

Limerick Reformed Fellowship

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Dear saints in the
Protestant Reformed Churches,

In my first bimonthly newsletter I would like to introduce Limerick (Gaelic: *Luimneach*) and the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (LRF). Limerick, originally a 9th Century Viking settlement, has had a turbulent history, including the Normans (c. 12th Century) and sieges under Cromwell (1651) and William of Orange (1691), traces of which history



The hall before services (Sam and Jessie Li)

can still be seen in the city today (e.g., King John's Castle, St. Mary's Cathedral, and The Treaty Stone). Today, Limerick is the third largest city in the Republic of Ireland (ROI), with an urban population of about 100,000 people. Its thriving university, situated in the Castletroy suburb of Limerick, where, incidentally, I also live, has about 13,000 students. Limerick is about 5 hours drive from Ballymena, and by the end of the year that journey time should decrease because the motorway between Limerick and Dublin is almost complete. It is also close to some of Ireland's popular tourist destinations and about 30 minutes from Shannon International Airport.

Religiously, Limerick is, like most of the ROI, predominantly Roman Catholic, but much of that is nominal. Of the several evangelical groups located in the city, most are Charismatic, (Ana)Baptistic, and Arminian. There is also one (thoroughly apostate) Presbyterian-Methodist Church.

How did the LRF start? Rev. Stewart has been

giving public lectures in Limerick since 2004, and for many years a small group of dedicated saints have been meeting to worship the Lord with sermons provided by the CPRC. Now, under the providence and grace of God, a full-time missionary labours in their midst, for which we are thankful to our heavenly Father.

The LRF meets in the city centre in *Conradh na Gaelige*, an Irish language school. We use a school room that overlooks Thomas Street, which despite its being the Lord's Day is still bustling with shoppers, tourists, and walkers. When we arrive we need to spend 20 minutes or so setting up—moving the tables, arranging the chairs, and displaying our literature. The CPRC kindly donated us their old pulpit and Psalters. On summer days (which are now over), when we had the windows ajar, I could see people looking up to where we were singing and to where I was preaching; and I am sure that the diners at the cafe next door must have been able to hear some sounds coming from above as they sat outside. Still, no one has been curious enough to visit or annoyed enough to complain!

The LRF is a small but very enthusiastic group of Reformed believers. When we have full attendance we have 17 people (10 adults, 7 children), not including the pastor. Usually, because of illness and other hindrances, we have fewer than that. Seven to eight people is not unusual. The main members are



Setting up before A.M. service

Terry Casey (married with three children; his wife is not a member but two of his children [Clara, 13, and Stephen, 12], attend some of the services); *Bill Davies* (an elderly gentleman originally from Wales; after his recent hip-replacement he attends regularly



Billy Davies

the evening services, but hopes to be fit enough soon to attend both); *Billy O'Connor* (because of a chronic bowel-disease he has not been able to attend, but he also hopes to soon); *Chris and Joanne Cesar* (a Filipino family living in Shannon. They have three children, Coleen, 12; Joseph, 10; Joshua, 6); *Samuel Watterson* (post-graduate student in the University of Limerick); *Manuel and Emily-Kate Kuhs* (the newlyweds, Manuel is a PhD student and Emily-Kate is a recent university graduate); *Jessie Li* (a Chinese student, who will be returning to Beijing in January 2011, DV; she will be



Jessie Li, Sam, Manuel, Emily-Kate

sorely missed by the LRF, as are two other foreign nationals who were with us for a time, Nelson from Uganda and Daniel from Hungary); and *Luke and Catriona Osborne* (with their children Joshua, 3; and Caleb, 9 months), sister and brother-in-law of Samuel Watterson. They have started attending recently.

Besides these regulars we have some occasional visitors both at our worship services and our mid-week meetings. These are encouraging beginnings. One of the young men who attends the Essentials Class (see

below) was greatly encouraged by Rev. Eriks' article in a recent *Standard Bearer*, "The Teenage Years: Goofiness or Godliness," so much so that he brought the *SB* issue home and was going to photocopy the article for his church's youth group, but discovered that his parents, who saw the magazine in their living room, had beaten him to it!

