

# Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

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8 September, 2011

Dear saints in the  
Protestant Reformed Churches,

## US Trip

It was wonderful to meet many of you again and to preach in the churches on our recent trip to the US and Canada (18 July-15 August)! For the first time, I made it to the PRC congregations in Edmonton and Lacombe, Alberta, on Sunday, 24 July, where I preached and gave PowerPoint presentations on the CPRC and its witness. Both churches had refreshments, and we also experienced warm hospitality from the families of Doug Tolsma, Henry Ferguson, and Rev. Tom Miersma.

On the next weekend, we attended the wedding of our niece, Mandy Hanko, to Troy VandenBosch in Lynden, Washington (29 July). It was good to listen again to my former minister, Rev. Hanko, at the wedding ceremony and to watch the very entertaining slide presentation at the reception. It has been eight years since I last was in Lynden, and it was good to preach there again (31 July).

On Friday, 5 August, I gave a lecture, “For Whom Did Christ Die?” in Spokane, Washington, for the Covenant of Grace PRC. It was well attended and was followed by a profitable question-and-answer session. Besides preaching and a PowerPoint presentation (3 August), we attended a congregational picnic at a nearby park and visited several families in their homes (Duerrs, Tashes, and Edwards). We also visited Neil Hanko and met Ed and Carol Banton, with whom we had correspondence several years ago.

Between our weekends in the PRC churches in the Northwest, we camped and hiked in the Canadian Rockies and the Coast Mountains and in Glacier National Park,

Montana, with family. It was very relaxing and refreshing, and I got to do some reading. I have put some photos on my personal Facebook account. We also met some friends with whom I had e-mail correspondence: in Missoula, we met Noah Heckman, Jr. and his family from Belgrade, Montana; in Edmonton we met Jason Allen from Winnipeg, Manitoba; and in Spokane, we met Gary and Lloyd Gordon from Reno, Nevada.

In our few days in West Michigan (9-15 August), I preached in Hudsonville PRC (the church I attended when at seminary) and Providence PRC (my first time there) and gave a PowerPoint presentation in Georgetown PRC (14 August). I had a good meeting with the Contact Committee (10 August) and visited family and friends in Grand Rapids. We saw the renovation work at the seminary, and Don Doezema showed me the Theodore Letis Library in the basement.

We brought some *British Reformed Journals* to the US for American subscribers, but we brought a lot more literature back: RFPA books, some books to review for the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, and hundreds of pamphlets, including 800 copies of “For Whom Did Christ Die?” published by Trinity PRC ([www.cprf.co.uk/pamphlets/forwhomdidchristdie.htm](http://www.cprf.co.uk/pamphlets/forwhomdidchristdie.htm)). We returned too with some helpful tips from various saints in the PRC regarding live webcasting and pamphlet racks—both of which we hope to install in the CPRC in the future, when we are ready financially. Most importantly, we returned very refreshed and encouraged by the great interest and support expressed by you, our brothers and sisters in the PRC—in Canada and the US, west and east.

## Visit of Rev. Bleyenberg

While we were in North America, Rev. and Deb Bleyenberg were in Ireland. On the three Sundays Pastor Bleyenberg was in the CPRC, he preached three sermons on Christ's temptation, two sermons on the day of atonement (Lev. 16), and one sermon on "Affliction Working Glory." Elder Brian Crossett read two reading sermons on the Sunday that Rev. Bleyenberg preached in the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (7 August).



In their time here, the Bleyenbergs visited a good number of the families of the CPRC and even managed to make it into the pages of both of Ballymena's newspapers, when they signed the visitors' book at Ballymena Town Hall. The congregation had tea and made a presentation to the Bleyenbergs after their last Sunday evening service (14 August). Their visit was much appreciated!

## Return to the CPRC

Since arriving back in Northern Ireland (16 August), Mary and I have been catching up with things here and getting ready for the new church season. Eventually all the e-mails were sorted out and the post/mail taken care of. Stickers with the CPRC contact details were put on the books and pamphlets we brought back from the US, and orders were posted off to various people.

After 35-40 years, the tarmac on the manse drive was breaking up, necessitating a lot of sweeping, cleaning, patching, etc., over the last few years. A few days ago,

new curbs were fitted, better drainage installed, and asphalt laid. The workmen were pretty tidy, but you know how it is—there's always a lot of work that needs to be done after they leave! It is great that they were able to do the job in late August before the church year starts. Our thanks to the PRC, which owns the manse and pays for such repairs.

On Sunday, 4 September, Ivan Reid and William Graham were reappointed as elder and deacon respectively. Our church council was also enlarged by the election of Philip Hall as a second deacon.

Currently, I am about halfway through a series of sermons on John's prologue (John 1:1-18), entitled "The Word." There are always so many great passages in the Bible to preach on! The last series of sermons on Psalm 2, "The Son's Messianic Kingdom," is selling well in box sets of 6 CDs or DVDs ([www.cprf.co.uk/audio/boxsets.htm](http://www.cprf.co.uk/audio/boxsets.htm)).

We are now almost ready for the new season with two new whiteboards and another table in the Bible-study room. The four catechism classes, two weekly Bible studies, and monthly men's group start next week, D.V., as we begin our second year in our new church building. (The fortnightly Ladies' group starts this Friday.) A reporter from the *Ballymena Times* asked me some questions for an article he wrote about our first year in 83 Clarence Street, our new church home (30 August). Mary is revamping the main CPRC website ([www.cprc.co.uk](http://www.cprc.co.uk)), giving it a new look and greater browser compatibility. With 5000+ pages to work with, it will take a while to get the new website up and running.

May the Lord be with you all and build us up by His Word and Spirit!

In Christ,  
*Rev. & Mary Stewart*