

Site Report: Aviano, Italy

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Introduction: Aviano Air Base is located in the northeastern part of Italy, at the base of the Italian Alps, about 20 miles north of Pordenone. The city of Pordenone has a population of approximately 50,000. It is at the base of the Dolomites Mountains in the Po Valley, the largest agricultural plain in Italy. Aviano Air Base hosts the 31st Fighter Wing, which maintains two F-16 Fighter Squadrons in support of NATO

Need: The Aviano military base needs a Presbyterian and Reformed Church. It has approximately 5,400 service men and women serving there. When civilian support and family members are considered the population which needs ministry swells to around 10,000. These service members are highly trained and motivated professionals. Spiritually, the community is served by chaplains in a highly pluralistic environment. I have only been able to locate one English speaking church off base. It is Southern Baptist. A Presbyterian and Reformed Church can best serve this military community

Project Description: A church planter is needed to establish a Presbyterian and Reformed witness in the Aviano area. This church would be primarily directed at 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 of a challenge for this work because of a smaller target population. The Church planter could implement an ongoing support effort by getting commitments of those who rotate through the church to support the work after they rotate out of the Aviano military community. We can discuss how this effort would look and function. The church planter should be a self-starter. He must be willing to work hard. He should be a good expositor of the Word and 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 for 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 due to the loss of members on a regular basis and opportunities because there will be 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 life changing ministry, the minister and his family in their free time, can explore a great culture and explore the beautiful country of Italy.