

# Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

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14 March, 2009

Dear saints  
in the Protestant Reformed Churches,

2009 is the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of John Calvin. The CPRC, in its own small way, is commemorating this and taking advantage of this great opportunity to spread the Reformed faith. We created a “Calvin Resources” page on our website (<http://www.cprf.co.uk/calvinresources.htm>) listing audio and written resources, books by and on Calvin, and various P. R. articles on the Genevan Reformer. We are also holding lectures on Calvin at various venues in the British Isles.

Our first Calvin speech was held in Portadown (20 February), about 50 minutes drive south of us. We saw more visitors than at any of our previous speeches, with almost 60 in attendance, only five of whom were CPRC folk. The high attendance (for us) was in part due to the subject, “Calvin’s Battle for the Reformation,” and in part to the advertising. We had two men in the area giving out fliers to their friends; articles were published in the local *Portadown Times* (13 February) and the provincial *News Letter* (14 February); plus radio announcements in the church events slots (Radio Star, Radio Foyle and BBC Radio Ulster); as well as the trailer at the end of our Reformed Witness Hour broadcast (Radio North).

The lecture was very well received. One man at the back asked for a second speech on the subject (we have since arranged “Calvin’s Battle for the Reformation, Part 2—the Geneva Years” for 27 March in

Portadown). After a lively question and answer period, a dozen books, many CDs, and all our DVDs were bought; the pamphlet table was cleared; and several signed up for the *Covenant Reformed News*.

However, later we found out that at the end of the meeting, a Baptist man had been handing out CDs by Robert Zins, claiming that infant baptism is Romish! A letter by a paedobaptist, published some days later in the *Portadown Times*, commended the lecture and denounced the Baptist’s dirty tricks!

“Calvin’s Battle for the Reformation, Part 1” was also delivered in Limerick (6 March). The national *Irish News* carried a short piece I sent them advertising the lecture. Of the fifty or so students at the University of Limerick invited by members of the Limerick Reformed Fellowship who attend that institution, only two turned up! Still, we had a fine night and we are encouraged at the development in Limerick. The saints there will soon start meeting in a rented hall in Limerick centre on the Lord’s Day, no longer assembling in two of their houses. The Limerick Reformed Fellowship has also decided to open their own bank account and to take offerings at their Sunday meetings.

The Calvin theme also proved useful in the ongoing battle against women ministers. I had letters published in the *Belfast Telegraph* (11 February) and the *News Letter* (12 February) quoting Calvin’s denunciation of women officebearers in Christ’s church as “monstrous” (Comm. on I Tim. 2:12).

This issue has arisen in Northern Ireland again because of the election of a new moderator in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, a man who would not allow a woman minister into his pulpit. BBC Radio Ulster invited me to a radio debate (4 February) with Christina Rees, the chairwoman and lead figure of WATCH (Women and the Church)—not to be confused with WITCH!—an influential feminist lobby in the Church of England that advises the Archbishop of Canterbury. The interview is on-line (<http://www.cprc.co.uk/womenchurchoffice.m3u>), and we have received good feedback from it.

The work of the CPRC continues to prosper by God's grace. This Lord's Day I am to finish a 17-sermon series on "The Holy Spirit in Ephesians," a very rich subject. Recently, we began the sixth "lap" on our *Heidelberg Catechism*. Stephen Rush-ton, from Bradford, England, a member of the British Reformed Fellowship Council, visited us 18-23 February and so was able to join us for our Wednesday Bible Study, Portadown lecture, and Sunday services. The website keeps growing and developing, especially the thirteen new "Resources" pages, which group all our materials on one subject on one page (Calvin, Calvinism, Cessationism, Church, Church Office & Feminism, Covenant & Baptism, Eschatology, Lord's Day, Marriage, Prayer, Psalm-singing, Reformation, and Revivalism).

Of late, Mary and I have been having a lot of difficulty sending e-mails to sbcglobal and comcast accounts. So if you have one of these two e-mail accounts and are wondering why you have not received from us the *CR News* or our weekly bulletin or a reply to an e-mail you sent us, now you know. Sorry about this! Your spam filter is filtering us out!

By my next bimonthly letter (DV), we should have started work on our new church building. Five builders are to submit their bids to us by 9 April. We plan to begin the foundation soon after one of these bids is accepted by our Building Committee. However, our quantity surveyor has informed us that the earlier estimate for the total cost of our building was much too low. The greatly increased cost will put a lot more pressure on us financially.

Mary and I are looking forward to our biennial trip to the US this summer (10 August – 7 September)—visiting with family, meeting the saints in various PRC churches, attending the Young People's Convention (17-21 August) and the Calvin Conference (3-5 September), etc. We also hope to bring back about 150 pounds of RFPA books, to try to keep up with our sales!

May the Lord be with you all.

In Christ,  
*Rev. & Mary Stewart*