



# eNews Dec 24/ Jan 2025

## HOPE

*Now hope does not disappoint; because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Romans 5:5 (NKJV)*

At this time of year, we look to Christmas and 'hope' for a break from the hectic pace of life, we look to the New Year and 'hope' the next one will be better than the last.

Hope is an interesting word, as a noun it can be a feeling of expectation or desire for a particular thing to happen. As a verb it is about expectation, anticipation. In the epistle to the Romans, Paul speaks about the many facets of hope, he speaks about how hope is something that grows in us as we understand God more. I find it also interesting that Paul also states that character produces hope. Character is about the mental and moral qualities of an individual. Hope is also linked to faith and love. (1 Corinthians 13)

Hope is like a light shining in darkness and the use of the word 'hope' can increase a person's capacity to recover from mental trauma.

As we journey through the Advent period we need to remember the Reason for the Season, which was Christ coming into the darkened world to bring the light of truth and hope "*and the light shines in the darkness*" (John 1:5). In the hectic chaos of the round of Christmas get-togethers, end of year parties, the rush to buy presents, prepare dinners and lunches. Pause for a moment and think about a young couple who were also swept up in the need to return to their hometown as there was a census on and the hustle and bustle that they faced. The crowded overbooked accommodation, the noise and the smells. They had to travel around 112 kilometres from Nazareth to Bethlehem (on foot), this would have been a journey of about a week and for a heavily pregnant young woman would have been quite uncomfortable, challenging and difficult.



One thing about Mary and Joseph is that they demonstrated character and perseverance and are a good example for us in these attributes. Their faith enabled them to overcome many obstacles and as a result the Hope of the World – Christ was born.

2024 has been a particularly significant year for the MCF as we have celebrated 40 years of bringing the Hope of Christ to those who work in Defence. During this year, we have widened our vision to include families and veterans, we have continued to build the relationship with the other ministries within Defence (FCMM) which has also brought many blessings, we have continued to decentralise and encourage the MCF Reps and groups to be more active in their regions rather than a Canberra centric focus.

Can I encourage you all during the Christmas period to take some time for yourself and your families, time to pause, to rest, to reflect and be restored in body, mind and soul.

May you all have a Holy, Christ centred, Hope filled, Blessed and Safe Christmas and New Year.

Godspeed,

Stephen Neuhaus - **MCF Chair**

## AMCF Conference Brazil 2024 – overview

Military Christian Fellowships are in 150 countries around the world. The Association of Military Christian Fellowships is a community of Military Christian fellowships (MCFs), and individual military, police and security forces Christians, in over 150 nations. AMCF members encourage and inspire each other in their spiritual growth and service to their nations.

The President of AMCF MAJGEN (Retd) Essel Soriano oversees 14 regions that are led by the vice President of the region. MCF Australia is part of the SW Pacific region whose VP is LTCOL Jamie van Heel, former MCF-A Chairman from 2009-18. Other military countries in the region include Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Fiji and New Zealand. There are also an additional 8 countries that have police or security forces such as the Solomon Islands, Vanuata, Tuvalu and Micronesia.

Every ten years there is a world conference for the AMCF. This year from 15-20 Oct 24 the world conference was held in Sao Paulo Brazil. There were 1000 delegates from 74 nations. The theme of the AMCF Conference was arise and shine. From the Pacific region seven delegates attended the conference. There were two delegates from Timor Leste CHAP Rui Gomes and LT Tome Soares, two delegates from Tonga, WO1 Toni Langilangi and Reverend Ikani Tolu, one delegate from Fiji CHAP Taniela Tama and two delegates from Australia LTCOL Eric Bettanin currently posted to Timor Leste and LTCOL Jamie van Heel VP SW Pacific.

As we were accommodated together it was a great time of getting to know each other in the Pacific region. There was time to share what was happening in our countries with Christian military ministry and an opportunity to pray with each other. We also met two British soldiers Joe and Anna Seero, originally from Fiji who would like to return to Fiji in a couple of years to support Christian military ministry. CHAP Kurt Mueller from the USA works with the Association of Christian Conferences Teaching and Service (ACCTS) and is looking forward to supporting the SW Pacific region. ACCTS financially supported five Pacific delegates travel and conference fees for which I am very grateful.

Moving forward Jamie Van Heel plans to visit Timor Leste, Fiji and Tonga to encourage MCF leaders there. There may be an opportunity to hold a regional conference in the next few years. Please hold AMCF SW Pacific in your prayers and reach out to Jamie [james.vanheel@defence.gov.au](mailto:james.vanheel@defence.gov.au) or 0409329540 if you'd like to be part of Christian military ministry in the Pacific.