The LRF holds two worship services every Lord's Day (11 A.M. and 7 P.M.), as well as catechism class and Bible study. We also intend to hold regular public lectures in Limerick, South Wales (3 Dec.), and in other places, if the Lord opens doors of opportunity. We do not despise the "day of small things," and we pray that our Father will prosper His church in our midst. We know, too, that the enemies of the truth are dismayed that the LRF is becoming more established in the city. Many view us with suspicion, and spread slander



Our group on my inaugural Sunday

concerning us (unloving, narrow, Hypercalvinist, etc), but by God's grace we do not faint.

After I was ordained on 30 July, my full-time work as a missionary pastor began. On 1 August I preached my inaugural sermon, choosing the text from I Peter 2:1-2, "Desire the Word." Present on that occasion were Peter and Dorothy VanDerSchaaf, from Faith PRC; Francesco de Lucia (CPRC); and Marco Barone, from the *Italian Reformed Fellowship*. They had the peculiar honour of being the first guests in the LRF parsonage. Several of the members of the LRF enjoyed the *British Reformed Fellowship Family Conference* in mid-August, reports of which you have already received from Rev. A. Stewart and will read in the *Standard Bearer*.

The regular "church season" has now begun. I have started my and the LRF's first journey through the Heidelberg Catechism. We are up to LD 9 this coming Sunday. I recently began a series on Hebrews 11 ("A Great Cloud of Faithful Witnesses"). These, and

indeed all my sermons, have been well received by the grace of God and are uploaded weekly on our website. Besides the two Lord's Day services, we have begun a mid-week Bible study on John, which is immediately followed by an adult *Essentials of Reformed Doctrine* class. These meetings are held either in the homes of members or at the LRF parsonage. This is the first time that the members here have encountered Essentials and the first time (apart from four enjoyable weeks on the internship in Southwest PRC and two more in Lynden, WA) that I have taught it. Our members are regularly amazed at how thorough Protestant Reformed catechetical instruction is, especially since none of them (their pastor included!) was catechised in this way growing up. Young people, treasure this catechism! See it as a blessing, a privilege, and never a chore! We also have one children's catechism class (4 students, with a few neighbourhood children as attentive observers), *Old Testament Bible History for Juniors*, which I teach on Saturday afternoons.

One of the highlights for our fellowship thus far was the wedding of Manuel Kuhs and Emily-Kate Dunning (8 October). I conducted pre-marriage counselling with the happy couple for several weeks before the big day, and I was privileged to officiate at their wedding. By God's grace, a witness to the biblical and Reformed gospel was given to a crowd of some three hundred guests, many of whom were Roman Catholics and nominal evangelicals. I understand there was even a Romish priest in attendance, although I hasten to add he took no part in the ceremony! I preached on Ephesians 5, and I hope I did what was asked of me: keep it simple, keep it short. There were a few murmurings of discontent during the sermon, especially when I was explaining how Christ found His unworthy Bride, bought her, and washed her from her sins (worldly unbelievers do not like to hear about sin), but I was encouraged by the whole day. Manuel, Emily-Kate, and Samuel (the Best Man) were fine witnesses for Christ, especially in their godly conduct and in the wedding speeches. Rev. Stewart and Mary were guests, which meant that the CPRC and LRF had their first pulpit-swap on 10 October, a hitherto unheard-of luxury in this part of the world, and also my first time preaching in the new CPRC church building.

The LRF has been encouraged by a good number of visitors already from our sister churches. I have already mentioned the VanDer Schaafs, Francesco de Lucia, and Marco Barone (1 August). Prof. Engelsma very graciously fit us into his busy schedule in August. Prof. and Mrs. Engelsma, their daughter (Jennifer Bleyenbergh) and her friend (Liz Griess), both members

in Redlands, CA, visited us in mid-August after the BRF Conference. Prof. delivered an excellent speech on Assurance of Salvation for the LRF (19 August). We had 18 people in attendance at the lecture. On 22 August, Julian Kennedy, from the CPRC, paid us a visit; Matthew Kortus from Loveland, CO was here from 25-27 September; and David Crossett, from the CPRC, stayed with us from 1-4 October. All of these visitors are of great encouragement to our small group.

I remember my many friends in the PRC with fondness and am confident that you remember me in your prayers before the throne of our heavenly Father. Thanks also to those of you who have written and who keep up with LRF news on Facebook (Facebookers: please add the Limerick Reformed Fellowship to your



Building on Thomas Street

“likes/friends”). I hope this newsletter will give you added incentive to pray for the work here, that God's church might be gathered, defended, and preserved to the glory of His great name.

In Christian love,
Rev. Martyn McGeown