

The Story of PWOC-USA

Military chapels have long existed in the United States. In those chapels women have worshiped, studied the Bible, united for community projects and enjoyed Christian fellowship with other women. However, a nationwide connection between women in those chapel communities has not always existed. That changed in 1989 and the change began in Europe.

On May 16, 1989, at the 34th Annual Leadership Training Conference of PWOC United States Forces Europe, in Sondhofen, Germany, Chaplain (Captain) Herbert M. Goetz, U.S. Navy Fleet Chaplain and PWOC-Europe Navy Advisor, invited attendees who would be leaving Europe that summer to meet to discuss a "Vision of Connecting of PWOC". Nearly 100 women attended the meeting. From that meeting, Chaplain Goetz and 11 women volunteered to organize the concept of developing "PWOC- America". They found that the desire to build a PWOC network among U.S. military chapel communities was very strong for the following reasons: to provide continuity of discipleship for those women who choose to worship in stateside chapels; to provide a strong, Christ-centered bridge between women in the U.S. and foreign U.S. military chapel communities; and to retain the momentum of faith building, prayer, evangelism, stewardship, teaching and community service nurtured in military chapel communities outside the states.

Ann Besson was secretary of the group and on behalf of the group, in two separate speeches, addressed the 1989-90 incoming European Council (to establish a position of historical birth in its minutes) and the conference attendees (to announce the vision of "PWOC-America"). The response to starting the PWOC network was overwhelmingly positive. The theme that year was "He Is My Shepherd". The scripture was Isaiah 40:11 and the hymn was "He Leadeth Me".

November 16-18, 1990, Gale C. Wright, (EC President, 1988-89) coordinated the 35th Anniversary/1st International Reunion for the Protestant Women of the Chapel, in St. Louis, MO. The guest speaker was Rev. Maria-Alma Rainey Copeland, assistant to the Bishop of the North Carolina Synod for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, whose topic was "Christ Is Our Hope", the conference theme. The theme scripture was Hebrews 6-19 and the hymn was "The Solid Rock". A commemorative Bible was given to conference attendees. The reunion attracted 95 people from all walks of current and past PWOC involvement. Each branch of the Armed Forces was represented. People signed in from Panama, California, Alaska, Massachusetts, Georgia, and states in between.

One attendee, former Army Chaplain John Rhea, had been to the first PWOC-Europe conference in October 1955. Nine former European Council presidents, who had served terms from 1967 to 1989, were present.

In the course of the reunion, pressure mounted to meet the growing grassroots desire for a national PWOC network to be expressed in an annual training conference. A committee took shape to harness the collective interests of the assembly and to come up with a working plan and a start date. Invited to participate in the committee were active duty and retired chaplains, former European Council presidents, and two members-at-large. The fruit of their labor was as follows:

The stateside PWOC network was to be called "PWOC-USA". Each Monday was to be a PWOC Day of Prayer. The training conference was to be held by Fall 1992.

A training conference steering committee was formed, chaired by Gretchen Brown (EC President 1979-89); Finance Secretary, Sandy Burley (EC President 1986-87); Conference Logistics and Transportation Coordinator, Altha JOHNSON (1989 "PWOC-America" committee member); Washington DC Liaison, Mary Alice Heffner (EC President 1974-75); Publicity Coordinator, Ann Besson (1989 "PWOC- America" committee secretary); and Advisor- Chaplain Jack Ettershank, USA retired.

The steering committee was installed in a ceremony during a communion service officiated by a chaplain from each service: Capt. Herbert Goetz (USMC), LTC Larry Mosley (USAF), Maj. James Snyder (USA), and Lt. Deborah K. Banks (USN). Gretchen appointed Mona Bailey (EC President 1977-78, 1983-84) as training conference coordinator.

On December 19, 1990, a package was sent to each Chief of Chaplains detailing the PWOC-USA vision as organized at the November gathering. A commemorative anniversary Bible and program booklet were also part of the package. Fund support was requested in the letter. Chaplain (Col.) Meredith Standley, Executive Director, Armed Forces Chaplains Board, was our point of contact at the Pentagon. Seed money for the first PWOC-USA Training Conference was donated by each of the services.

January 9, 1991 The establishment of PWOC-USA was unanimously endorsed during the 235th meeting of the Armed Forces Chaplains' Board, 9 January 1991, in Washington, DC.

May 7-9, 1992, the first PWOC-USA Training Conference was held in Oklahoma City, OK. The theme was "More Than We Dare", based on Deuteronomy 28:1-2. Speakers were Hansi and Betty Pershing of HANSI Ministries, Inc. Special music was provided by Joan Miller. Rochelle Wheeler was the Worship leader, accompanied by Doris Lambert. Nine training classes were offered. Attendance was approximately 165. Army, Air Force and Marine services were represented. One Army and three Air Force chaplains attended.