## Fiji Military Forces Bible



From an email sent to the MCF-A Office at end of October - The Team has just returned from the RFMF Head Quarters (Republic of Fiji Military Forces) where we handed over the RFMF Bibles to the Commander. A traditional handing-over ceremony took place with Senior Officers and Chaplain Team in attendance. The Military Commander conveys his gratitude to BSA, RAMF & Chaplaincy Team, BSSP, and everyone who played a part in bringing this Bible to the RFMF. The arrival of the Bibles was timely as it coincided with the

RFMF Reconciliation Services held within the week and which will conclude in a Church Service on 02<sup>nd</sup> November.

A reconciliation service was conducted last Tuesday for the CRW and RFMF Units that clashed in the 2000 **Fijian coup** d'état. A Trauma Healing approach was used – “Sharing your Story”. According to a Chaplain, that story time went on for 6 hours, and the stories themselves brought healing, peace, and release to CRW families who were for 24 years asking, “What happened to their CRW relatives and loved ones who died during that coup?” Cause of death was a mystery for 24 years.

A photo of the Bible Hand Over is attached.

Thanks and Blessings,

Geoffrey Miller – General Secretary of Bible Society South Pacific

(Which is part of United Bible Societies, of which Bible Society of Australia (BSA) is also part of. BSA also helped with this project, along with Jamie van Heel the AMCF SW Pacific President)

## MCF Office Dec/Jan open hours

The MCF-A Office will be closed over the Christmas period from mid-day **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> Dec until 9am (AEDT) Monday 13<sup>th</sup> Jan 2025**. It will also be **closed on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> until 9am, Friday 31st Jan 2025**.

If your matter is urgent during these times please email [mcf.office@defence.gov.au](mailto:mcf.office@defence.gov.au) and follow instructions on how to get in contact.

**A very Blessed Christmas season and 2025 to you and yours.**

## Being part of Timor-Leste history – *electric!*



In September 2024, history was made in Timor-Leste as Pope Francis graced the nation with a visit that will be remembered for generations. As part of Australia's Defence Cooperation Program, I was privileged to contribute to the meticulous planning and build-up for this extraordinary event.

Timor-Leste, where 98% of the population identifies as Catholic, embraced this momentous occasion with unparalleled enthusiasm. With its harmonious interfaith relations—including a tolerant Muslim community and a thriving Protestant evangelical presence—the anticipation united the nation like never before. The three months leading to the Pope's arrival gave the country a singular focus, culminating in three days of public holidays declared to celebrate his visit.

The streets were alive with anticipation as crowds lined every route, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Pope waving from his convoy. For three days, the nation stood still—except for the collective energy of hundreds of thousands joining together in faith and celebration.

I volunteered for the night shift in the operations centre—a tactical decision that traded sleep for an unforgettable experience. By daybreak, I was among the 600,000 pilgrims walking to a specially prepared open-air venue to attend the largest Mass Timor-Leste had ever seen.



When asked later, “What was it like?” my answer was simple: **electric**. The energy was palpable. Despite the heat and the massive turnout, the atmosphere was one of joy and unity. The combined efforts of the Army and Police Task Force were exemplary, gracefully guiding crowds that far exceeded expectations. The Timorese people displayed extraordinary kindness, helping each other through the heat and ensuring smooth passage for ambulances and official vehicles.

The seamless collaboration between the Church, the government, and the people demonstrated that Timor-Leste is not only capable of hosting world-class events but also excels in creating moments of profound unity and inspiration.

As I reflect on the infrastructure improvements, the vibrant banners, and the lingering positive energy, I can only say this: Thank you, Pope Francis and Timor-Leste for a truly memorable experience!

LTCOL Eric Bettanin – former MCF-A Treasurer, currently posted to Timor-Leste



## Baptisms

In early November two members of HMAS Stirling in WA, Jake and Todd, were both Baptised!



We opened the night with a Bible reading and a prayer followed by singing Amazing Grace. Chaplain Bosch then baptised the lads with myself (Clay) and Josh (another core Bible Study member). We then had their Senior Pastors from their respective churches cover them both in prayer, which was incredible!

The night ended with fellowshiping over a BBQ and some home baked desserts. Overall it was an incredible evening and of Glory to God! A came along, so to 30 people in

Clay – MCF Rep also runs a Bible evenings)

*Please  
Jake, Todd and  
in your prayers.*



course we give all large group of Navy overall we had close attendance.

