

Thriving in Christ

“Thriving in Christ in a Challenging World” was the theme of October’s AMCF South Pacific Regional Conference in Australia, which included Bible teaching and interactive workshops on networking between military Christian fellowships, strengthening marriages, Christian leadership, and military Christian ethics.

Seven island nations were represented at the conference, which was preceded by an Interaction leadership training program. The conference also provided an important opportunity to inaugurate the new AMCF vice president for the region, Lt. Col. (Ret.) Jamie Van Heel of Australia.

ACCTS staff members Russell and Helen Bielenberg of Australia were involved in the conference and Interaction program, as was ACCTS’ director Phil Exner and staff member Sue Exner. “It was important to meet with believers in this region during this strategic time as the new AMCF vice president assumes his duties,” Phil shares. “Sue and I had a lot of invaluable one-on-one discussions with the AMCF president, the new vice president, and national military Christian fellowship leaders. Our conversations helped regional Christians learn how ACCTS’ programs can be of use to their MCFs, and they helped us better understand how to serve indigenous Christians. One particular area that came to light was the need for more training for chaplains, since some nations in the region provide little or no training in this area. We plan to invite some of those chaplains to future Chaplains Interaction leadership programs.”

“Sue and I participated in this conference shortly after we finished two other international ministry trips. It struck me how, despite the many cultural differences, people have the same spiritual needs all around the world.

Whether we were in Finland or Argentina or Australia, military Christians asked for prayer for wisdom as they live out their faith while serving in their nations’ armed forces. They asked for prayer to minister effectively through their fellowship groups, and they asked for prayer for their families and friends and the struggles that we all encounter.

When you meet such diversity of cultures, languages, tastes, histories, and traditions, you begin to appreciate the greatness of the miracle of Christ uniting us as one family under God. Although we may come from different branches of the Christian church, it is Christ alone who motivates these international MCF leaders to serve Him as they serve their countries. They devote so much of their talents, time, and money into God’s kingdom so that men and women in their national armed forces and their families can find redemption and salvation in Christ.”