

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

22 May, 2015

Dear saints in the
Protestant Reformed Churches,

End of Church Season

Now not only the Monday night catechism classes but also the Ladies' Bible Study (Philippians) and the Wednesday doctrine class are over for the season. We concluded with Belgic Confession 25 on the abolishing of the ceremonial law. Our eight classes included the history of the increase and the decrease of the ceremonial laws, as well as Old Testament prophecies of their change and fulfillment. Our Lord's words and deeds in the four gospels bespeak its passing away and many passages in Acts and the epistles make this clear, especially in connection with Christ's cross, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the salvation of a catholic church of Gentiles as well as Jews. We also spent a night on Hebrews, the key biblical book on the ceremonial law (www.cprf.co.uk/audio/belgicconfessionclass.htm).

With the end of the Wednesday evening studies on the Belgic Confession (6 May), family visitation began. The elders and I have already visited over half the congregation. Our passage this year is II Corinthians 4 on the glorious light of the gospel of the glory of God in Jesus Christ and how this illumines and transforms us, even through afflictions. Each year I am impressed afresh with the need and value of family visitation, an important part of our Reformed heritage.

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Monday, 18 May, was a very encouraging evening. Stephen Murray gave a report on his audio-visual work: technical improvements in quality, CD and DVDs, YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/CPRCNI), and positive feedback. Our best-selling box set for the past year was "Be Ye Holy: The Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification" by Profs. Hanks and Engelsma at the 2014 British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) Conference in Scotland. Total sales of books and box sets in the last ten years are £60,000 (about \$94,000 US), not including money paid for postage and generous donations!

Julian Kennedy gave an informative financial report at the AGM, also mentioning several items of proposed expenditure for next year. Offerings are up significantly from the previous twelve months. My presentation was entitled "Why We Do What We Do," explaining the biblical, creedal and Reformed rationale for the witnessing of our church. Our missionary, Rev. McGeown, spoke on his labors for the Lord with the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (LRF), outlining some of the difficulties of the last year, the

spiritual growth of the saints, and new openings in Shannon with Filipino believers.



Samson box-set

On Sunday, 17 May, the day before the AGM, Pastor McGeown preached in the CPRC the two concluding sermons of his series on "Samson: Strong in Jehovah, Weak in the Flesh." Stephen Murray has made this eight-sermon set into CD and DVD box sets with CPRC and LRF cover versions. That Lord's Day, Mary and I were with the brethren and sisters in Christ in the Limerick Reformed Fellowship.

Other Items

Our Tuesday morning Bible study continues through much of the summer. After the kingdom of God, we are now on Hosea. We noted three things by way of introduction: (1) Hosea's great longevity (he is the writing prophet who served longest in office), (2) his northern provenance (his book is the only one in the canon about the Northern Kingdom by one from the Northern Kingdom), and (3) his unusual family (a harlot and children of whoredoms). For the past five weeks, we have been studying the prominent but sad theme of harlotry in Hosea and the Old Testament. Next week, we will consider its cure (D.V.).

Two saints who had come to many BRF Conferences died recently. Mary and I took the ferry to Scotland for the funeral of Willie Whitten (7 April). Willie was blind but now he has the beatific vision of God in Jesus Christ. It was good to be able to fellowship with Willie's widow, Mary, and son, Andrew. Isabel Beaton died on 13 May. She was a lovely lady, with whom we stayed in our early visits to South Wales, and a great lover of the Reformed faith we hold dear. Mrs. Beaton was a good friend of Prof. and Mrs. Hanks, even visiting them in Michigan. Sadly, Mary and I were not able to attend her funeral.



Mrs. Beaton

Our friend Alan Greenaway requested that I give a speech entitled, “The Threat of Rome to Protestant Churches Today.” I delivered it in Lurgan, about an hour’s drive south of Ballymena (10 April). This lecture is our most popular audio for 2015 so far. We had a fine night and have arranged another speech in Portadown, near Lurgan (26 June).

Recent visitors to the CPRC include Hank and Barb DeVries from Randolph PRC in Wisconsin, and Charlotte and Emma Higgs from Brisbane Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Australia, in April. We had tea for them at church after a Sunday evening service (19 April). On Lord’s Day 10 May, we were joined by Erik Prins of Trinity PRC (currently serving with the military in Germany) and a group of four young ladies from Reformed churches in Ontario, Canada, and Gelderland in the Netherlands.

I had a Skype session with Karen VanBaren’s church history class of fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds from Heritage Christian High School in Dyer, Indiana, answering questions about John Knox, the CPRC, etc. (13 May). It was a very enjoyable experience. What a great blessing your Christian schools are!

The women of the CPRC are well looked after! A carpenter recently fitted shelves by the sinks in the ladies’ bathroom for handbags, etc.

WWW.CPRC.CO.UK

We added 34 translations in 8 languages to the CPRC website in the last couple of months (www.cprf.co.uk/languages.htm): 13 Indonesian (by Irwan and Cai), 6 Chinese (from the CERC in Singapore), 5 Hungarian (by Balint), 5 Afrikaans (by Nic), 2 Russian (by Renat), 1 Javanese (*Nicene Creed*), 1 Swahili (“Knowing the True God” by Rev. Houck), and 1 Portuguese (“Does God Really Desire to Save the Reprobate?”).

Our English articles are continually growing too. With the help of David Hutchings, our Welsh friend, more Protestant Reformed materials have been added to our resource pages on “God’s Effectual Saving Desire” (www.cprf.co.uk/effectualdesireresources.htm) and “Uncommon Grace” (www.cprf.co.uk/uncommongraceresources.htm). These articles are also of use to those engaging in on-line discussions, for they can simply link to them.

Users of our website are also increasing. For the last three months, we have averaged about 1,650 people per day on the written pages of our main website (excluding pdfs and audios).

Upcoming US Trip

Mary and I are coming for our biennial holiday to the US this summer (DV). My preaching schedule has been finalized and I am also to give some Power Point (PP) presentations—12 July: Kalamazoo (PP) in A.M. and Cornerstone (PP) in P.M.; 19 July: Loveland in A.M. and P.M. (PP); 26 July: Loveland in A.M. and P.M.; 2 August: Georgetown in A.M. and Grace (PP) in P.M. We hope to see some of you!

May the Lord continue to bless and keep you.

In Christ,
Rev. and Mary Stewart