

## Change - Leadership - Trust

### Ministers and Wives Conference 2010

Sixty-five CRCA ministers and wives gathered together 03-06 May at the Collaroy Conference Centre, Collaroy Beach, NSW, for the “annual” Ministers and Wives conference. Attendees came from every state and almost 30 churches had one or more of their ministers and/or wives represented. Three lecturers from the Reformed Theological College attended, along with Kevin and Machi Rietveld, who came all the way from the Solomon Islands. The setting could not have been a more idyllic spot for a retreat, for refreshment, and refocusing for life and ministry.



The guest preacher for this conference was John Paterson of Trinity Church, Tamworth, NSW. Trained at Moore College, Sydney, John has ministered in Anglican churches in Sydney and Adelaide before settling in Tamworth in 1980. Trinity ministries include two Christian

schools, church planting work in PNG since 1989, and annual pastors conferences in the Philippines since 1991. Two Filipino pastors joined John at this conference.

John is passionate about the justifying work of our Lord Jesus. In messages based on Romans 3, 5, Galatians 2, John stressed how in the evangelical world we so often get the message of

justification wrong. Our eternal security often lies in the quality of our faith rather than the faithfulness and completed work of Christ. When our confidence rests in Christ alone, we can live boldly and even take risks in life and ministry. Our worth as human beings does not depend on our accomplishments nor is it diminished by our sinfulness. It is secure in Christ.

The conference began with a video message by Dr. Tony Evans. As ministers and wives we can so easily get lost in the routines of ministries (which Tony called the “same-old” disease). We forget the “calling” we received from God. Referring to Exodus 3, the time God spoke through a burning bush and gave Moses his calling, Tony challenged each person to reflect on God’s calling on their life, and not forget the One who issued the call – the great I AM WHO I AM.

The other plenary sessions focused on ministry issues: change, character, and trust. We live in a changing world and change affects us all – leaders and churches alike. At times churches need to change in order to be more effective in reaching people for Jesus. One session gave suggestions how to decide what to change and what ought never to change. Another session looked at the art of leadership. The most important ingredient in leadership is character. At the heart of character is personal integrity. Leaders need not only



Jack De Vries led the plenary sessions on change, leadership, and trust.

talk the talk, but walk the walk. Each person was encouraged to identify areas of character weakness and develop a plan to become everything God intended us to be.

The final session looked at trust! What can we do as ministers and churches to build trust – in all relationships: marriage, family, church, classis, and denomination? After discussing what trust looks like and how to build trust, groups were formed to create pieces of art on canvas which depict trust. It was a joy to see all the groups working so well together creating their masterpieces of art.



This group of eight artists took the "best picture" award!

The conference was not just about receiving some teaching. There was ample time for fellowship and building friendships. A highlight this year was going out Wednesday on a Sydney harbour cruise. Our hosts were Terry and Karen Coleman, members of the Blacktown, NSW, congregation and owners-operator of



The Fun Boat

"The Fun Boat." The boat could not hold everybody so the ministers and wives went in two groups. Under sunny and cloudy skies the beautiful sights of Sydney harbour were appreciated by all. As one conference attendee remarked, "The highlight for me was the opportunity to catch up and spend time with other pastors and share experiences."

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One group of ministers and wives arriving at Mosman Wharf and another heading back.



*Lots of time to catch up with each other.*

On Tuesday night a number of people gave presentations. Retired pastor Gerald Hanscamp



gave a rivetting account of the opportunities for the gospel in Indonesia. Bert Kuipers talked about the growing work of GOSPEL in India. Kevin and Machi Rietveld updated us about the mission work in the Solomon Islands. And the GEMS and Cadets gave a presentation. People really appreciated this part of the conference: sharing stories about what God is doing in and through our churches. We hope to do more of that at the next conference.

On Thursday afternoon all the ministers and wives returned back to their homes and ministries. From the comments received from those attending this year's conference, these men and women returned with a fresh appreciation of being justified through Christ, an understanding of how to embrace new ways in reaching people for Christ, a recommitment to living lives of integrity and building trust in all relationships. But there was more! Those in ministry established new friendships and strengthened older ones. But isn't this what the church is all about: *"Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head [of the church], that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds*

*itself up in love, as each part does its work."* (Ephesians 4:16-16) Strengthened by the Spirit's power at work among us, each person returned home eager to serve the One who has done it all for us – and to do so boldly even if this might require taking some risks.