad, I travelled to another Important city named Baroda where I came across a retired Warrant Officer. Baroda has a large Military Base. The Warrant Officer is a mission leader with a passion for India. He leads a group of Pastors who are now seeking to fellowship with Military Christians in their area.

From Gujarat, I travelled to Goa - a beautiful port city that only recently

became a state of India. Goa is small state with lots of beaches and is a popular tourist destination. The State was ruled by Portugal until 1960, so a clear sense of European culture can be experienced there, including ancient Catholic church buildings. Here I was directed to a retired officer from Signals and encouraged him to start a fellowship with Military Christians. In the same area I came across two retired Nursing Officers from the Indian Army. They are recently "born again" and both took voluntary retirement from the Army and joined the Goa government hospital as nurses. There is the potential for a Military Christian fellowship to be born here, but it needs to be prayed in.

Although the war in Europe seems a long way off, we get regular updates in the Indian press and on national TV. The 18th Heads of State and Governments of the Group of 20 (G20) will take place in September 2023 in New Delhi India.

Please pray for peace in India.

Please pray the Indian government will help to negotiate a just end to the war between Russia and Ukraine.



Retd Lt Gen L. Nishikanta Singh (inset) calling on the Government to take action.
A church attacked in Manipur.

THE EARLY DAYS OF MILITARY MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

MMI SUPPORTER MICHAEL PIPER



An overall history of MM is on the website, so this is just a personal account of my involvement in the early days. At the age of 87 my memory is not what it was so there may well be some who can point out that I have misremembered. My involvement with what is now called MMI goes back to the early 70s and I will try to give a brief account of what I remember.

My first memories are when Captain Geoff Skippage left a promising army career in the Royal Engineers and developed a close association with Captain Cleo Buxton, known to everyone as 'Buck', who led the US Officers Christian Fellowship for many years. In this role Buck was conscious of the international links that the OCF had, and felt that much more could be done for them. At that time the only international aspect of the Officers Cristian Fellowship and the British older equivalent, the Officers Christian Union, was the Association of

Military Christian Fellowships, AMCF, that had been formed before the second World War, bringing together five similar independent organisations. Buck had the concept of a separate international organisation, designed to support Christians in the armed forces of other countries, and he formed the Association of Christian Conferences Teaching and Service (ACCTS).

In seeking to build a bridge for the organisation across the Atlantic, he identified Geoff Skippage's



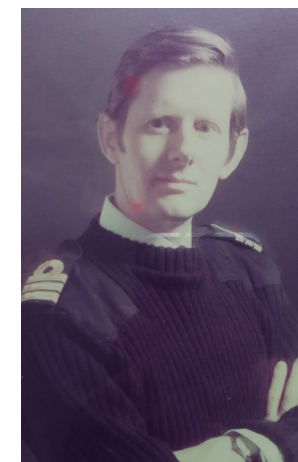
Geoff Skippage (centre) with Accts USA. Betty and Dell McDonald (left), Buck and Louisa Buxton (right).

considerable personal and Christian gifts, and asked him to be his assistant for the building of the European part of ACCTS, but also with a heart for those in Africa. Geoff was fired up by the concept and felt a call from God to accept Buck's invitation, which of course brought his military career to an end. Geoff was asked by Buck to head up an outreach in Europe and Africa with a view to supporting individual Christians within their own military and bringing them together with others both within their own country and also across different nations.

Many senior OCU members observed this process, and whilst admiring Buck's leadership and imagination, felt that there was a big question hanging over it, which was the financial aspect. Apparently financial support didn't come into Buck's thinking, and he expected Geoff and his family somehow to manage on his fairly low army pension, which was the pattern for OCF staff on their much larger US military pensions. Two senior British officers who were concerned about this were Lt Col Peter Harvey and my father-in-law, Brigadier Alfred Jarrett-Kerr. They thought that Geoff had accepted a role that was inadequately supported, and that he and his family could suffer serious privation as a result. So, they decided to form a group designed to support Geoff financially which they called ACCTS Europe. Peter and Alfred realised this group needed to have a constitution and be properly run, so they formed a committee to do that, and out of the blue my father-in-law asked me if I would be willing to chair it! As a young Naval officer at that time I saw the value of what was being arranged, but had to acknowledge that I knew very little about ACCTS, so I had some misgivings about taking on this role, but

in the end felt it was right to do so.

