

Jack & Jeannie De Vries arrive in Australia

On the final day of 2007

Jack and Jeannie De Vries set foot on Australian soil, ending years of ministry in Canada and taking up the task of Ministry Training Coordinator with the CRCA.

Originally planning to arrive the day before, their transit from Canada was delayed due to weather conditions over the North American continent.

Jack has served the churches of the CRC in North America for almost 25 years. He has served both smaller and larger congregations, in both rural and urban settings. For almost nine years he was involved in church planting and most recently served the Bethel CRC in Listowel, Ontario as lead pastor, a congregation of 700 members in a small agricultural community. In 2003 he was awarded a Doctor of Ministry from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. 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 the lost for Christ.

Jack and Jeannie have not only left their congregation in Canada and denominational responsibilities with the CRC of North America, they have put further distance between themselves and their family. Most of their immediate family lives in Ontario, but their children live all over the world. Their eldest daughter Jennifer, her husband Mike, and their two grandchildren, Payden and Wyatt, make their home in North Carolina, USA. Their other daughter, Jodie, is doing mission work with Youth with a Mission (YWAM) in Katutura, a suburb of Windhoek, Namibia, Africa. Their two sons, Jayson and Jered live on the west coast of Canada. Between snow boarding in the winter and surfing in the summer, they are employed respectively as an auto mechanic and a house painter.

Jack and Jeannie have purchased a home in Petrie, a northern suburb of Brisbane and will make their church home at Bray Park Community Church. Redlands CRC remains the calling church and

there on February 11th Jack was installed and commissioned for the task of Ministry Training Coordinator. The following day Jack attended the inaugural Evangelising Australia conference hosted by Gospel Outreach Ministries at Chatswood Anglican in Sydney. There he was joined by a number of CRC leaders as well as leaders across denominational lines, all desiring to see the lost found and enfolded into the body of Christ.

Jack shares how before they left North America, their son in law Mike gave them three scriptures to encourage him and Jeannie on their way. One of them were the words of Isaiah 58:11: "The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." This scripture spoke to Jack because he had heard of the long standing drought in Australia. But ever since they have come the waters have not failed. Jack reflects: "For me this is a parable of the ministry which I feel called to in Australia as I take up the position of Ministry Training Coordinator. One Australian pastor wrote to me about the 'spiritual wilderness' in Australia. In desert places, God promises to provide the refreshing rain. The water he provides will satisfy not only our needs, but the needs of all Australians. Not just physically, but spiritually. As churches we extend the life changing invitation of Jesus: 'Come! Whoever is thirsty, come and take the free gift of the water of life.' (Revelation 22:17)"

In the weeks and months to come Jack plans to continue meeting with many pastors and other church leaders in order to talk about how we as a church can reform to reach the lost for Christ. He has already begun to meet with pastors and church leaders in Queensland. In March he and Jeannie plan to travel to South Australia and

Victoria states to meet with leaders and churches there. He will also participate in the Fan the Flame 2008 conference held from March 8-10 at the Reformed Theological College in Geelong. The need for those taking up the call as a pastor, preacher, missionary, church leader, or evangelist is urgent, as Jack realized anew at the recent conference in Sydney. For Christ followers to effectively reach the lost for Christ, more than 10,000 new churches need to be planted all across Australia. The Fan the Flame 2008 conference is a wonderful opportunity for people to discern God's calling upon their lives. As Jesus taught us: "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matthew 9:37-38). Jack has already been meeting with those interested in planting new churches and is excited about what God is doing in and through the CRCA. After South Australia and Victoria, Jack plans to visit the churches in the other states as well. He is looking forward to meeting many pastors and other church leaders to listen and discuss how together we can get the message of grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ out to our neighbours and community. As Jack notes: "May the words of Isaiah ring true, that in a sun-scorched land, the church in Australia become like a well-watered garden."

Jack will work closely with the Ministry Formation Workgroup in implementing the vision of the CRCA to be a church reforming to reach the lost for Christ. The Workgroup will be focusing on assisting local churches to apply the Fourfold Task adopted by Synod 2006 in their local setting.

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Jack and Jeannie De Vries

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PETER FINDS HIS FAITH TO BE MUCH STRONGER IN THE WINTER