During the first conference, a nomination committee was formed; six national areas were introduced (Northeast, Southeast, Central, West, Alaska and Hawaii); and 7 new officers were installed. These were: President Sandy Burley, Vice President

Deborah Seekins, Secretary/Publicity Coordinator Ann Besson, Financial Secretary Gwen Chandler, and Regional Coordinators - Caroline Grube (Northeast), Dawn Harper (Southeast), Brenda Jones (Central), Michelle Jackson/Marlene Lyon (Western). Mary Wake was appointed Washington Liaison. Chaplain (COL) George Pejakovich was appointed by the Army Chief of Chaplains to be the PWOC-Army Advisor. It was proposed and accepted that the national conference would be held even years and the regional conferences to be held odd years.

September 19-25, 1992, Caroline Grube, Nancy Smith and Mary Wake flew to Moscow and Omsk, Siberia to see first-hand the ministry opportunities and needs of Russian military families for a project called "Operation Open Hearts, Open Doors". Invited by a nonprofit organization, Operation Helping Hands, PWOC-USA was challenged to raise funds, purchase humanitarian aid items, and deliver them personally for the first openly celebrated Russian Orthodox Christmas in more than 70 years. Caroline coordinated the massive undertaking.

January 2-10, 1993, 20 women representing Christian Women of the Chapel, eight of their family members, two chaplains, four translators, and five representatives from Operation Helping Hand fulfill the September promises made by Caroline, Nancy and Mary to return to Omsk. From around the world more than \$30,000 from designated offerings and individual donations were contributed. Many corporations donated generously from their warehouses. And more than 10,000 Russian New Testaments were dispersed. Trip participants met with local Russian Orthodox clergy, military cadets, rocket forces, air force and army support forces. Some members of the group visited children and veteran hospitals, a gulag and attended Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services.

In the spring of 1993, between 60 and 75 women, representing 11 to 15 military installations, participated in five regional conferences. Unique to the Northeast Region conference was the attendance of eight Russian women from Omsk, Siberia. They had come by invitation as the result of Operation Open Hearts, Open Doors.

January 6-7, 1994, Sandy Burley, PWOC-USA President, garners encouragement and support from each of the U.S. military Chief of Chaplains for PWOC-USA, during courtesy calls paid while she participated in the Open Hearts, Open Doors reunion in Washington, DC.

PWOC-USA Themes

YEAR	THEME *	SCRIPTURE	HYMN
1989	He is My Shepherd	Isaiah 40:1	He Leadeth Me
1990	Christ, Our Hope	Hebrews 6:19	My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less
1991-92	More Than We Dare To Ask	Deut 28:1-2	
1992-93	God's Perfect Peace	Isaiah 26:3	It Is Well With My Soul
1993-94	Glorify Thy Name	Psalms 86:12	To God Be the Glory
1994-95	Embrace the Cross	I Cor 1:18	The Old Rugged Cross
1995-96	Stand On His Word	Isaiah 40:8	Standing On the Promises
1996-97	Sisters in Christ, Arise!	Eph 6:10	Soldiers of Christ, Arise
1997-98	Hear the Father's Heart	Matt 22:37-39	Take Time to be Holy
1998-99	Draw Near the Throne of Grace	Heb 4:16	Amazing Grace
1999- 2000	Called for Such a Time as This	Esther 4:14 Eph 1:18	Here Am I, Lord
2000-01	Proclaim the Blessed Hope	Isaiah 61:1-3	My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less
2001- 2002	Fix Your Eyes On Jesus	Heb. 12:2	Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus
2002- 2003	Filled With the Light of His Glory	2 Cor. 4:6-7	Heaven Came Down Glory Filled My Soul
2003- 2004	Come To the Living Water	John 7:37-38 Rev. 22:17	Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken Come As You Are
2004- 2005	Delight In The Lord	Psalms 37:4	Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee I Give You My Heart
2005- 2006	We Are Workers Together For Christ	1 Corinthians 3:9 Hebrews 10:24- 26	Blest Be The Tie That Binds Workers Together For Christ