As ACCTS Europe was essentially just Geoff and his activities it wasn't too complicated. But my memory of that time is of Geoff being rather a one-man band whose approach to finances was rather like Buck's, and he often made decisions without considering the financial implications. Nonetheless he did achieve a great deal, and set up high level conferences, largely in Africa. He certainly thought big and made it his business to contact the highest military and political authorities. I learnt to think of him as a 'head of state operator!'



Cdr (ret'd) Michael Piper

My chairmanship of ACCTS Europe came to an end when I was appointed to an accompanied job at the Nigerian Command and Staff College in Kaduna in 1984. I kept in touch with Geoff and it was good to invite him to visit me in Nigeria, which kept me thinking about international Christian Fellowship. A few years later when I left the RN, at Geoff's invitation I became a staff member of ACCTS MMI, as it became, with special responsibility for links in South Asia.

A VERY PERSONAL HISTORY

SUE SKIPPAGE

Sue Millard asked Sue Skippage what the start of ACCTS UK (now MMI) was like for her. She was married to an army Captain, and they were planning to start a family. Suddenly, Geoff was invited to give up his career and become a military missionary – with no support!

Cleo Buxton (Buck), the leader of the US Officers' Christian Fellowship, had invited my husband Geoff and I to accompany him on a journey loosely in the footsteps of St. Paul (everything with dear Buck was 'loosely' !) We had a crowd from different military academies and a few internationals. We travelled by 5 minibuses, train and ship across Europe, Israel and Turkey.

It was on an overnight train that Geoff was asked to go for a chat with Buck in his carriage. I settled down and eventually went to sleep only to be woken at 3 a.m. with the news that Geoff had been offered, and accepted, the job of becoming the ACCTS rep for Europe and Africa! This meant resigning from the Army and living by faith. Geoff was very excited as he had always been a pioneer and forward thinker. I hadn't a clue what this may entail but knew that God would lead and provide.

However – 'living by faith' sounds all very worthy but in reality (and I am being totally honest) it was very hard and often heart breaking.

To set the scene, Buck had said he would cover bills but that we had to raise our own support also. Geoff in his travels stayed at good hotels (no mobiles/laptops/wifi in those days)

because of being able to use phone and fax in them, and also to have a decent meeting place as he invited Ministers of different countries to chat over ideas.

Back home in Warminster in those first days with a young baby I went out when the milkman called for payment as I hadn't any money in my purse or bank account. Our furniture was made from a lump of wood that meant both of us had to learn how to make a settee and arm chairs – very basic but useable. Clothes as the children (two by now) were made from worn out scraps or jumble sale purchases refashioned. This was hard as our girls heard at nursery that people went to a place called "Mothercare" for their clothes and they had never shopped for clothes. Was God faithful? Undoubtedly a big yes of course! We were given creativity, a sense of humour, a deep sense of knowing somehow, he would provide. Although both our families couldn't understand why he should give up a promising Army career, they supported us unconditionally. Friends were very generous and gradually a structure was put into place to form a charitable trust.

Personally there were times when I was less than gracious accepting

guests into our home and knowing I would have to feed and host without knowing where the money was coming from. But God did. The verse I was given while going through a very tough and tearful time was "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Deut. 33:27. As a family we were in this start up together,

through tears and laughter; plenty and little. It forged us into the people we now are and in God's economy nothing is ever wasted.

From two men with a vision, ACCTS has grown into MMI with representatives worldwide... and that is the God we serve. He is able!



Geoff Skippage in Nigeria

2024

Next year we celebrate 50 years of
Military Ministries International

There will be different events throughout the year
the main date to keep free is the weekend of **20-22 September 2024**, when we plan to have a special service and supporters' events.

Location and details to be confirmed, but somewhere in the South of England.

Biblically a year of Jubilee is an
Economic, cultural, environmental and communal reset.



MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS:

VISION

To see what God might do if every military Christian had someone to stand with.

MISSION

Helping Christians follow Jesus Christ in Armed forces around the world.

