

Site Report: Grafenwoehr/Vilseck, Germany

From: Rev. Dr. F. Douglas Hudson, Director of Military Ministry, Southeast Alabama Presbytery, doug.gertie@yahoo.com 1-704-909-6516

Introduction: Grafenwoehr/Vilseck/Hohenfels military communities are located in Upper Bavaria in Germany. Nuremburg is the closest large city to these communities. The bases are very near the Czech border. American forces have been in this area since the end of the 2nd World War. It is now the home of a Stryker Brigade (Armor) and maneuver training site for forces in Europe.

Need: The three communities mentioned above need a solid Presbyterian and Reformed Church. This area is considered among the continuing communities for the US Army in Europe. There are approximately 12,000 soldiers in the area. When one takes into consideration civilians and dependents of soldiers that number swells to approximately 20,000 Americans. The soldiers at these bases are highly trained and motivated professionals. Spiritually, the community is served by chaplains in a highly pluralistic environment. There is at least one Fundamental Baptist church in Grafenwoehr. A Presbyterian and Reformed Church can best serve the military community.

Project Description: A Church planter is needed to establish a Presbyterian and Reformed Church in the Grafenwoehr/Vilseck/Hohenfels community. This will be a pioneering effort. Funding for this work will be initially borne by the sending presbytery that adopts this location. Churches outside the geographical bounds of the sending presbytery could also partner in this effort to expand the Kingdom. The Church planter could also participate in the raising of funds for this effort. Our experience, though somewhat limited by only two church plants thus far, indicates that the work could in a reasonably short period of time could be self-supporting. The Church planter must be a self-starter. He must be willing to work hard in his vocation. He should be a good expositor of the Word of God and he should have a burden to reach the lost with the good news of Christ. He should also be a disciple maker. A man strong in the faith and yet tender in heart is much needed for the ministry. A familiarity with the military culture would be helpful, but not necessary. A brief training period could be provided for the Church planter to help him understand the military culture. He should also understand that the military is a highly mobile society. It moves soldiers and their family members around quite often. The presents both challenges and opportunities. Challenges in terms of continuity in the body, but opportunities in that over a period of time the pastor will literally impact thousands of people for the cause of Christ. Additionally, the church planter must be prepared to live and work in an environment where there are few like-minded, if any, pastors around him.

Conclusion: The military community is a wonderful community that could benefit greatly from the doctrines of grace ministry. In addition to the opportunities for life changing ministry, the minister and his family during his free time will be able to explore the land of the Reformation and the history of the Church on the continent. Europe provides a wonderful cultural experience.