

Site Report: Misawa Air Base, Japan

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Introduction: Misawa Air Base is located in the northeast portion of the main Japanese island of Honshu approximately 400 miles north of Tokyo. Misawa is a small city of about 43,000 people which sits on the southern shore of the picturesque Lake Ogawara. The surrounding area is mostly rural and quite scenic.

Need: The Misawa military community needs a Presbyterian and Reformed Church. The main fighter wing made up of 3,850 personnel supported by another 13,500 personnel of 35 units representing all four military services. Family members and civilians add a significant number Americans who are in need of a strong church. Most of the personnel are from the Air Force.. This airmen and soldiers of this base are highly trained and motivated professionals. Spiritually, the community is served by chaplains in a highly pluralistic environment. I have been unable to determine if there are any off post churches in the area. A Presbyterian and Reformed Church can best serve this military community.

Project Description: A church planter is needed to establish a Presbyterian and Reformed Church in the Misawa area. 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. The church planter could also participate in raising funds for the effort. Our experience, though limited to two church plants thus far, indicates that the work could in a reasonably short period of time 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 have a heart for reaching the lost with the good news of Christ. He should be a disciple maker. A man strong in the faith and tender in 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. He should understand that the military community is a highly mobile entity. It moves soldiers and their family members quite often. This presents both challenges and opportunities. Challenges involved continuity of the work and the opportunities are that over the course of the pastor's ministry he 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 the 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 learn of the history of the people of Japan.