

GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS AT BRAZILIAN CHAPLAINS CONFERENCE

ACCTS staff member Gina Rajah described “a sensation of great achievement” following an interdenominational chaplain’s conference in Brazil in April. The conference was a major leap forward in communication and cooperation and included both Roman Catholic and Protestant chaplains in a nation where those chaplains have interacted very infrequently in the past, with limited access to facilities and opportunities for ministry to troops.

The conference focused on ways that chaplains can meet the needs of all military personnel and their families, including frequent situations where there are different denominations in a single unit. “God moved the hearts, minds, and spirits of people to get a job done, with excellence, for His glory,” Gina continued. “A lot was done, much was accomplished, and more things have been set in motion to be the next step forward for Christ.”

Military, police, and firefighting chaplains attended, along with the chaplain generals from Brazil’s navy, army, air force and military police. Brazil’s military archbishop, who hosted the event, also attended. The conference included speakers from different nations and military ministry organizations, including ACCTS’ director Phil Exner, who spoke on the importance of partnering together for Christ’s kingdom. Former AMCF vice president and MSO staff member General Lee, Kap-Jin of South Korea spoke on pluralistic chaplaincy issues in a multi-religion nation, and Chaplain Douglas Lee of International Association of Evangelical Chaplains spoke about the U.S. chaplaincy model. Staff Sergeant (USA, Ret.) Tim Payne (chosenleadership.com), a double-amputee Afghanistan war veteran, shared Christ through his testimony. The conference was an unprecedented time of learning, listening, fellowship, and engagement for Brazil’s chaplains and the international guests.

In addition to countless hours of planning and preparation, as well as interpretation during the conference, Gina arranged a busy and intense schedule of pre- and post-conference visits for the international team and Brazilian military Christian fellowship (MCF) leaders. Brazil’s national MCF includes groups in each of the country’s 27 states. At Fortaleza in the north, state MCF members put together a last-minute conference featuring the international team, which 200 MCF members attended. In Sao Paulo, the team visited the MCF’s headquarters and met with their staff to learn about their vision for future ministry. They spoke to thousands of military personnel at dozens of locations, including Brazil’s air force academy, army academy, army prep school, and sergeant’s academy. They also talked individually and in groups with federal and military police and special forces personnel.

The team met members of Brazil’s disabled police organization and visited the Paralympic center, where wounded police and others are helped to find a new life.

Brazil's military police and special forces are waging an internal war against gangs, which claims as many as sixty thousand lives per year. Every day police face ambush, death, and maiming, and there are few units without a memorial wall of honor to fallen comrades. SSgt. Tim's testimony of how Christ changed his life after losing his legs riveted the attention of every police unit the team visited. After each talk he was surrounded by a crowd that wanted to meet him and talk, and we pray that many will respond to his urging to turn to Christ.

"At one point during our travels, one of the MCF leaders was in tears, grateful for all that God is doing in his nation," Phil concludes. "There were many answered prayers during the conference and we thank everyone who supported this work with their prayers and financial gifts. Please continue to pray with all the military Christians, including chaplains, in Brazil as they share Christ's hope and redemption.

"I believe the conference and other visits and meetings were a great encouragement to military believers in Brazil. They opened many doors of access, communication, and cooperation among the chaplains, introduced the Gospel to many, inspired young leaders to live for Christ, and gave confidence to MCF leaders who are in the midst of the ongoing spiritual warfare for their nation. Military leaders in Brazil are keenly aware of the need for Christ-like servant leadership, and we pray that God will use our visit to draw men and women in uniform to Himself and inspire them to incorporate their faith into their personal and professional lives."