

## **Jesus' Light Shines Through Them:**

### **Women's Roles in Military Ministry**

*Shortly before staff member Sue Exner prepared to travel to South Korea to give a presentation on women's roles in military Christian fellowships, we asked her a few questions on the subject of women in MCF work. Sue served for three years in the Marines before she became the spouse of a serving Marine, and has many years of involvement in military ministry both in the U.S. and internationally.*

#### **How were you involved in military ministry before you became an ACCTS staff member?**

When Phil was active duty, we were always involved in Officers' Christian Fellowship Bible studies, and many times we hosted the studies in our home. I was also involved in Protestant Women of the Chapel and a program which helped sailors with emergencies, financial counseling, and other needs.

Whenever we were stationed to a new place, we intentionally looked for an OCF Bible study, or started one ourselves, because of the unique needs and challenges and language of the military. We knew we needed that support group of people who understood the military life and what we were going through.

#### **Did you mentor other military Christians during those years?**

At the time, I never thought of it as mentoring. Phil and I were just living our lives, sharing ourselves and our family with others – especially in the context of chapel involvement and Bible studies. But through the years we've run into people who were in our Bible studies and they've told us how much they learned – not only from the studies but just by watching our lives and our faith.

It always felt like something was missing in our lives if we weren't involved in small group Bible studies. They gave us stability, especially with Phil coming and going with his duties. The friendships we developed during those small groups are also the ones that have been most maintained through the years.

#### **How do you see military wives ministering in other nations, and how do you minister to them?**

In other nations, I've seen military spouses who serve in the background at meetings and events, and those who are ministering in more up-front and noticeable ways. It varies depending on each nation. In Brazil, whole busloads of military spouses come to the military Christian fellowship conferences and hold their own meetings during these events. In Ukraine, women are involved in hospital ministry and take food and necessities to injured soldiers and their families. Many ACCTS staff members who came before us encouraged women's roles in MCF ministry and have helped these outreaches.

Military spouses in some nations are the ones doing behind-the-scenes work -- they check people in to conferences or work in the kitchen preparing and serving food. I actually prefer to minister in the background in that way, and so I want to encourage these women and help them know that Jesus' light is shining through

their service, even though few others see their work. What they're doing is important and supports the entire MCF ministry. We all need to be open to where God has put us and what our role is – and our roles can change. Sometimes we are the ones doing the unseen work, and other times we are involved more directly. God needs both kinds of servants.