

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

16 January, 2013

Dear saints in the
Protestant Reformed Churches,

Congregational Dinner

Each year in January, the CPRC holds its congregational dinner in a hotel in the Ballymena area. On Friday there were no church visitors from the PRC at our dinner, for this year Rev. Carl Haak and Elder Pete VanDerSchaaf are to come in March. Despite this, we still had more transatlantic visitors than ever before, but with most from South (not North) America! Kristin Prins from Trinity PRC was with us, as was a lady from Brazil who now lives in Ballymena, plus five young adults from southern Brazil currently learning English in Dublin. We also had a Czech, a Latvian, and an Italian. Ballymena and Northern and Southern Ireland are a lot more cosmopolitan than they used to be! Most of the saints in the CPRC were there, plus good friends and some family of the congregation. Seventy were present for the meal and fellowship, with two more joining us for William Graham's fine table quiz afterwards.



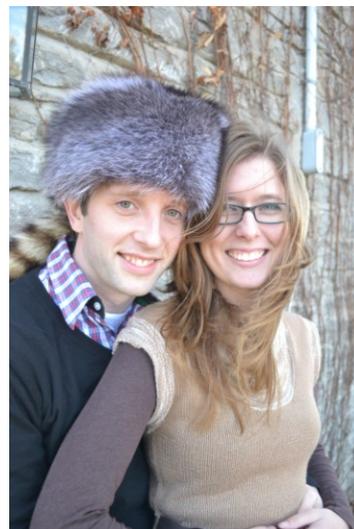
The group of five Brazilians—Thiago and Sarah (a married couple), Lidi and David (a sister and brother), and Nara—spent the weekend at the manse. They have translated some of our literature into Portuguese and are working on more PR materials. On Saturday, Mary and I, Stephen and Debbie Murray, and Marco Barone (up from Limerick for the congregational dinner) went with our guests on a beautiful, long walk at the Giant's Causeway. That Lord's Day (13 January), Rev. McGeown, who also was up for the congregational dinner,

preached two excellent sermons in the CPRC on Psalm 23:4 and *Heidelberg Catechism* preaching. After a weekend of fellowship, Bible studies on John 15-16, and discussion of theological subjects, and with a box of RFPA books in their hired car, our Brazilian friends headed back to Dublin. That Monday evening, Rev. McGeown joined the CPRC office-bearers at our monthly council meeting. It was great to have our missionary with us and to discuss aspects of his labours in the gospel.

Visitors

Sadly, Jackie Lou Hing and her children, Kirstin and Kyan, were not able to get a visa to stay in the UK and they have returned to Trinidad and Tobago. It was lovely to have them with us for some three months. They participated well in the life of the congregation and were keen to learn and join in. May the Lord be with them back in the Caribbean!

As well as Jackie's sister and her sister's boyfriend from Trinidad and Tobago (18 November), Hank and Barb De Vries (Randolph PRC), who stayed with the Buchanans in late December, attended the services. They and Kristin Prins joined the congregation at the Lord's Table (23 December).



This summer, Kristin is to marry David

Crossett (not Crockett, despite the coonskin hat he picked up in Canada!). During the four weeks she was in Northern Ireland, the three of us met for premarital classes. Kristin says that a number of Prinses and VanBarens, etc., are hoping to come to Northern Ireland for the wedding (9 July). You will all be very welcome!

CPRC

In the last two months there have been a lot of people in the congregation with health issues. Besides numerous instances of flu, other saints were and are struggling with more serious afflictions—all calling us to trust more deeply in the wisdom and love of our sovereign God.

On 24 December, Lucas Joshua was born to Philip and Susan Hall. From the prenatal scans, the doctors diagnosed several medical problems. If he were to make it to his birth, they said that he would probably die within hours. With no unoccupied incubators in N. Ireland, Lucas was born prematurely at just 2 pounds and 12 ounces in Dublin. Many scans and tests later, doctors have yet to find any medical conditions and Lucas is steadily putting on weight at a good rate. From Dublin, he was moved to Belfast and is now in Antrim hospital, cutting the driving time for Philip and Susan with each move. It has been a roller-coaster ride for them and their family and the saints. Now we are looking not at a funeral but at a baptism, by God's mercy.

“John the Baptist's Birth and Preparation” (Luke 1) is the title of a recently finished sermon series in the CPRC. Now we have begun another series on “John the Baptist's Public Ministry.” John's role and importance both then and now is little understood, making this a wonderful subject for studying and preaching. The last eight Wednesday night classes on the *Belgic Confession* 17-18, entitled “The Incarnation of the Son of God,” are now available on-line (www.cprf.co.uk/audio/belgicconfessionclass.htm) and in an attractive box set (www.cprf.co.uk/audio/boxsets.htm). After fourteen classes on “The Millennium” (Rev. 20) and related subjects, the Tuesday morning class is considering “The Nearness of Christ's Coming”—a vital perspective on our Lord's return that enables us to deal with many Scripture passages on the last things.

The church building is completely paid off! With our contractor completing the “snagging list” of little things that needed fixing, we were

able to write him his final cheque. This triggered our final payment to the quantity surveyor. This brings to a close a very happy chapter. We are delighted with the building and we found the contractor and quantity surveyor easy to work with. Big projects like this can bring all sorts of headaches but, by God's goodness, it ran remarkably smoothly for us.

Our next major project at the church building is installing live webcasting of our services. This involves several things (a computer, a camcorder, software, broadband, streaming provider, etc.) and takes some research. We have been speaking to several people about it and are making progress. Our thanks to the covenant children at Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School and other saints who have contributed financially to this cause.

Websites

Our main website (www.cprc.co.uk) is doing very well. In the last two months, 49 translations (or links to translations) have been added in 10 languages: 12 Hungarian, 9 Spanish, 8 Italian, 7 Chewa (a language especially spoken in Malawi), 5 Burmese, 3 Portuguese, 2 Afrikaans, 1 German, 1 Danish, and 1 Kabyle (a Berber language especially spoken in Algeria). Mary is continuing to tidy up the website code, recently sorting out the German articles and the pages of “Quotes,” etc.

The CPRC YouTube page (www.youtube.com/cprcni) is getting more hits than ever and gaining good feedback. It also contains the video of the lecture I delivered in Lurgan on “The Spirit of the Age and the Church” (23 November).

Thanks to all those who sent us cards recently. It is good to be reminded that there are many who are thinking of us, and the family photos now adorning our kitchen wall are greatly appreciated. Please continue to pray for the work of Christ's church here. May the Lord be with you all in 2013!

Yours in Christ,
Rev. & Mary Stewart