

**50 years  
of  
The Association of Military Christian  
Fellowships  
in  
Africa**



# **FIFTY YEARS OF MILITARY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIPS IN AFRICA – 1958 – 2008.**

***MOTTO: "ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS"***

***By Col. Charles Amaning  
Vice President AMCF Africa 1984 – 2002***

***The history of the AMCF Africa tells of our story, the African story of how God in His mercy has also extended His Salvation through His Son Jesus Christ to reach us. The story of the soldier embracing Christianity as a way of life is not new. We are told of a Roman Centurion (Soldier) accepting Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord and continued his military service. (Acts 10:24-48). This story AMCF is a record of events spanning fifty years.. There are several photographs which will show some of the activities during the fifty years journey .Please enjoy reading it and give glory to the name of our Lord. Amen.***

## ***Introduction***

***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..., teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...”(Matthew 28:19-20)***

In the closing chapter of British colonial rule in Africa, there were a few converted Christians among the British Officers who showed keen interest in winning souls for the Lord. This was about the time a few Africans also received their commission and one or two of them joined the British Officers Christian Union (OCU). Outside the military, one could hardly see the role a converted Christian soldier could play. Already, the examples of the veterans of the two world wars formed the wrong picture in the minds of many Christians as to what the soldier really is. They know of only one aim of the soldier, and that is to kill.

The stand of the Christian soldiers has become a “Stumbling Rock” in a world of fantasy and lacking aptitudes of a “True Soldier”. The life and behavior of the soldiers in the colonial era which was more of aggressiveness coupled with drinking and pillaging, cast a slur in the minds of many Africans on soldiers generally and caused people to think of them as belonging to people who are half wits only capable of indulging in acts of hooliganism.

Military Christian Fellowship outreach into Africa was specifically started in Ghana by one Major Yarde Martin, a member of the British OCU, who was posted to the then Gold Coast Army and served as the Military Secretary from 1952 to 1955. Ghana gained her independence in 1957 and in the following year 1958, the OCU was acknowledged and received official approval.

## ***The Early Formative Years – 1958 – 1980***

One of the Ghanaian Officers who joined Major Yarde Martin for prayer and Bible study was Officer Cadet Philemon Quaye. When Major Martin left Ghana, Philemon Quaye now a Captain, took over and organized fellowship meetings in his Unit and at his house.

The Scripture Union which was fast growing in the Secondary Schools became a springboard for rapid growth of the OCU in the military. The Scripture Union organized week-end rallies and Ester House Parties which were also taking place in other African Countries. Phil Quaye became a pillar in the SU both in Ghana and internationally and has remained so till now. Meanwhile at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst, UK a Ghanaian Officer Cadet by name Joshua Hamidu had accepted the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior at a British OCU winter Ski Party in Switzerland after hearing Dr. W. Robert Smith from the USA share the gospel. Joshua came from a strong conservative Moslem family.

In 1960, Ghana established her own Military Academy to train Officers. The OCU was introduced to the cadets, one of whom was Officer Cadet Charles Amaning. Once a week, Lt. Joshua Hamidu, now commissioned and back in Ghana, would ride his motor bicycle to the Academy to conduct prayer and Bible Study with the cadets. In the early sixties Colonel Quaye was posted to the Armed Forces Headquarters where he had a great opportunity to promote the OCU in other units.

The Ghana OCU received a great deal of support from the first International President Gen Baron van Thuyll of the Netherlands and his successor Major General Sir Robert Ewbank. There was also other support from the General Secretary of the British OCU, Cdr. Alan Fairbairn and the Executive Secretary of the American OCU Major. Cleo Buxton. As a sign of acceptance into the family of OCUs, Capt. Joshua Hamidu was invited to be the first African to attend the 1961 International Conference at Berchtesgarden, Germany. Two years later, in 1964, Lt. Charles Amaning was invited to attend the Lunteren Conference in the Netherlands. In 1968 a young Officer Cadet from Kenya by name John Seii was introduced to the OCU at the International Conference in Dassel, Germany and on his return he organized prayer and Bible Studies in his unit. In 1970, Major General Sir Robert and Lady Joyce Ewbank visited Ghana and Kenya. After his visit the General wrote to inform Ghana of the birth of the second Africa OCU in Kenya. In the same year South Africa started an OCU with a question mark whether it would be a true **“All One In Christ Jesus?”**, due to its apartheid stance at the time. Joyfully it was in 1994 that South Africa OCU was fully integrated into the family of OCUs. By the close of 1980, only three African countries had become OCU members.

