



eNews April 2024

Metamorphosis

There is a show I have seen a couple of times on TV where people take items that look like rubbish or should be thrown away and lovingly restore them to like new. Even though they may look like new often, they still have some small marks and scars when you look closely. If you visit Canterbury Cathedral in England, the Chapter House has been restored and looks absolutely resplendent, particularly the intricate ceiling.

When you take time to pause and rest from the stresses and strains of a changing and turbulent world, enabling you to reflect on what God wants you to do and how to do it, then He can begin the work of restoration. He (Jesus) restores my soul, he guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Psalm 23:3

Restoration, however, takes time, sometimes it may be quick however normally you have to work slowly and carefully to ensure that the results are lasting. This may test our patience however, if we allow it to occur at Jesus' speed then we find ourselves restored, equipped and prepared for the task ahead, despite any scars we may still carry.

ANZAC Day is a day which for some cause the scars and wounds to ache and hurt, however it is also can be part of the healing process as we reflect on ours and others service to this nation and its people. It enables us to put things into context and perspective.

It is my prayer that wherever you are in your journey of healing you take the time to first rest, then reflect and finally, like a butterfly emerging from its pupa stage, be finally transforming into a new creature of grace and beauty able to inspire others around you.

Godspeed,
Steve Neuhaus, MCF-A Chair



MCF-A Small Groups

RAAF Amberley – Keep an eye on the Amberley Notices for info on the MCF Small Group or contact matthew.coleman1@defence.gov.au for updated info.

It's exciting that there are a number of **new or revamped MCF-A Small Groups** as we move into 2024. **To find out if you have a Small Group in your area** check here: [Small groups - Military Christian Fellowship of Australia \(mcf-a.org.au\)](https://mcf-a.org.au) and if you can't find one, or would like to start one, click here: [Get Involved - Military Christian Fellowship of Australia \(mcf-a.org.au\)](https://mcf-a.org.au) or contact mcf.office@defence.gov.au

Website issues and an unknown donor

If you filled in a form on the MCF-A website in February and haven't had an email from the MCF-A Office, can you please redo the form as there were some technical issues during Feb meaning some forms didn't save once sent.

Also, there is a **regular fortnightly donor to MCF-A that started in January**. Thank you! The Office would love to know who you are so we can send you a tax receipt at the end of June. If you think it may be you please email mcf.office@defence.gov.au

MCF-A Office unattended

The MCF Office will be **unattended** due to annual leave from **3pm Friday 12th April until 9am Monday 22th April, 2024**. Please contact david.coleman1@defence.gov.au, phone 02 6203 6451 for anything urgent.

The Governor General of Australia and Mrs Hurley help celebrate 40 years of MCF-A

A reflection from the recent 40th Anniversary events in Canberra, 11/12 March 2024

"The MCF Council invites you to join us at a special event to celebrate 40 years of MCF in Australia. The Governor General, and former MCF Patron, is hosting an event at Government House to mark the 40th anniversary of MCF (formerly Officers' Christian Union) in Australia. This is a great opportunity to remember God's continued faithfulness to this ministry in support of Christians in Defence, to remember those who have served and the many lives impacted by the ministry over these four decades. We sincerely hope you can join us."



When the invite above arrived, Tracey and I jumped at this chance of a lifetime to attend and visit Government House and to meet our Governor General; however, we were wonderfully surprised when we realised that the Holy Spirit's presence must have been invited as well. We walked up through the beautiful sundrenched gardens towards the front door that has been made famous as the spot where all the Government's members stand for their photo after their swearing-in ceremonies. As the fellowship and friendships filled the room, it was humbling to be in

the company of about 60 of our brothers and sisters in Christ. The 40th anniversary of the MCF was the reason we were all there, but it was really to Glorify our Father for His continued love and protection for all in Defence and their families. As the Governor General entered the room, a sense of calm came over us all.

His Excellency, General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) and Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley, both reflected on their many years of service, and the joy of having MCF a part of the journey with them. Knowing that the prayers of many were with him and his family, came as a great comfort in times of difficulty and challenges. Mr Hurley shared the verse from 1 Peter 4: 10-11. *“Each of you should use whatever gifts you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms ... so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.”* This for me, is exactly what Mr and Mrs Hurley have done for their country, their God, and their families.



With her gift of songwriting, Mrs Hurley sang the song she wrote about the MCF which captured the essence of the Defence Ministry that is MCF perfectly. After her song, Mrs Hurley then invited us to join her in singing a hymn together. With full voices, we all Praised God with Confidence and Passion through the words of “To God be the Glory”. It was a truly moving experience, and the Holy Spirit’s presence was felt by all.



