

‘Farthest thing from my mind’ becomes dual call to ministry for transplanted North Carolinian

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

Shane Moore holds the rank of major and the title of Staff Chaplain at the 186th Air Refueling Wing of the Mississippi Air National Guard at the Jackson-Medger Wiley International Airport, just east of Mississippi’s capital city. In addition to being endorsed for the chaplaincy assignment by the Southern Baptist Convention, he is the bivocational pastor of Oak Hill Church, Poplarville.

He wasn’t born in Mississippi, but rather near Charlotte in North Carolina. “My grandfather managed the farm next to the Graham family dairy farm, so he and Billy Graham hauled hay together a long time ago.”

Moore joined the U.S. Air Force at age 18. “A lot of the upperclassmen in my school were enlisting in the Air Force and getting stationed close to home. I didn’t want to go anywhere, but I did know I wanted to learn a skill or trade.”

His plan to stay close to home didn’t exactly work out. “I got stationed in Shreveport, La., and was discipled by the men in a local church there. That’s where I got my call to ministry, and at 19 I started pursuing that call. I began going to school at night at Louisiana Tech University to be an agriculture teacher, because I felt the Lord was calling me to be an ag missionary.”

Moore, who was a youth minister at the time, began to feel a

strong call to attend seminary. He enrolled at New Orleans Seminary. "That's where I met my wife," he said. "I separated from the Air Force after four years because I'd met my requirement, and used the GI Bill to go to school."

The GI Bill money ran out while Moore was in seminary. "I was trying to figure out how to pay for school. I was doing collegiate ministry at the time at LSU-Shreveport and getting a stipend from the [Southern Baptist] North American Mission Board. It was tough making ends meet.

"A recruiter came to see me. The surge into Iraq had happened. I had long hair and a goatee – you know, the stereotypical collegiate minister type. The recruiter said, 'I see you're in seminary. Have you ever considered chaplaincy?'

"That was the farthest thing from my mind. I'd only seen an Air Force chaplain a couple of times in passing. I told the recruiter I would pray about it."

Moore discovered the Air Force would pay for his schooling, which was an attractive offer to the financially-struggling seminarian. "I had to pay them back in some form of Air Force service, so I joined the South Carolina Air National Guard. I went on as associate pastor with a church in South Carolina.

"I deployed to Iraq as a chaplain in 2010. I'd seen some awesome ministry but not anything of that magnitude. I was still a young pastor but we were seeing people get saved. We saw people thirsty for discipleship, and it was a really neat time in my life."

Moore returned from that deployment and talked with his wife Ashley about his experiences. "She's a radiation therapist, but wanted to stay at home because we'd had our first child. I told her that going back on active duty had been on my heart ever since I got back from Iraq. I applied and went to a training base in Texas.

“They looked at my college and youth ministry experience and said, ‘This guy would be good at a training base with college-aged kids.’ So there I was going back to Sheppard Air Force Base [in Texas] after being there as a trainee several years prior. I was chaplain there for a few years and deployed again.

“We had our second child during that deployment, and I just really felt the Lord calling me back to the pastorate and back to the reserves. That’s what brought us back to Mississippi.”

Moore felt a bivocational calling to both the pastorate and military chaplaincy. Oak Hill Church called him, and he’s been there six years as well as serving with the Mississippi Air National Guard.

“Recently they called me up to do a year-long tour,” he said. “Because of COVID and military suicides and other unrest, the National Guard Bureau brought on ten full-time chaplains for a year. The church has allowed me to go part-time. I’m there on Wednesdays and Sundays, so I’m a sort of ‘shepherd by phone.’”

Moore estimates that 99% of his military ministry is counseling. “As I’m out visiting, someone will pull me aside and want to talk about how their marriage is crumbling, and I always offer Christ as the answer to that. There is a lot of evangelism that goes on; it’s a great opportunity to share the Gospel.

Moore received a Doctor of Ministry degree from New Orleans Seminary in 2018. He and Ashley now have three children: son Caleb and daughters Kaleigh and Kyleigh Grace.

“What I love about chaplaincy is that it’s an incarnational ministry,” Moore noted. “It’s like being a pastor in uniform. They may not trust you until they see that you’ve gone through some of the same things they’ve gone through.

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"They see that I was an aircraft mechanic – that badge on my uniform below the cross – and they say, 'Yeah, you're one of us.' What I tell people is the rank gives me access, the maintenance badge gives me credibility, and the cross gives me purpose."

For more information on chaplaincy, contact the Men's Ministry Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) at jmartin@mbcb.org.

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