

## **Site Report: Lakenheath, England**

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

**Introduction:** Lakenheath, United Kingdom is located 70 miles northeast of London and 25 miles from Cambridge. This base has been in existence since the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. It continues to serve a vital function in providing for our national security and the security of Europe.

**Need:** Lakenheath and the surrounding English communities need a solid Presbyterian and Reformed Church. We currently have approximately 6,000 service members on active duty stationed at Lakenheath. Additionally, 2,000 British and US Civilians support the operations of the base. When family members are factored in one can see that there is a significant community in need of our rich theological history. This work, although it is being established primarily for American service personnel and their families, can easily reach out to embrace those who live in surrounding villages and towns. The Americans are members of the US Air Force. It is made up primarily of fighter aircraft. These members are highly educated and motivated. Spiritually, the community is served by chaplains in a highly pluralistic environment. The closest evangelical church appears to be in Cambridge about 25 miles from the base.. A Presbyterian and Reformed Church can best serve the military community and the English communities surrounding the base.

**Project Description:** A church planter is needed to establish a Presbyterian and Reformed work near this base in England. This will be a pioneering effort. With God's blessing such a church will be raised up. Funding for this work will initially be borne by the sending presbytery that adopts this location. Churches outside the geographical bounds of sending presbytery could also contribute to this Kingdom expanding effort. The church planter could also through his contacts might raise additional support for the effort. Experience indicates that such a work could become self-supporting in reasonably short order. The church planter must be a self-starter. He must be one who is willing to work hard in his vocation. He should be a good expositor of the Word able to reach out to the lost. He should be one who is moved to make disciples for Christ. He should be one who is strong in the faith, but gentle in spirit. A familiarity with the military culture would be helpful, but not a must. A brief training period could be provided to help the church planter understand the military culture better.. The church planter must understand that the military community moves around quite a bit. This mobility can be seen as a negative, but it also can be seen as a positive. Many service personnel and their families will rotate through the base. The church planter will have an opportunity to literally impact thousands of people over the life of his ministry. The church planter must also 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 centered ministry. We should not leave our military service members and their family members to have their spiritual needs met in a

pluralistic chapel community that cannot raise one faith group above another. The Christian Church, as the repository of biblical truth, must take the life changing message of the Gospel to the world and not be ashamed of its exclusive nature.

Lakenheath offers great opportunities for the pastor and his family to experience a rich culture and a rich history of one of the great nations of the world. It will allow one to explore their spiritual roots and visit some of the Reformation sites on the continent while impacting others for generations.