

# The Messenger

October 2008

## A Message from the Executive Director...

OBI has been blessed with the addition of Michael Weiss to the OBI team. He comes to us after a successful career in the US Army, having provided support to chaplains at the highest levels of command. He achieved the highest rank possible, sergeant major, and, upon retirement after 27 years of active duty service, he was selected to serve a term as the honorary chaplain corps regimental sergeant major. This keeps him involved in supporting active duty Army chaplains and chaplain assistants around the world with encouragement and expertise. One of his passions is to mentor ministry leaders and he is currently working with a chaplain candidate from Nebraska.

Since coming on board, Michael has been instrumental in streamlining our office procedures and implementing an improved financial accounting system, thereby improving our ability to be more responsive to volunteers, supporters, and staff. Michael is continuing his formal education at Regent University by pursuing a Masters Degree in Biblical Studies. This formal education is expected to round out Michael's expertise



so he may develop an OBI complementary program that develops pastor and chaplain assistants.

Michael's wife, Darlene, is instrumental in working alongside Michael, and they are the proud parents of two, Susie and Michael.

*Victor Salazar*

## Expanding OBI's Reach to the African Continent

OBI has begun expanding its reach into the continent of Africa. Substantive discussions were held recently with national-level military ministry representatives during the Pan-African Association of Military Christian Fellowships (AMCF) Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya. While there were some celebratory



moments, the sobering issues remained in the forefront. A common need expressed by many of the delegates was the

professionalization of its chaplains, a skill set OBI has been developing over the years. One key initiative involves the training of chaplains and chaplain assistants from the West Africa Region, specifically the Mano River Union (MRU) of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. One other avenue of support under discussion is to train some trainers from Kenya and Ghana who will in turn launch into Sudan to develop a chaplain corps. To remain relevant, especially in Africa, we will also continue to update our curriculum to include addressing the facets of humanitarian assistance to war widows, orphans, and abandoned children.



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## Club Ruth Offers Business Seminars to Women in Ukraine

Asst. Professor Lynn Barnes, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate, Eastern Kentucky University, led a series of five seminars in five cities in western Ukraine for Club Ruth last March. Last October 2007, OBI sponsored a conference in Ukraine for 115 military wives and military women to launch

fellowship groups around the country.

*This was the first stand-alone conference for women in the military community which OBI has offered in the twelve years OBI has been working in Ukraine.* After the conference, the OBI team divided into three smaller teams and traveled to thirteen cities throughout Ukraine to promote the formation of Club Ruths, similar to the Protestant Women of the Chapel (PWOC) fellowships in the US military.

At the autumn conference, Lynn (herself a daughter of a retired U.S. Navy Chaplain) lead very



heavily attended workshop sessions on starting small businesses. In March, Lynn used her spring break to go back to Ukraine to continue teaching on this important issue. The Ukrainian military is in a 40% drawdown over the next two years in preparation for the military becoming

an all volunteer military in 2010. Many military people, particularly professional officers, are having to leave the military and look for a new career in an economy that cannot absorb them all that well. Ukrainian women have historically provided an important second source of income to support their families. Lynn's teaching hits the button at the right time in the right place. Between 100-120 women attended her seminars with many requests for her to return. Lynn's teaching also has the effect of making Club Ruth a place where women can be helped practically as well as a place to be in fellowship with other Christian women.

Lynn changed jobs and is now at West Virginia University in Morgantown, WV. At her earliest opportunity, Spring Break (March '09) Lynn plans to return to Ukraine to continue the Christian business seminars.

## ***OBI Returns to Mongolia***

One of our closest allies in the war on terror is Mongolia. Their forces were committed to joining the coalition in an active role from the very outset. Additionally, the Mongolian forces have added unit deployments as international peacekeepers to their already high operations tempo calendar.

A lingering issue that has been raised is the long term effects of separation, in both combat and peacekeeping environments, on the soldiers and families of deployed forces. OBI has begun to assist in dealing with this issue by providing training and education to counselors who will deal with both the service



members and their families. The initial group of counselors who were trained in April 2008 was comprised of civilian volunteers from across Mongolia who spent three and a half days in hands-on training. This project was facilitated by the Mongolian national director of Centurions Ministry, the Military Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ (CCCMM).

Due to the success of the initial effort, OBI is set to return to Mongolia at the invitation of the Army General Staff and will have as its training audience active duty officers. Coordination efforts are underway so that the training will be conducted at a military garrison outside of the capital city, Ulan Bator.

We are honored to play such a key role in supporting the Mongolian Forces and their families and we look forward to sharing good reports with you in the days ahead.

### ***OBI EVENTS CALENDAR 2008/2009***

<b><i>September</i></b>	<b><i>Pan-Africa Association of Military Christian Fellowships Conference, Nairobi, Kenya</i></b>
<b><i>October</i></b>	<b><i>Chaplain Training, Kiev Theological Seminary, Ukraine</i></b> <b><i>Semi-annual OBI Board of Directors Meeting, Fort Monroe, Virginia</i></b>
<b><i>November</i></b>	<b><i>Mongolian Forces Counselor Training, Ulan Bator, Mongolia</i></b>
<b><i>January</i></b>	<b><i>English Camp Reunion and Planning Conference, Kiev, Ukraine</i></b>