In 1980, the United Kingdom organized an International Conference in Swanwick. Among the participants were 25 sponsored delegates from 11 Africa Countries. One significant event at the Conference was the appointment of Lt. General Joshua Hamidu as the first African Vice President. The African delegates were charged to go and spread the gospel and establish more fellowships. Thereafter, the British OCU and the American OCF gave their support through prayer, correspondence, literature and finance.

### ***The Missionary Thrusts – 1981 – 1990***

Soon after Swanwick 1980, the Association of Christian Conferences Teaching and Service (ACCTS), appointed Capt. Geoffrey Skippage of the UK to the Staff of the Secretariat and assigned him as a Traveling Secretary to help the movement in Africa. Capt. Skippage being able to understand and speak the French language became a very effective missionary to Africa. Meanwhile the African Vice President, General Hamidu, had relocated to Nairobi, Kenya and with the help of Capt. Skippage; the first Pan-African Regional Conference was organized and held at Limuru, Kenya in 1982. About 200 people from 11 African nations attended. The main speaker was Bishop Festo Kivengere of African Enterprise from Uganda. The supporting speaker was Dr. Samuel Kameleson of the World Vision International. In attendance were Lady Joyce Ewbank, Major General Clay and Mrs. Clara Buckingham, OCU General Secretary, Peter Melly, ACCTS General Secretary, Dell McDonald, Cdr. Chuck Piersee, Rev. Cdre Philemon Quaye and Capt. John Seii. The other Speakers at that Conference were Bishop David Gitari of Kenya and Dr. Isaac Zoukoue from the Central African Republic. Due to political instability in his country, General Hamidu resigned his position of VP for Africa and relocated to the UK. On 28 January 1984, Nigeria became the 4<sup>th</sup> Africa OCU established.

The AMCF World Conference in Seoul, September 27<sup>th</sup> – October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1984, was quite a remarkable occasion. There were 11 African Countries with military representation, all sponsored by Korean MSO and German COV, among others. The Conference programme was tightly packed and it was only after 10pm each evening that African Delegates were able to meet for prayer and fellowship. Capt. Skippage was made an honorary African. During those meetings the Africans were able to discuss AMCF ‘strategy’ for Africa and to plan the next African AMCF Conference for 1986 in Kenya. Colonel Charles Amaning from Ghana was elected as AMCF Vice President for Africa to replace General Joshua Hamidu who had stepped down.

In preparation for the next Pan-African Conference, Geoff Skippage undertook a Missionary Thrust into many African countries. The first countries visited were Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Madagascar. He was able to meet Christian Officers who clearly would be suitable for attendance at the 1986 Conference and also to meet those in authority who would be involved in giving clearance for them to attend. Other countries visited were Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda and Rwanda.

Geoff's traveling efforts were greatly rewarded as witnessed in the attendance of a large number of Africans represented at the Pan- African AMCF Conference in Nairobi in 1986. The following is an extract from a report in "OCU NEWS" of Dec. 1986/Jan, 1987.

***"We are very grateful to all OCU members who contributed so marvelously to the traveling cost of delegates to this superb Conference 1986 held at the University of Nairobi. As a result, over 250 Africans from the Armed Forces of 24 different African countries were able to have, for most of them a first time, experience of inspiring fellowship, teaching and debate with those in other armies. The majority of those attending were from the host nation and it was President Arap Moi of Kenya who opened the Conference for us with a striking message. Several delegations present expressed their intentions of starting Military Christian Fellowships in their own countries."***

The theme of the 1986 Pan-African conference was "Christ is our Peace" and the main speaker was Dr. Appianda Arthur, the Regional Director for Africa of the Prisons Fellowship International. The second speaker was Pasteur Emilien Razafiarison, Scripture Union representative for Madagascar, who gave his address in French. Rev Lt. Col S.K. Mwambiri, the Chaplain of Kenya Forces played an important role in organizing this Conference. In attendance were Major General Clay and Clara Buckingham and some ACCTS and British OCU staff members. Lt. Col. Alexander Heroys of British Army on secondment to Kenya Forces, acted as the Conference Secretary.

In 1987, the General Secretary of ACCTS, Lt Col Dell McDonald and his wife Betty, and two Staff members, Lt Col Emanuel Williams and Dennis Stafford, traveled to Liberia to teach the Chaplains of Liberia Armed Forces at the invitation of Chaplain Capt. Isaac Liberty. Dell and Betty continued to Sierra Leone to teach Chaplains headed by Chaplain Thomas George.

