



A New Country – A New Calling

by Jack De Vries



A couple of years ago, Jack and Jeannie De Vries set foot on Australian soil, bringing to an end years of living and ministry in Canada and establishing themselves in a new land. When they made the decision to emigrate to Australia, like any immigrant knows, there were mixed emotions. They felt excited and happy, but at the same time anxious and sad.

For more than 25 years they served the churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. They served both smaller and larger congregations, in both rural and urban settings. They planted a church and saw this church give birth to another church. For years Jack has been active in advancing theological education, mentoring new pastors, and assisting churches and classes in renewal. He has a love for the church and a passion for reaching people for Christ with the gospel.

But why emigrate to a new country and leave a flourishing ministry in Canada? The answer lies within the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA). In 2006 the CRCA adopted a new strategy for their churches, the vision to be a church reforming to reach the lost for Christ. The CRCA originally was

formed as a church reaching out to migrants who immigrated from the Netherlands. Now a half century later, as churches the CRCA realised they needed to now reach out to their Aussie neighbours and extend a welcome to new migrants – from Asia, South Africa, England, and beyond. For this reason the denomination adopted a fourfold task: to pray for revival, to multiply churches, to train up new workers, and align everything around the vision to reach people for Christ. It was this vision that sparked interest in Jack De Vries and became the seed for a new calling in a new country. The CRCA is well on the way to implementing this vision. As Ministry Training Coordinator, Jack is active in helping churches become healthy, encouraging the planting of new churches, and the raising up of gospel workers.

In every state new churches have either been planted or strategies are being implemented to initiate church plants. The CRCA is especially committed to welcoming migrants from South Africa. There are over ten SA pastors who are currently serving CRCA churches in Australia. Many SA migrants have already found a home in member churches in every state. For example, in the northern suburbs of Perth, the Grace



CRCA has seen growing numbers of SA migrants become part of their church. This past year Joe Vermeulen, a pastor from South Africa, moved from Queensland to Western Australia. The growth of this church has been so rapid, they considering finding larger facilities or planting a new congregation. The church is made up almost exclusively of SA migrants.

One of the most recent church plants targets South African migrants in the Sydney area. Supported by the Sydney congregation, the Church in the Hills now meets in the Seventh-Day Adventist church in the Castle Hill area. Many SA migrants are now finding a church home in this new church.



Recently there have been requests to begin a Reformed church in the Mackay area. Over the next several months the CRCA is going to explore the possibility planting a church in Mackay. Jack De Vries will meet with community leaders and individuals and discover how the CRCA can assist SA migrants in finding a church home for themselves and their families. Jack is keen to meet with anybody interested in being part of a Reformed church plant.

A website has been set up to provide resources for pastors, churches, and individuals, assisting them in reaching communities with the good news of Jesus Christ:

www.ministryformation.com.au

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