

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

15 November, 2013

Dear saints in the
Protestant Reformed Churches,

Heidelberg Catechism Conference

Mary and I greatly enjoyed our week with family and friends in Michigan in the middle of October. We travelled with Rev. Martyn McGeown and Marco Barone of the Limerick Reformed Fellowship by plane from Dublin to Chicago and then onwards in a rented car to Grand Rapids.

Our purpose was especially to attend the conference celebrating the 450th anniversary of our Heidelberg Catechism (17-19 October). Mary and I very much appreciated the fine speeches and warm fellowship. Though we were in the US this summer, we spent more time with the saints in Iowa/South Dakota, Lynden (WA), and Randolph (WI) and only one Sunday in Grand Rapids. So it was good to meet friends from Michigan (and other parts of the US and Canada, as well as Germany) at the conference. Josh Hoekstra of Hudsonville PRC passed on the conference DVDs and CDs to us, and Stephen Murray of the CPRC has reproduced them in an attractive box set for distribution on the eastern side of the Atlantic. Five of the conference mugs that the seminary had produced are now in the meeting room of the CPRC council.

While in the US, Rev. McGeown and I had a profitable meeting with the Contact Committee, and I gave a chapel speech at Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School. The afternoon before, I joined an ad hoc, largely adult volleyball team that was fairly beaten by Hope's all-conquering junior high girl's team! Earlier in the month, I had had the privilege of speaking about my homeland to Chad Uittenbogaard's sixth grade Geography class in Iowa by Skype from Northern Ireland. What a great blessing are the Protestant Reformed schools. I wish we had such schools over here!

Mary and I were delighted to attend the Protestant Reformed Special Education production of Handel's Messiah in St. Cecilia's

Music Center (where Herman Hoeksema preached for a time after 1924) on Saturday, 19 October, courtesy of Jim Noorman. It was great to hear people singing what they believed. I especially enjoyed it in the light of the material we have been studying in the CPRC's Wednesday night class on Christ's glorious atonement.

Next day, I preached at Holland PRC, calling in on the way back with Andra Hanko, our sister-in-law, who had given birth to a little boy the day before in Zeeland Hospital. That evening, I spoke at Byron Center PRC and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the sister-church relationship between the CPRC and the PRC. Elder Brian Crossett delivered reading sermons in Ballymena in our absence.

For us, no visit to Grand Rapids is complete without calling at the RFPA and the PR Seminary. We brought back over 50 books and some 500 pamphlets to help restock the CPRC Bookstore. Book sales have been very good recently, especially in the first half of November, including Herman Hoeksema's new devotional, *All Glory to the Only Good God*.

Live Webcasting

Recently, the CPRC has begun live video webcasting of both our Sunday services, as a number of PR churches are already doing. Our services are at 11 A.M. and 6 P.M. (GMT)—6 A.M. and 1 P.M. Eastern Time in the US and Canada (and other parts of the Americas). Maybe our evening service would work for you some Sunday (www.cprf.co.uk/live.html)?

We acquired the necessary hardware and software at a good price, and Mary spent a lot of time researching the hosting providers to keep our monthly running costs as low as possible. With advice from Rich Feenstra of Hudsonville PRC, the sound quality when the minister speaks is now good.

The *Ballymena Guardian* published a piece I sent them about live webcasting in the CPRC (24 October) and we have also informed people

about it via Facebook, our main website (www.cprc.co.uk), our weekly bulletin, and the monthly *Covenant Reformed News*. So we are now building up an audience.

Philip Hall's installation as deacon, with the accompanying sermon on "Holding the Mystery of the Faith" (I Tim. 3:9), on Sunday morning, 6 October, was the first service we broadcast live. Already the live webcasting has been of help to our own members who were unable to attend in the flesh due to sickness, and we have heard from viewers in different parts of the world. Our thanks to those individuals and societies who donated to this worthy cause—you know who you are.

Staying with things audio-visual for a little longer, the CPRC YouTube site (www.youtube.com/cprcni) recently added its 1,500th video ("The Restraint of the Man of Sin's Revelation"), received its 120,000th viewing, and gained its 400th subscriber. These are not massive figures compared to many sites, but it is encouragement for the many hours of work put into it.

Others

Jess, Emma, Rachel, and Charlotte Higgs, four sisters from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) in Brisbane, Australia, who stayed with David and Kristin Crossett, worshiped with us on 13 October. Our last visitors from the EPC were Anna and Kezia Carins, Alan and Leoni Duff, and Rev. Phil and Bev Burley. Currently, Hank and Barb DeVries from Randolph PRC are staying with their daughter and son-in-law, Beth and Colin Buchanan.

Reformation Day (31 October) saw the first class of a new catechumen in the CPRC. On the next day, a Friday, we held our Reformation Day lecture in Ballymena on "War and Peace in the Heidelberg Catechism." It was the first use of the projector screen the church bought and the first CPRC lecture broadcast live on the Internet. The speech and the question-and-answer session are on YouTube. It was an encouraging evening with several visitors and a good number of books sold. The *Ballymena Guardian* carried an article about the speech a few days before it was held.

Last week, I gave a lecture in South Wales on "Original Sin" in a new venue, the Round

Chapel, Port Talbot (7 November). This style of church building, which is actually octagonal, though it looks round, increased in popularity in Britain through a structure erected in Norwich (1754-1756) by the congregation of Dr. John Taylor, a liberal minister whose book attacking the truth of original sin was refuted by Jonathan Edwards in New England. Strangely enough, my last speech in our previous venue, The Rest, Porthcawl (which has now gone into administration), was entitled "Rest for the People of God." Anyway, the recent lecture in our new venue was attended by a small but zealous group who bought a lot of books.



In the last two months, 34 new translations in 9 languages have been added to our website (www.cprc.co.uk/languages.htm): 1 Dutch, 1 Spanish, 2 Thai, 4 Hiligaynon, 4 Hungarian, 4 Italian, 5 Afrikaans, 6 Portuguese (including the *Compendium of the Christian Religion* and an e-book of Prof. Hanks' *Portraits of Faithful Saints*), and 7 Chinese (21 articles from the *Covenant Reformed News*, translated under the auspices of the Christian Literature Ministry of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore).

The booking forms for the 2014 British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) Family Conference in Gartmore House, Scotland (26 July–2 August) should be available soon. In the days ahead, we also plan to provide more on-line information about the conference and travelling to it (www.britishreformedfellowship.org.uk). We hope that many of you can join us in Scotland next year, as we consider "Be Ye Holy: The Reformed Truth of Sanctification."

May the Lord be with you all,

Pastor and Mary Stewart