

Site Report: Iwakuni, Japan

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

Introduction: Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station is almost 300 miles south of Osaka at the southern end of Honshu, the main island. It has a population of around 110,000. It is also about 55 kilometers south of Hiroshima. Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station is home to four flying squadrons. One of the squadrons is a fighter squadron. It is also involved heavily in the logistics arena.

Need: Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station needs a Presbyterian and Reformed witness to serve the continuing flow of military personnel and family members that serve in this theater of operations. The American community has a population of about 8,000 in total. These Marine pilots and all the support personnel are highly skilled and motivated professionals serving forward based in defense of our nation. Spiritually, the service members and their families are being served by chaplains in a highly pluralistic environment. I have not located an off post church.

Project Description: A church planter is needed to establish a Presbyterian and Reformed witness in the Iwakuni military community. The efforts of the church planter will be directed primarily to the American military community. This is a pioneering effort. Funding for the 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 of God and His Church. The church planter could also participate in raising funds for the effort. Becoming self-supporting will be a bit more challenging because of a smaller target population. The Church planter could implement an ongoing support effort by getting commitments from those who rotate through the church to continue to support the work when they move on to new locations. The church planter should be a self-starter. He must be willing to work hard. He should be a good expositor of the Word of God and he should have a heart to reach the lost with the good news of Christ. He should be a disciple maker. A man of strong faith and tender of heart is needed in this ministry. A familiarity with the military culture would be helpful, but not essential. A brief training period could be provided for a man without military experience so as to get him up to speed on the culture of the military. He should understand that the military community is a highly mobile entity. It moves soldiers and their family members quite often. This presents challenges and opportunities for the church planter. Challenges because of the loss of members on a regular basis as they move on and opportunities because there is a constant influx of new people for ministry. The pastor, during the course of his ministry, will literally impact thousands of lives with the Gospel. 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 a doctrines of grace ministry. In addition to the opportunities for a life changing ministry, the minister and his family in their free time, can explore a great culture and beautiful country.