06 December 2023
Trustees Meeting (UK)

09 September
Supporters' day in
Ladywell

10 Sept - 15 Sept
AMI conference -
Belgium

30 July - 6 Aug
SAR - Bulgaria

16 September
Bulgaria MCF 25th

14 July - 25 July
Trip to the Gambia

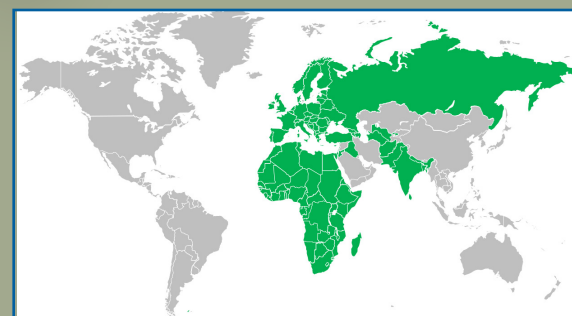
11 Sep - 23 Sep
First contact with Togo
Lome

16 Nov - 23 Nov
TMTI Cape Town

08nJan - 11 Jan 2024
MMI Staff Retreat

12 Oct - 15 Oct
Adria Interaction
Croatia

MMI Praying Daily
17.00 BST
for Ukraine/Russia
on zoom.
*Request link from
prayer@mmi.org.uk*



MMI global reach

Want to support our work?

Prayer Support

Prayer is the foundation of everything we do in MMI and we have various ways to share and 'fuel' prayer. Here are some of them:

PrayerLink

Be a part of our e-mail PrayerLink. Urgent or immediate prayer needs and reminders to pray for planned activity are e-mailed in a short, succinct form, straight to you. To sign up, email prayer@mmi.org.uk to add your name to the MMI prayer support base.

TPB - The Prayer Brief

(previously known as Quarterly Prayer Brief)

31 prayers covering ministry activities and regional needs for four months. One short prayer for each day of the month (current TPB Jul-Nov 23) available with the MMI News or from prayer@mmi.org.uk.

Pause 4 Prayer

Spring and Autumn (currently online) - an opportunity to pray with those ministering in our regions.

Next Pause for Prayer morning:

NOVEMBER 2023

Annual Supporters Prayer Day
Saturday 9th September 2023.

More detailed prayer needs and answers to prayers are shared at our prayer days. Regional Team Leaders (RTLs) and MMI field workers brief on recent activities, difficulties and future plans; international guests are invited to provide in depth and contextual information on prayer needs.

Praying for a Region

If you would like to pray for a specific region (Africa, Europe, Middle East, S Asia) or a country within one of these regions, you can join a

regional prayer group who meet to prayer together on-line. Currently we have English, French, Portuguese and German speaking groups as well.

For more details on how to support MMI through prayer, look at our Prayer page on our website. www.mmi.org.uk

We need both prayer and financial support to be able to continue our ministry to the military.

Financial Support

If you would like to support the ministry financially, even just £10 a month (by standing order) would make a huge difference to what we are able to do.

You can also donate

a one-off gift through the mmi.org.uk website with give.net, or

by bank transfer

by sending a cheque to the office.

You can also designate a gift for any of the projects, activities or regions you have read about.



WAYS TO GIVE

Set up a STANDING ORDER via your online banking - you're in control of how much you give and when.

By BANK TRANSFER

Our new bank details are:
Military Ministries International
Sort Code: 20-11-43
A/c No. 63332268

GIVE ONLINE: at www.mmi.org.uk

SEND A CHEQUE: payable to
Military Ministries International.

LEAVE A LEGACY: If you wish to know more about leaving a gift in your will please contact us.

Your support, no matter how small can help us, through Jesus Christ, to give every military Christian someone to stand with.



Geoff Skippage in Nigeria, 1985



Grozdan addressing CoV conference



VP Mike Terry addresses the EMCM conference



Turkish MCF conference



Richard Sandy praying for delegates at the Byblos Gathering



AMCF President Gen Essel Soriano addresses EMCM.



RTL Richard with the delegates in Lebanon

Front Cover:
Christen in der Bundeswehr, Afghanistan

BACKPACK

This season's thought to take with you
and share ...

**Don't feel insignificant.
No one is too small to
make a difference.**

'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

Matthew 13:31-32