### ***Africa Regional Groupings and Expansion 1991 – 2000***

In the early 1990s, there was great manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit as seen in the rapid growth of MCFs in Africa. At the 1991 Presidential Bench retreat in White Sulphur Springs, USA, it was suggested that Africa should be divided into three Regional groupings due to its size and for ease of administration. Though there was a general agreement no action could be taken until 7 years later.

The first Pan African Conference in West Africa was held in Cotonou, Benin in 1992. There were 300 delegates in attendance, most of them coming from the Francophone West African Countries. The main speaker was Rev. Godfried Osei Mensah of African Enterprise based in the UK. The theme was ***"Peace be to you from God" (Eph 1:2)***

The VP Col Charles Amaning and Geoff Skippage made several trips to Benin to plan the Conference together with the Army Chief of Staff Col. Andre Atchade. Major General Sir Laurence New, the newly appointed AMCF President together with Maj. Gen. Ian Durie, Lt. Col. Emanuel Williams, Rev. Lt. Col. Val Rajah, Rev. Cdre P.F. Quaye and Maj. Jan Ransom were in attendance. The Conference experienced a very high spiritual uplifting as singing and dancing featured high in the programme. For the President, it was his first time of dancing to an African rhythm. After a few toddling steps, he picked up the rhythm and thoroughly enjoyed himself to the glory of God. A few of the delegates gave their lives to Christ. An interesting incident that happened at this Conference was that as soon as the programme had started, information was received that the Togo Government was going to close its borders for elections and that meant delegates North and

West of Togo who mostly traveled by road would have to wait for two days after the close of the Conference. For this reason, the Conference closed two days early.

A Southern Africa Military Chaplains Conference was organized by ACCTS in Kariba, Zimbabwe, in 1993. In attendance were the VP for Africa Col. Charles Amaning, four senior Chaplains from South Africa, Rev. Lt. Col. Val Rajah and Geoff Skippage. The Zimbabwe Minister of Defense was a special guest at the closing ceremony.

As part of strengthening country MCFs, the VP for Africa, Col. Charles Amaning and Rev. Lt. Col. Val. Rajah were invited to attend the reconstitution of the South African MCF in Cape Town, in 1994. In the same year, in 1994, a World Conference was held at Virginia Beach, USA, which saw 50 African delegates in attendance. Following "USA 94" and still strengthening country MCFs, VP Col. Charles Amaning and Lt. Col. Emanuel Williams of ACCTS USA, were sponsored by ACCTS to tour some 10 Francophone Countries in 1996. The visit should have included a Pan-African Conference, the second in West Africa, in Lagos, Nigeria, but this was aborted.

The Angolan MCF was inaugurated by Major General Sir Laurence New on 15 November. 1995.

In 1997 at Sunbury Court, UK, Commandant Gaston Gnomou and his wife Loise were commissioned as Vice President for Francophone Africa to oversee the French speaking MCF in Africa. In the same year 1997, there was a move to create Vice President for North and East Africa. Brigadier Njuki Mwaniki was appointed as its new Vice President. The Swaziland embryo MCF was inaugurated by Major General Sir Lawrence New in April 1997.

Again in September 1997 Geoff Skippage together with Major General Tumwine and the Uganda MCF organized a Pan-African Conference in Kampala. The main speaker was Rev. Zac Miringye (Uganda) who was supported by Dr. Tokumboh Adeyemo (Nigerian). The theme was ***"Harvesting Righteousness in Peace" (James 3:18)***. Present at the Conference were VP Col. Charles Amaning, Maj. Gen Ian Durie, Brig David Stileman, Lt Col Jan Ransom, Mrs. Mary Wheeler and Rev. Lt Col Val and Gina Rajah. Also in 1997, Cdr. Jean and Mrs. Suzanne Bayevelvd from SAMCF represented South Africa at the Asian Regional Conference in Seoul, Korea.

South Africa organized the first Southern African Conference in February 1998 in Cape Town. The Conference whose theme was ***"One Body Many Parts" (1 Cor. 12 vs 12.)***, and mainly targeted countries from Southern African including Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Sao Tome, Zambia and Zimbabwe. AMCF representatives from Ghana, the UK, and USA also attended the Conference including Col. Charles Amaning, and his wife Christine. Col. Tom Capps (Rtd), USA, was instrumental in getting and financing approximately nine Mozambican delegates to attend. After this Conference the South African MCF agreed that a follow-up trip to the South Africa Region will be beneficial. Therefore in July 2000 four members of the SAMCF traveled by road to Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Botswana, Zambia and Namibia. The team was supported in Mozambique by the then USA attaché, Maj. Bernie and Sara Sparrow, who helped establish the Mozambican MCF and later the Angolan MCF.