There were around 40 people that gathered for dinner together on the Monday night before, as we came from around Australia for fellowship and celebration of 40 years of the MCF. They were past and current; Patrons, MCF Exec and Council, Donors, Area Reps, Volunteers, Forum of Christian Military Ministry (FCMM) and other supporter organisations such as Bible Society and Association of Military Christian Fellowships (AMCF). Some from the present, some from around the time of amalgamation and everyone in between. These events coincided with the launch of Russell

Bielenberg's book – Faithful Service (a personal history of MCF-A) of which Russell was able to give a copy of to the Governor General the next day.



The Governor General and Mrs Hurley along with most of the 2024 MCF-A Exec and Council, and their spouses

My prayer for the next 40 years, is that MCF, can continue to grow and enhance the interdenominational Christian fellowship of all ranks, from all services and civilians who seek to promote Christian faith in the ADF. As our mission states, we promote Christian faith in Defence by;

- Being disciples for Christ,
- Encouraging, supporting, and developing Christians in Defence, and
- Actively supporting the ministry of Defence Chaplains.

We help members live effectively as Christians in Defence, by providing support to;

- Local area groups,
- Deployed members,
- All Defence Chaplains, and
- Other Christian Military Ministries.

Cheers and God Bless

Thommo, Darren Thomas, Vice-Chair MCF



Invited guest and spouses with the Governor General (a former MCF-A Patron) and Mrs Hurley at, Government House Canberra

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday 31st August - there will be an informal dinner in Canberra for everyone to help celebrate 40 years of MCF-A. Those that can't make it to Canberra are encouraged to organise an event in their area on the night. More info below and in coming months.

Book launch and welcome event

Faithful Service – A history of the Military Christian Fellowship of Australia book launch

by PRINCHA (Ret'd) Eric Burton



It was a normal Saturday morning in the beautiful grounds of St Johns Anglican Church Canberra on Saturday the 9th March, except on this particular morning it was not particularly normal; there were a group of about 45 people gathered for a special event:

A protest group perhaps?

An outside meeting of the church faithful? Not quite!

The group was meeting to launch the book *Faithful Service a History of the Military Christian Fellowship of Australia* (MCF-A) on the occasion of its 40th Anniversary by Lt Col Rtd Russell Bielenberg.

MCF-A Chair, Steve Neuhaus, along with long time MCF-A member Peter McKay (pictured) gave a few words followed by the actual launching of the book by Eric Burton.

The book is a record of the activities of the MCF over these 4 decades replete with lots of photos and stories and short history of how MCF-A came into being.



Of special note is the following:

- The controversy of the early years of MCF when there was a move to ban MCF groups from all bases.
- The bravery of members of MCF who defended the movement.
- The work of Russell and Helen Bielenberg (pictured with sons Thomas and Adrian) – the longest standing members of the group; in particular Russell’s work in promoting unity in Christian work in the military through the FCMM (Forum of Christian Military Ministries) bringing together groups such as the MCF, Solid Rock Ministries, Salvation Army (RSDS) , Everymans, FOCUS and Navigators.
- Recording the value of the world wide MCF (AMCF) conferences with the next one in Brazil at the end of the year – enquiries to james.vanheel@defence.gov.au



Copies of the book may be obtained by clicking this link to the MCF website: <https://mcf-a.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Advertising-via-MCF-updated.pdf>

MCF National Day of Prayer for Defence, June 2024



Saturday 15th June, 2024 has been chosen to set aside for the National Day of Prayer for Defence.

There is a booklet with suggested readings and prayers available on the MCF website for you to use and adapt for your area and Church. Your MCF Rep, or you, are encouraged to organise your own events with your Small Group, on your Base, in your local Bible Study group and at your Church. If an event can't be held on that day (or weekend, or the week either side), you are welcome to hold it when suitable but preferably before the end of June. **For those outside the Canberra area, it is strongly encouraged you host your own event but you are also welcome to join in the livestream of the Canberra event from St John's Anglican Church Reid beginning at 11am (AEST, CBR, SYD) on Saturday 15th June.**

Booklet, events and info link: [National Day of Prayer for Defence - 2024 - Military Christian Fellowship of Australia \(mcf-a.org.au\)](https://mcf-a.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Advertising-via-MCF-updated.pdf)

Video (you are welcome to use this to advertise your event): [MCF-A Prayer Event Invite](https://mcf-a.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Advertising-via-MCF-updated.pdf)

For more info and to register your group's event details please email: mcf.office@defence.gov.au

Meet one of the new MCF Member Reps

Dinusha Perera (LACW)



I have recently posted into RAAF Base Edinburgh from RAAF Base Tindal at the end of last year.

