

Site Report: Yokosuka, Japan

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Introduction: Yokosuka is located on the southeast coast of Honshu, the largest of the four main Japanese islands. Yokosuka is a very densely populated city with an estimated population of 430,000. The climate is similar to the Washington, DC area and Norfolk, Virginia. The Navy Community is located near the cosmopolitan centers of Tokyo and Yokohama. It is the most important naval facility in the Western Pacific, and the largest, most strategically important overseas US Naval installation in the world.

Need: Yokosuka, Japan needs a Presbyterian and Reformed Church to serve the American Military community primarily, However, due to its close proximity to Tokyo the church could become international in scope. It has 23,000 military and civilian personnel plus family members. The Navy personnel are well educated and highly motivated professionals. Spiritually, the community is served by Naval Chaplains in a highly pluralistic environment. Just like at other bases around the world there is generally a Baptist Church and a Church of God in Christ congregation. A Presbyterian and Reformed Church with our rich theological heritage can best serve the community.

Project Description: A church planter is needed to go and establish a Presbyterian and Reformed presence in the community. This will be a pioneering effort. And with God's assistance, along with His command to go and His promise to be with us, a solid, biblical church will be raised up to worship Him and to give Him glory and praise. Funding, which is always a concern, could be secured in a variety of ways. One church could provide the start up costs until a core group and eventually a congregation could become self-supporting. A presbytery that might adopt such a work could be responsible for such an effort. Perhaps the man called to go could solicit support from relatives and friends and other contacts he might have. The PCA Foundation could be made aware of the need and perhaps a generous donor might want to invest in Kingdom activity with the sailors and family members that serve our nation in Japan. All these avenues could be explored for funding such a work. Experience tells us that the work should be self-supporting in fairly short order. The church planter needs to be a self-starter and understand he will not be around reformed minded colleagues. He needs to be willing to work hard, preach and teach the whole counsel of God, be able to nurture the saints toward maturity in Christ, one who has a burden for the lost, and one who will promote close fellowship in the covenant community. He needs to be strong in the faith and at the same time loving and tender toward the flock. It would be good to have a church planter who has some familiarity with the military culture especially in this pioneering work. A brief training period could be provided for someone without this experience. 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 needs what the Presbyterian and Reformed community has. The Chaplaincy must be broad and minister to all faith groups. It cannot elevate one above another. The Church is the repository of truth. It is the Church that embraces the biblical marks that set it apart. This work could become international in scope would be a wonderful work. Japan is a delightful place to live and work to the glory of God.