In July 1998, there was a Conference in Rwanda with a theme ***"Christian Ethics in Military Leadership"***. Speakers were Major General Elly Tumwine (Uganda), Col. Philip Chebet, Majors Geoff Muturi, Francis Ogolla and Simon Kinorgor (Kenya) and two OCU members from UK and Geoff Skippage.

There was another Pan-African Conference in Nairobi Kenya, in September 1998. This was attended by the AMCF President Maj. Gen. Sir Laurence and Lady New who together with Col. Charles Amaning laid hands on Maj. Gen. Njuki and Mrs. Lois Mwaniki as VP for the North and East Africa Region at a commissioning ceremony. The Conference which was held at the Safari Park Hotel had its theme as ***"Harvesting Righteousness in Peace"*** and was opened by his Excellency Arap Moi, the then Kenyan

President. There were approximately seven hundred (700) delegates in attendance, the majority of them from Kenya.

### ***Consolidation and Spiritual Growth from 2000 and Beyond***

In January 2000 the president of AMCF, Major General Sir Lawrence and lady New visited Ghana and from there traveled to Cote d' Ivoire to chair a Pray and Plan meeting. Present were himself Col Charles Amaning, Cdr Mike Piper, Col. Henry Ladele and Comdt Gaston Gnomou.

The first Francophone International Conference under its VP Gaston Gnomou took place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The theme was ***“The Bible and Military Values”***. Those from outside included Col Charles Amaning, Col. Henry Ladele, Rev, Simon Farmer and Lt. Col. Jan Ransom.

Following the visit of 2000, a very successful AMCF regional conference was held in Lusaka, Zambia in 2001. The president AMCF Major General Sir Laurence New and his wife Lady Anna were in attendance. The concept of the “stronger” MCF Countries being Lighthouse” (recommended by Maj. Gen. Ian Durie) MCFs to the younger MCFs, was introduced at the Zambian Regional Conference. The Lighthouse Support countries concept remains to the present, but has not worked as well as it should do.

Also in 2001 Cdr. Peter Louwrens was appointed and confirmed as Vice President of Southern Africa with his wife Di. In the same year 2001 Major General Sir Laurence and Lady Anna new visited Sierra Leone.

Col Charles Amaning, who has been the longest serving Vice President (18 years), brought his service to a close at a Pan-African Conference for West Africa held in Lagos Nigeria, in 2002. Air Cdre Ishaku Komo of Nigeria was nominated to replace him. The main speaker was Rev Dr. Nii Amoo Darko of Africa Enterprise. The Theme was ***“A Living Sacrifice Unto God” (Rom, 12:1)***. There were 300 delegates in attendance. The AMFC President General Lee and Mrs. Pil Sup together with Col Charles and Mrs. Christine Amaning laid hands on the new VP, Ishaku and his wife Sarah, to confirm the appointment. Present from ACCTS MMI were Rev Major General Ian Durie, Rev Simon Farmer, Lt Col Jan Ransom and VP for AMCF Southern Africa, Naval Capt Peter Louwrens.

In 2002 SAMCF organized the first Table Mountain Top Interaction (TMTI) for Junior Military Officers/Leaders from Southern Africa in Cape Town. The aim of the Interaction was to encourage Junior Military Leaders from the Southern Africa Region and abroad in their faith and give them a truly Christian mountain top experience.

South Korea organized a World Conference in 2004 and gave out a number of sponsorship to some African delegates to attend. At that Conference African leaders met to discuss the setting up of a Secretariat for each Region. A decision was also taken to organize an African Conference in Kenya in 2008. There were 152 Africa delegates in Korea.

The Southern Africa AMCF organized a Regional Conference in Gaborone, Botswana in 2005 under the leadership of VP Peter Louwrens and his wife Di. Those in attendance were the AMCF President Gen Lee and his wife, VP Air Cdre Ishaku Komo, Major John Seii, Lt Col Jan Ransom, Rev Simon Farmer and Col Charles Amaning.

### ***Partners in Service***

When the seed of Military Christian Fellowship was sown in Ghana in the late 1950s, support mainly came from the Officers Christian Union (OCU) of UK and USA- the latter before it changed its name to the American Officers Christian Fellowship (OCF) as already indicated in the earlier paragraphs. There were individuals who gave their life support to the budding fellowship being formed in Africa. Ghana received its earlier support from General Baron Von Thuyll of the Netherlands and Major General Sir Robert Ewbank, the first and the second Presidents of the International OCU respectively.

