

# Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

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15 January, 2009

Dear saints  
in the Protestant Reformed Churches,

The main progress in the work here involves Limerick. Five young people (four students and one recent graduate) from Limerick hired a car and drove to Ballymena to spend the weekend with us for Bible studies, walks, discussion, and Sunday services (22-23 November, 2008). They were great company—very enthusiastic! Sixteen attended a Limerick lecture on “The Reformation’s Teaching on the Church” (5 December). Three of the young people have now definitely cast in their lot with the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (LRF). Sam Watterson, Manuel Kuhs, and Emily-Kate Dunning (Manuel’s fiancée) have joined Bill Davies, Billy O’Connor, Terry Casey, and Terry’s youngest children, Clara and Stephen.

This still makes only eight, but the young people are very keen and are reading a lot of PRC material, including dozens of RFPA books. They have a number of good contacts and are very busy inviting their family and friends at Limerick University. Nelson from Uganda is very interested and a good number of other people have attended the meetings. Now the LRF has started holding two services (and not only one) each Lord’s Day—11 AM at the student accommodation of Sam and Manuel, and 6 PM at Terry Casey’s house. They are planning to start a Steering Committee soon and are looking to hire a suitable place for Sunday meetings.

With the arrival of Prof Gritters and Elder Peter VanDerSchaaf, our church visitors, Mary and I were able to drive to Limerick to take Sunday services there (4 Janu-

ary). The Limerick saints are most appreciative listeners and we greatly enjoyed our day with them. On Thursday (8 January), Prof. Gritters, Pete, and Mary headed south to Limerick (I had the flu and was not up to going). Prof. gave a fine lecture on “Music’s Indispensable Place in (the) Reformation.” The next day, Sam and Manuel joined us in Ballymena at the CPRC congregational dinner. They stayed the night at the manse and left Belfast for Limerick by bus at 3 PM on Saturday. All this increased contact with the saints in Limerick has been a great encouragement to both us and them.

The CPRC was also greatly blessed through the visit of Prof. Gritters and Peter VanDerSchaaf (2-12 January). Prof. preached four times on two Sundays in Ballymena, delivered a speech in Limerick and led a Bible Study on the trumpets of Numbers 10. As usual when PR ministers are with us, we had several visitors at Lord’s Day services including a couple of women who came through the Reformed Witness Hour advertisement, a family of seven who have attended before, and others. It was good to get to know Pete. The brethren were able to visit and fellowship with the saints here and were much appreciated. They joined us at our congregational dinner and quiz (ably organized by William Graham), where Prof. Gritters, who teaches Martyn McGeown at seminary, was at a table with Martyn’s parents.

All too soon, the congregation was bidding the PR brethren farewell over tea and sandwiches after their last meeting (11 January). We rate such visits very important

in our sister-church relationship with our North American brothers.

We have also enjoyed visits of other PR saints at our services: Mr. & Mrs. Henry DeVries (Randolph, 9 November) and Becky Gunnink (Byron Center, 7 December). The most unusual reason for a visitor to our meetings involved mistaken identity. My old school pal from Antrim Grammar School came to a Sunday morning service (30 November)! The problem was that I did not attend that school, nor did we know each other! His old friend is also called Angus Stewart and is a Christian minister too!

Our last South Wales lecture on “The Reformation’s Teaching on the Church” was poorly attended (12 December), though this was partly explained by the inclement weather. Attendance at our New Year’s Eve board games night at the manse was hit by the flu, but we had a very enjoyable evening.

The CPRC bookstore has been doing very well. At the British Reformed Fellowship Conference in August, we received

fourteen boxes of about 50 pounds each from willing PR helpers. But most of this is long gone, so the books brought by the two church visitors were much appreciated. Julie Rainey helped us immensely by collating and stapling about 500 new CPRC book, free pamphlet, audio cassette and CD catalogues (<http://www.cprf.co.uk/bookstore/bookcatalogue2008.pdf>). Largely through feedback from the Calvinism vs. Arminianism debate, the *Covenant Reformed News* list keeps growing steadily, including a guy from Trinidad and Tobago. The last two months were relatively quiet concerning the foreign language translations, yet they still increased as follows: Italian 29, Filipino 9 (including 6 PR catechism books), Afrikaans 4, Portuguese 3, Spanish 2, and Slovenian 2 (including Prof. Hoeksema’s pamphlet “God So Loved the World”).

May the Lord bless and keep you all in 2009.

In Christ,  
*Rev. & Mary Stewart*