** In the spirit of unity, the PWOC-USA theme is frequently the same as the PWOC-Europe theme.*

Past PWOC-USA Presidents and National Boards

1990-1992 Gale Wright, Steering Committee Chairperson

1992-1994 Sandy Burley

1994-1996 Ann Besson

1996-1998 Lucinda Fisher

1998-2000 Shellie Kelly

2000-2002 Brenda Pace

2002-2004 Rochellé Wheeler

2004-2006 Kim Worrell

PWOC-USA National Board 1992-1994

Sandy Burley, President

Deborah Seekins, Vice President

Ann Besson, Secretary/Publicity Coordinator

Gwen Chandler, Financial Secretary

Mary Wake, Washington Liaison

Chaplain George Pejakovich, Chaplain Advisor

PWOC-USA National Board 1994 - 1996

Ann Besson - President

Caroline Grube - Vice-President/Training Conference Coordinator

Julie Johnson - Secretary

Deborah Seekins - Financial Secretary

Chaplain Dennis Camp - Chaplain Advisor

Pat Cerjan, Amelda Jones, Rosalin Short - Titus 2 Advisors

Sandy Burley - Resource List Manager

PWOC-USA National Board 1996 - 1998

Lucinda Fisher - President

Vera Bell - Vice-President/Training Conference Coordinator

Barbara Boykin - Secretary

Shellie Kelly - Financial Secretary

Chaplain Wayne Lehrer - Chaplain Advisor

Pat Cerjan, Mary Jane Taylor - Titus 2 Advisors

Karen Dement - Prayer Coordinator

Sondra Lambert, Julie Stoll - Resource List Managers

PWOC-USA National Board 1998-2000

Shellie Kelly - President
Brenda Pace - Vice-President/Training Conference Coordinator
Karen McEver - Secretary
Joyce Moore - Financial Secretary
Chaplain Hugh Dukes, Chaplain Tim Taylor, Chaplain Jim Puchy, Chaplain Don Hanchett - Chaplain Advisors
Vera Bell, Pat Cerjan, Caroline Grube - Titus 2 advisors
Helen Jackson - Prayer Ministries Coordinator

PWOC-USA National Board 2000-2002

Brenda Pace – President
Rhonda King – 1st Vice President/ Fall Focus
Victoria Robinson – 2nd Vice President/ Traveling Training
Judy Wiseman – Secretary
Caroline Grube – Financial Liaison
Christina Wood – Prayer Coordinator
Rochelle Wheeler – Web Weaver
Chaplain Jim Puchy - Chaplain Advisor
Vera Bell, Becky Shirey and Debbie Stewart - Titus 2 Advisors

PWOC-USA National Board 2002-2004

Rochellé Wheeler - President
Deb Easterling - 1st Vice President, Fall Focus
Kim Worrell - 2nd Vice President, Traveling Training
Cinky Jones - Secretary
Chaplain James Puchy - Chaplain Advisor
Chaplain Gary Cuncell - Chaplain Advisor
Caroline Grube - Financial Liaison
Teresa Puckett - Prayer Coordinator
Shellie Kelly - Leadership Selection Committee Chairman
Shirley Rogers, Julie Stoll, Becky Shirey - Titus II Advisors
Kelley Barber, Kristen Rietkerk - Web Weavers
Brenda Pace - Advisor
Dawn Galloway - Assistant, Traveling Training
Maureen Lee - Assistant, Fall Focus

PWOC-USA National Board 2004-2006

Kim Worrell - President

Pat Davis - 1st Vice President, Fall Focus

Sandy Troutman - 2nd Vice President, Traveling Training

Kristen Rietkerk - Secretary

Chaplain Gary Councill - Chaplain Advisor

Shellie Kelly - Financial Liason

Lisa Nelson - Prayer Coordinator

Ruth Bloomstrom - Leadership Selection Committee Chairman

Dawn Galloway, Shirley Rogers, Caroline Grube - Titus II Advisors

Kelley Barber - Web Weaver

Brenda Pace - Resource Manager

Beth Mills - Assistant, Traveling Training

Karen Cribb - Assistant, Fall Focus

PWOC-USA Conferences

1992 PWOC-USA Conference

Oklahoma City, OK

More Than We Dare - Deu.28:1-2

Mona Bailey - coordinator

Maria Anne "Hansi" Hirschmann, Betty Pershing - speakers

Joan Miller - guest musician

Rochelle Wheeler/Doris Lambert - praise and worship team

1994 PWOC-USA Conference

Atlanta, GA

Embrace the Cross - 1 Cor.1:18 - "On a Hill Away" ("Old Rugged Cross")

Evelyn Christenson - speaker

Betsy Brown/Sandra Pipkin - praise and worship team

1999 PWOC-USA Conference

Colorado Springs, CO

Sisters in Christ, Arise - Eph.6:10 - "Soldiers of Christ, Arise"

Quin Sherrer - guest speaker

Cindy Edwards - praise and worship leader

Betsy Brown - musician

1998 PWOC-USA Conference

Cherry Hill, NJ

Draw Near the Throne of Grace - Heb.4:16 - "Amazing Grace"

speaker - Reona Joly

Rochelle Wheeler/Karen McEver - praise and worship

2000 Fall Focus-USA

San Antonio, Texas

Proclaim the Blessed Hope - Isaiah 61:1-3 - "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less"

Laurie Katz McIntyre - speaker

Shepherd's Heart Ministry Team - Dennis Jernigan, Kathy Law, Chuck Angel

Rochelle Wheeler - praise and worship leader

Betsy Brown - special music

2002 Fall Focus-USA

Orlando, Florida

Filled with the Light of His Glory - 2 Corinthians 4:6-7 "Heaven Came Down and
Glory Filled My Soul"

Carol Kent - speaker

Shepherd's Heart Ministry Team - Dennis Jernigan, Kathy Law, Chuck Angel

Kim Moore - praise and worship leader

2004 Fall Focus-USA

Ridgecrest, North Carolina

Delight in the Lord – Psalm 37:4 – “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” ”I Give You My Heart”

Pam Farrel – speaker

Alicia Williamson – praise and worship