Dr. Robert W. Smith from the USA was a great catalyst in encouraging the young OCU through his frequent visit to Africa. When the Association of Christian Conferences, Teachings and Service (ACCTS) was formed, its General Secretary, Major Cleo W. Buxton gave tremendous financial support which enabled some members to attend International Conferences and Interactions. This kind of support brought about the rapid growth of the fellowship on the Continent. Some few others to mention are Major General Clay Buckingham, Cdr Alan Fairbairn, Cdr Peter Melly, Mr. Paul Pettijohn and Mrs. Mary Wheeler.

The decision of ACCTS to appoint Capt Geoffrey Skippage to its Staff, supplied the greatest impetus in launching a Missionary Thrust into many African countries. Geoff with his knowledge of French was able to plant fellowship in many French speaking countries. By the year 2000, MCFs on the continent had grown to 26 confirmed, 18 in contact and 4 not yet visited. All glory to the Lord Most High. Three African Staff members were appointed namely Col. Henry Ladele, Major John Seii, and Rev Val and Gina Rajah and assigned to specific areas in Africa

Henry as Accts MMI Point-Man for West Africa, he travelled to many parts of the sub region preaching the gospel, encouraging military Christians and establishing new contacts. In this ministry, he endured hardship in his travels, was imprisoned at a frontier and faced opposition to his message. At the same time he saw the power of God open the door of the most senior officers in the region to his ministry and braved with many government ministers and military chiefs and commanders and received their permission to take the gospel to their armed forces and instigate military Christian fellowships where hitherto barriers had been insurmountable.

Major John Seii was a well known figure and was instrumental in the establishment of military Christian fellowships in East Africa. He was involved in Accts MMI almost since inception and was a key figure in the founding of the Military Christian Fellowship of Kenya. In 2000 he was taken on as the Accts MMI staff member for East Africa and much of his work involved assisting the training and establishment of Chaplains in South Sudan. Hereafter, he traveled throughout the region and later in Southern Africa too when he supported his wife, Tabitha in her appointment as Kenya High Commissioner in South Africa.

Rev Val Rajah and his wife Gina were appointed to the ACCTS USA staff and assigned to assist countries in Southern Africa particularly Portuguese speaking Africa. Val and Gina traveled to establish or encourage Christian fellowships in Angola and Mozambique.

Financial, prayer and literature support have also been received from ACCTS, Accts MMI, OCUs and Korean MSO. This support has enabled many Africans to attend International Conferences. These partners have also helped the Chaplaincy Service and in some cases helped some countries to start one. They have also given support to the three African staff assigned to the regions.

### ***The Establishment of regional secretariats***

By the year 2000, Africa has been divided into four regional sectors namely: 1) North and East Africa, 2) Southern Africa, 3) Anglophone West Africa, 4) Francophone Africa. As the work of Africa MCFs is growing, financial support has not matched the rate of expansion. It has appeared increasingly evident that some form of intervention, especially, for travel was needed for the VPs. The Lord provided part of the answer by his creation of ACCTS and later Accts MMI. Both associations have the ability to raise funds; their major expenditure has consistently been funding Conferences including, very often, delegates travel. However, to date very few nations have provided financial support for ACCTS/Accts MMI work and thus AMCF activities. The resourcing aspect has not grown in the same way as the membership and activities level of the Association but the demand on the few resource grows. As a consequence it was becoming much more difficult for ACCTS and Accts MMI to assist the VPs with their travel. Thus it was expected that national MCFs should assume a greater responsibility for travel expenses of their Regional VPs.

In view of these short comings, a decision was taken to establish a Secretariat for each regional VP to function as follows:

1. To assist the VP in his day to day administration of his region.
2. To keep a small office with a secretary who will deal with correspondence and other administrative matters to free the VP of workload.
3. The Secretariat would be a channel to source for funds from within the Region.
4. To provide the communication link to all local MCFs and outside the region.

### ***Appointment Holders of Regional Vice President***

1980 to 1983 Africa. Lt. General Joshua Hamidu

1984 to 2002 Africa. Col. Charles Amaning.

1997 to date Francophone Africa. Commandant Gaston Gnoumou

1998 to date Africa North and East Major General Njuki Mwaniki'

2001 to date Southern Africa. Capt. (Navy) Peter Louwrens.

2002 to date Anglophone West Africa. Air Cdre Ishaku Komo