

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

16 June, 2016

Dear saints in the
Protestant Reformed Churches,

New Members

The youngest CPRC member is now Keagan Jude Hall, born to Philip and Susan (8 May) and baptized on 22 May. Though his grandmother, Marilyn Adams (First PRC), was over in Northern Ireland, her return flight was already booked for the day before Keagan's birth. Babies are very hard to schedule for!



Last Lord's Day, Marina and Helen Mawhinney were received into membership (12 June). These two ladies are the wives of two brothers: Willie John and Ivan (respectively), who joined us three years before (16 June, 2013). How often it is that enthusiastic church members are used by God to bring others into the congregation (cf. John 1:40-42)!



These recent additions mean that the CPRC now consists of 16 families, 37 communicant members, 14 baptized members, and 51 total members. This is the largest we have ever been, though we are still a relatively small church. Our numerical growth has been slow but steady, with three steps forward and two (or two and a half) steps back. Our testimony is that the Lord is faithful and that Jesus Christ alone builds His church.

Family visitation began (9 May) after the end of the church "season," concluding with Rev. McGeown of the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (LRF) when he was in Northern Ireland, and Hilary and Timothy Spence, after he returned to Northern Ireland from his first year's study at Cardiff University in S. Wales (8 June). In my fifteen years as minister in the CPRC, this year had the most visits (25) and was the most encouraging in terms of the spiritual condition and unity of the congregation.

AGM

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place on Monday, 30 May. Excellent reports were given by Stephen Murray (audio-visual), Julian Kennedy (financial), and Rev. McGeown (LRF), and I gave a presentation under the theme of "Progress." The AGM is always a good night of fellowship, and it helps inform the members of the various aspects of the work of the church, as well as being one way to provide accountability and opportunities to ask questions.

The last financial year saw some very large one-off expenditures: refurbishing two manse bathrooms (much needed after some 45 years), installing solar panels (on the roofs of the church building and the manse), and setting up a pension for the minister (required by the civil government). Yet, by God's grace, the offerings and donations were so good that our bank balance is still healthy.

In the last year, our best-selling Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA) books were (in order): *In The Beginning God* by Homer C. Hoeksema, *Gottschalk: Servant of God* by Connie Meyer, *Faith Made Perfect* by Prof. Hanks, *Saved by Grace* by Prof. Cammenga and Rev. Ron Hanks, and *Doctrine According to Godli-*

ness by Rev. Hanko. The other titles in the top ten were the five British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) books by Profs. Engelsma and Hanko: *The Reformed Worldview*, *Keeping God's Covenant*, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, and *Ye Are My Witnesses* (www.cprf.co.uk/bookstore.htm).

Our most popular sermon download in January - May, 2016 was "Infralapsarianism and Supralapsarianism" (*Belgic Confession* 16)! The remainder of the top ten were (in order): "What Sort of a Man Is This Levite?" (Judges 19:1-21; the first in a sermon series on "The Outrage in Gibeah"); "The Psalms Versus Common Grace" (a 2007 South Wales lecture); "Five Attacks on the Holiness of the Church" (*Belgic Confession* 27); "Outside the Church No Salvation—Historical Teaching" (*Belgic Confession* 28); "Be Strong and Very Courageous" (Josh. 1:6-9; a sermon at confession of faith); "The Image of God" (a 2016 South Wales lecture); "Calvin on Justification" (a 2009 conference speech in Grand Rapids); "The Real St. Patrick" (a 2003 lecture in Northern Ireland); and "Why Heidelberg Catechism Preaching?" (a sermon on Lord's Day 1 by Rev. McGeown).

In 2015, we averaged a healthy 1,610 daily visitors on the written pages of our website (excluding the audios). The top ten countries on our main website (www.cprc.co.uk) so far in 2016 are (in order): USA, China, Indonesia, Brazil, UK, Peru, Italy, Germany, Russia, and Columbia.

Our top countries not only reflect their populations, the number of their professing Christians, and internet usage but there is also a correlation with the number of articles we have in their languages: 536 Italian, 448 Portuguese (Brazil), 156 Hungarian, 154 German, 152 Spanish (Peru and Columbia), 138 Afrikaans, 125 Indonesian and 61 Russian. We now have a total of 2,324 translations on our website (www.cprf.co.uk/languages.htm).

Others

Two new sermon box sets have been produced: "God's Attributes of Goodness" (treating His long-suffering, grace, mercy, and love) and "Our Wise, True, Holy and Righteous God!" (covering four more divine perfections), bringing our total to 64 box sets of CDs and DVDs (www.cprf.co.uk/audio/boxsets.htm). We recently produced our first audio-visual catalogue, which also includes our free pamphlets. The box sets are classified in five categories: "Attributes of God," "Old Testament," "New Tes-

tament," "*Belgic Confession* Classes," and "Conferences." Hundreds of copies of this hard-copy catalogue will be mailed out with the next *Covenant Reformed News* and distributed by other means, D.V.

The *English Churchman* carried a fine review of *Gottschalk: Servant of God* (15 & 22 April), which brought some sales. The May *Chatterbox*, a local free newspaper, printed the half-page article that I sent them, setting forth the various meetings and activities of the CPRC. The CPRC had a stall with books, box sets, and free pamphlets at the Ballymena Show (27-28 May). Bit by bit, these means of witness help to make our congregation and its bookstore—hence, more importantly, our biblical and Reformed message—better known.

As well as Marilyn Adams, other visitors from North America have included Becky Wierenga and Christine Tolsma of Lacombe, Alberta; Hank and Barb De Vries (Randolph PRC); and Jason Berkenpas (United Reformed Churches) and David Diemer (Heritage Netherlands Reformed Churches) from Grand Rapids, who stayed with us at the manse for a couple of days.

4,500 copies of *Be Ye Holy: The Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification*, the new BRF book, by Profs. Hanko and Engelsma have been printed in West Michigan and are due at the RFPA building today. The RFPA are kindly assisting us by seeing that the pre-ordered copies go to various bodies in our circles in the United States, Canada, Singapore, and the Philippines. Some of the saints coming from Michigan to the BRF Conference in Castlewella Castle in Northern Ireland are graciously helping us by bringing copies to the CPRC.

The BRF conference begins exactly one month from today (16-23 July). Rev. Lanning from Singapore and Prof. Engelsma are our two main speakers on the theme, "Behold, I Come Quickly: The Reformed, Biblical Truth of the End." Bookings are almost finalized and a good body of believers are coming. We are expecting a blessed week with the rich exposition of the Word and the sweet communion of the saints!

May the Lord be with you all,

In Christ,
Rev. and Mary Stewart