Growing up in Sri Lanka I come from a strong Catholic background where I studied in a convent. I have recently had my mum migrate to Australia and she is living with me.

My main reason for joining and wanting to be a part of the MCF was to be a part of the community, to give something back and share with our members of the experiences I have had over the years. Being in the military we sometimes tend to be caught up in life and forget to stop and reflect on life, which is why being a part of the MCF gives me a chance to stop and reflect on where I am at.

Looking after mum and taking her for Mass every Sunday gives me an opportunity reflect on my week. It helps me stay focused on my life's journey through its ups and downs.

I look forward to playing an active role within our MCF community and having mum involved in any events that come across the year to come.

SAVE THE DATE – Celebrating 40 years of MCF-A

Happy 40th Birthday



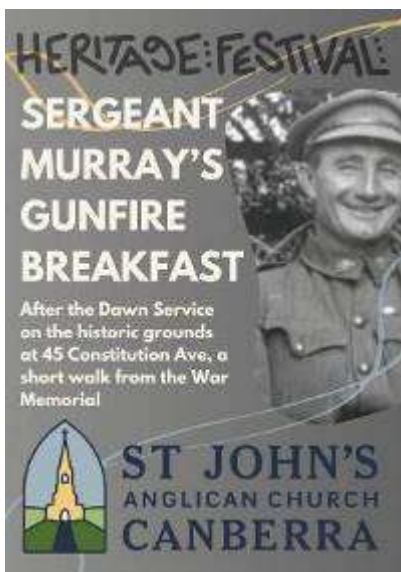
Praise be to God for 40 wonderful years of the Military Christian Fellowship of Australia after the amalgamation of the Australian Officers Christian Union and the Australian Services Christian Fellowship in 1984. MCF-A has evolved to include not only all in the ADF but all associated with Defence, such as APS and Contractors along with their families. MCF-A also likes to keep in contact and support those who have left Defence, and those who may not have served in Defence but have a passion to support those who do.

On Saturday 31st August, 2024 at St John's Anglican Church Reid, Canberra, MCF-A will host an informal dinner to celebrate this great milestone. Everyone is most welcome and you don't need to be in Defence to attend. Save the date and keep an eye on the eNews and your inbox closer to the date for more info and registration details. The MCF Council hope past and present members from all over Australia, including anyone who's had a connection to MCF will attend and help them celebrate. It is also hoped that we may be able to connect across Australia on the night via a livestream.

Other items that may be of interest

Helping Hands – TV series, ANZAC special

MCF-A Vice Chair, **Darren Thomas**, was recently on the TV series called 'Helping Hands' talking about **ANZAC Day**. If you'd like to view this episode you can watch it on **9Gem on Saturday 20th April**. Check your local guide for timings, or find it on [9Now - Helping Hands](#), series 2. There is an extended version and more info on www.helpinghands.tv. You may also like to watch the Easter episode where Darren talks about caring a cross while deployed in Afghanistan. The producer of this series was the Keynote Speaker at last year's Defence Christians Dinner in Puckapunyal.



This Anzac Day - Canberra

If you or someone you know is in Canberra for Anzac Day, drop by St Johns for a free coffee/tea and sausage sizzle between the War Memorial Dawn Service and the march. Easy walk, bottom end of Anzac Parade. There will be people doing guided tours of the grounds.

Why not make it a meeting point with friends?

Spread the word!



The power of reflection is so key in our walk with God, stopping and taking the time to ask God to show us things from his perspective each day. The key question for this NDOP is what is God saying to us? What is God saying to our nation? What is on His heart for our nation? How is God leading us to pray? What is He leading us (the body of Christ in the nation) to do? We know that Jesus is interceding for us individually, as a nation and globally. What is He interceding for us about? How can we join with Him in that prayer?

Online resources, event locations and registration via: www.australiaprays.com.au



Thursday 9th May, 2024

6.30am to 8.30am

Grand Ballroom, ICC
Darling Harbour, Sydney

They are expecting to have over 1,200 guests at the breakfast on Thursday 9 May 2024, but there is still room for more guests. They would love to have you there with them.

Please use sydneyprayerbreakfast.com.au to find out more and register.

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

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](#). (Direct debit preferred – details at right side of the webpage link)

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: daniel.solomon3@defence.gov.au

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 contact the MCF Office or Daniel.

Contacting the MCF Office

PHONE: 02 6132 7845

EMAIL: mcf.office@defence.gov.au You can also find us on Facebook and ForceNet.

To unsubscribe from this newsletter please contact: mcf.office@defence.gov.au