

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

16 May, 2014

Dear saints in the
Protestant Reformed Churches,

EPC in Australia

On Monday, 14 April, Mary and I began a journey of over thirty hours by air from Belfast to London to Singapore to Sydney to Tasmania, which is one of the farthest parts in the world from Northern Ireland. Yet, since it was settled mostly by people from the British Isles and its climate is very similar to ours (though slightly warmer), it was surprisingly like home, if one leaves out the penguin road signs, the wallabies, and the availability of shark at the fish and chip shop!

About 110-120 attended the annual Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) family camp (see picture below), held near Smithton in Northwest Tasmania (17-21 April). I gave four speeches under the theme of “The Ministry of Angels”—“Angels as Created Spirits,” “Angels as Messengers of the Lord,” “Angels as Agents of Divine Justice,” and “Angels as Worshipers of God,” with the enjoyable question times lasting almost as long as the lectures. The sermon on Zechariah 1:7-17 on the Sunday morning of the conference also developed the theme of angels. The five audios are now on-line (www.cprf.co.uk/audio/otherseries). It was great to fellowship with like-minded believers at the camp and to join in the excellent singing.

For most of the remainder of our ten days in Tasmania (16-25 April), we stayed with Rev. Mark and Susie Shand. Mark and I spent three very happy years together at the Protestant Reformed Seminary, and it was wonderful for

and me to spend time with him and Susie, after not seeing each other for fourteen years. We also stayed a night each with Pastor David and Ruth Torlach (David and our missionary, Rev. Martyn McGeown, studied three years together as seminarians) and with Rev. Phil and Bev Burrey, whom we entertained at the CPRC manse nine years before. We exchanged CPRC literature for EPC materials and visited the church buildings of Launceston EPC and Winnaleah EPC, and were shown around Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School by John Torlach.

Impressed by Tasmania's beautiful scenery and the warm hospitality of its saints, we headed to Brisbane in mainland Australia for a long weekend (25-29 April) where we were superbly hosted by Pastor David and Sue Higgs and their girls. Emma was our fine guide to the south and inland on Saturday, while Katie and Jessica showed us some beautiful sights to the north and inland on Monday. On Sunday, I preached twice in Brisbane EPC and gave a PowerPoint presentation about the CPRC (27 April). The next evening, I gave a presentation on the marriage of Martin and Katie Luther (www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUfPhTHuDyE). It was lovely to meet the Lord's people in Brisbane.

CERC in Singapore

Deacon Yoon Chuan and his wife, Jee Fung, met us at Changi airport after our flight from Brisbane. They prepared the itinerary for our week in Singapore (29 April – 6 May) and also showed us around themselves. We had fellowship and dined with Rev. Andy and Stephanie Lanning, various church officebearers and their wives (including Gim Theng, who attended last



Mary

year's PR Synod, and Patricia, who was at the 1994 British Reformed Fellowship Conference in Scotland), and members of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC), who took us to see amazing tropical flora and fauna on land, sea, or air at impressive zoos, parks or aquaria. The hotter climes, with a lot of energy in their ecosystems, have the greatest variety and colour in their creatures (Ps. 8:6-9). They also have a higher percentage of the pagan religions, so we checked out the shrines of Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism, though the alleged tooth of the Buddha is not even human, being the wrong shape and way too big!

We met with representatives of the CERC's Christian Literature Ministry (CLM) and *Salt Shakers* (the CERC youth magazine) to discuss their work and how we may be able to help each other. For instance, Rev. McGeown and I have already written for the CERC, and they have translated some of our materials into Chinese and are working on more. We left their bookstore some pamphlets, a couple of box-sets of lectures, and several dozen copies of the four books published by the British Reformed Fellowship.



Some of the saints in the CPRC

I gave a PowerPoint lecture on "Martin and Katie Luther: A Reformation Marriage," which was split into two parts, with refreshments in between (1 May). On Sunday, 4 May, Mary and I partook of the Lord's Supper in the CERC, and I preached twice, led a Bible Study on "The Two Components of Justification" with a group of (mostly) young adults, followed by "Table Talk" (answering questions), and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the CPRC's sister-church relationship with the PRC, exploring the possibility and profitability of a sister-church relationship between the CPRC and the CERC.

The next evening, I had a meeting with all the CERC officebearers to discuss ecumenical relations. We covered the history and membership of our respective churches, our doctrine,

church government, worship, etc., as well as the ways in which a sister-church relationship could serve both churches. I was impressed with the unity we have with the CERC.

At last night's monthly CPRC Council meeting, the Council decided that we should familiarize the congregation with the CERC and invite discussion. For example, we have asked Rev. Lanning to write about the CERC in our Sunday bulletin, and I am to present information about the church in Singapore and answer questions during our church's Annual General Meeting in a few weeks time.

Rev. den Hartog in Northern Ireland

While we were in the East, Rev. and Sherry den Hartog were in Northern Ireland—very appropriate, given Pastor den Hartog's years of service in Singapore. This is another fine instance of the help we receive from our sister church in North America!

Rev. den Hartog preached on two Sundays in the CPRC (20 April and 4 May) and one Sunday in the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (27 April), when Rev. McGeown was in the CPRC. He also gave two lectures in Ballymena: "The Importance of the Historical Adam" (23 April) and "The Role of the Father in the Christian Home" (2 May), as well as a speech in Limerick. The two weekly Ballymena newspapers each carried two articles about the two lectures. Pastor den Hartog's audios (www.cprf.co.uk/audio/visitorsermons.htm) and videos (www.youtube.com/user/CPRCNI) in the CPRC are on-line. Our thanks to the den Hartogs for coming over to preach for, and fellowship with, the saints in our congregation!

Upcoming BRF Conference

This summer's British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) Conference in Scotland is drawing nearer (26 July – 2 August)! Bookings are coming along very well, including from saints in the PRC. Our first Singaporean (Lisa Ong) in 20 years is also planning to attend! Gartmore mansion is now filled up and only dormitory places remain at just £230 (or the equivalent in US dollars) for an adult, full-board, en-suite for a week, with discounts for children (<http://brfconference.weebly.com>). So book quickly, if you want to come.

May the blessed triune God be with you all!

In Christ,

Pastor and Mary Stewart