HMAS Stirling (Clay Study off Base in the

*remember to keep  
all at HMAS Stirling*

**Can you spare the cost of 2 coffees a month?**



The MCF Exec know times are hard for most at present but they're **asking for each MCF member and supporter to give the cost of two coffees a month (or more if you can) to help cover the rising cost of running MCF-A.** The Exec have purchased better insurance to make sure all members and supporters are covered for events, and that MCF Reps and others have proper insurance cover for running the Small Groups. ***This is good governance, but it also costs.*** As MCF already expected to run at a loss this financial year the Exec have prayerfully considered options before taking out this cover and now they are asking you to prayerfully consider what you may be able to contribute to these rising costs.



**All donations over \$2 are tax deductible .**

You can [DONATE](#) here and follow the options on the middle or right hand side of page which includes direct debit into the MCF account ***remembering to put your name in the description/reference line.*** Or contact the MCF Office if you have problems doing this as we are changing our giving platform.

***If all our members gave the cost of a cup of coffee a fortnight we'd meet the updated budget.***

**Expertise for updating MCF insurances for next year required:** If you know about business/charity/religious insurance or would like to help the MCF Exec when looking into insurances and the like, please email [mcf.office@defence.gov.au](mailto:mcf.office@defence.gov.au)

## Army Chaplaincy Journal – hard copies

The MCF-A Office is grateful to the DG Chaplain Army Office for a limited number of hard copies of the latest Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal.

If you would like a hard copy, please email [mcf.office@defence.gov.au](mailto:mcf.office@defence.gov.au) with your name and best postal address and the office will attempt to get one sent to you.

If possible please give a donation of \$5-\$10 via the donate button at [www.mcf-a.org.au](http://www.mcf-a.org.au) to help cover the cost of postage as all postage is now charged to MCF, including Defence internal mail. Thank you.

## Other items that may be of interest

**321 – review**

What's the meaning of life?

## DISCOVER LIFE ACCORDING TO JESUS IN 321



321 is a new evangelistic resource that has been developed by Speak life and Glen Scrivener.

It is an excellent app that can be opened up with an individual or in a group setting, and provides animated content and presentation videos over 5 sessions.

The structure of the course is built on 3 main ideas.

1. God is 3 persons united in love who invites us into relationship with himself
2. There are 2 types of humanity – those who are in Adam and those who are in Christ.
3. We can be united to Adam in his death or united by faith to Christ in his life.

Some strengths of the course are its theological emphasis on God revealed as Trinity, its focus on Jesus and the importance of faith union.

The graphics and video content is attractive and engaging, and the app is super easy to navigate.

Scrivener is a winsome and able Australian presenter, who factors in a number of apologetic questions that are raised by his content.

The presentation is interesting, relevant and fast paced, with helpful pauses for reflection and questions. So far I have used the app one to one with a couple of soldiers who have found it extremely helpful.

Speak life has now also produced a book to accompany the online course, and Scrivener has also published an excellent apologetic resource “the Air that we Breathe”. Together the app and 2 books are a wonderful resource in sharing the heart of the gospel with those who are open to exploring faith and working through their questions.

If there were one weakness I have with the material is it is that the topical presentation means that although scripture is frequently referred to, in other evangelistic resources the participant is actively encouraged to read a Gospel as part of the course. That said the strength of the material is that it compellingly presents the Gospel of Jesus and invites the participant into relationship with God. I thoroughly recommend it and look forward to running my first 321 group course in the new year!

Every Blessing,  
Chaplain Shane Rogerson, 5RAR.

*(321 is a free course you can find by searching online, with the books available at Koorong)*

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## Other items

**Have you posted or moved house? Are you deploying, away from home for a long time?**

Posted or moved, please update your details [HERE](#)



Deploying or on a long exercise? MCF-A would love to support and pray for you while you're away. Let us know at: [mcf.office@defence.gov.au](mailto:mcf.office@defence.gov.au)

## Membership

[Membership](#) is free and **open to every Christian**. If you've not had an association with Defence or you don't identify as Christian, you can be an associate member via the same link.

## Donations

**MCF is supported almost entirely through freewill donations by members and supporters.** Please look at Supporting MCF in prayer, with your time and through [financial support](#).

***Note that donations (over \$2) to MCF-A are tax deductible.***

## Prayer requests

To put forward prayer points for inclusion in the calendar please email the MCF Prayer Coordinator Dr Daniel Solomon: [Prayer Request](#)

You can also send through **urgent prayer points** that are sent on confidentially to the MCF Prayer Warriors, or enquire about becoming an MCF Prayer Warrior by contacting the MCF Office or Daniel.

## Contacting the MCF Office

**PHONE:** 02 6132 7845

**EMAIL:** [mcf.office@defence.gov.au](mailto:mcf.office@defence.gov.au) You can also find us on Facebook and ForceNet.

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