

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

16 January, 2014

Dear saints in the
Protestant Reformed Churches,

Hannah

Hannah Joy, born to William and Alison Graham on 22 November, became the newest CPRC member at her baptism on 5 January. That Lord's Day both sermons were on Hannah, the mother of Samuel (I Sam. 1:1-2:10): "The Prayer of Hannah" and "The Joy of Hannah," so both Word and sacrament dealt with at least one Hannah.



Ministry of the Word

Besides Heidelberg Catechism and sacramental sermons, I recently finished a series on "The Man of Sin" (II Thess. 2), soon to be made into a box set of CDs and DVDs. Now I am preaching through "The Prophet Jonah," a fascinating character! We are learning afresh that "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), for it is not "of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth" (Rom. 9:16), nor of him that runneth away.

On Monday nights, we have four catechism

classes, with good progress being made in each. I give another catechism class or two later in the week. The Tuesday morning class (mostly for retired saints and mothers) on "Christ's Controversies" has moved from His debates with the Jewish religious leaders on the Sabbath (fourth commandment) to those regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage (seventh commandment).

After twelve classes on "Christ's Atonement" (now available in a CD box set) and three on "Faith in Jesus Christ" (Belgic Confession 21-22), our Wednesday night class has started a thorough study of the great Reformation doctrine of "Justification" (Belgic Confession 23). Our first two classes critiqued the meaning of justification as taught by the New Perspective on Paul and Roman Catholicism.

We have been joined at various meetings by various members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Carolyn Prins (Trinity PRC) and Val VanBaren (Hope PRC) were with us in early December. Philip Rainey (First PRC, Grand Rapids) and Erik Prins (Trinity PRC) were with us at the Lord's Supper (22 December). Erik was also among the group at the manse/parsonage for games, food, and fellowship on New Year's Eve, as was Rev. McGeown, who stayed in Northern Ireland for a few days after a pulpit swap (29 December). Fellowship with saints from our sister churches in North America is of great encouragement to the CPRC, and some are able to bring literature, which helps the bookstore distribute Reformed materials.

Church Building

Some two and a half years after the erection of our church building, we now have an official sign on Ballymena's Cullybackey Road pointing towards our property (22 November). Because our name consists of four words, each fairly long, the sign is a good size and so clearly visible to pedestrians and motorists heading into, and out of, town. The council charged us about \$500 but, given its prominence and permanence, it is worth it. Our thanks to Julian Kennedy for pursuing the matter with the local authorities.



Recently, we blocked off the walkway at the back of our church building with some fencing and gates (19 November). The path can be slippery, especially in the winter, and we were concerned that one of the children might fall. The wood was then treated by Tommy Duncan and Julian with the same paint as the other fences on our property.

Inside the building, we fitted a mixer to improve the sound quality on our live webcasting. Before this, the minister's voice was OK but not great, and the system struggled with the many voices in congregational singing. Now this problem is fixed. The British Isles are five hours ahead of Eastern Time, which means that our 11 A.M. and 6 P.M. services are live at 6 A.M. and 1 P.M. in all or some of 23 US states, much of eastern Canada, and parts of the Caribbean and Latin America (if you are in a different time zone, you can calculate accordingly). If you have an opportunity, please join us (www.cprf.co.uk/live.html).

Main Website

Besides the various audios, bulletins, book reviews, *Covenant Reformed News* articles, etc., added to our main website, are letters to various papers. Recently, I had one published in the *English Churchman* on "Lawful Oaths and Vows."

I am also compiling a growing number of quotes against the erroneous interpretation of the four main texts urged in support of a failed

desire of God to save the reprobate: Ezekiel 33:11, Matthew 23:37, I Timothy 2:4, and II Peter 3:9 (www.cprf.co.uk/quotes.htm#desire). We now have dozens of quotes from Augustine, Gottschalk, Vermigli, Calvin, Knox, Zanchius, Kimerdonchius, Owen, Turretin, Ness, Kuyper, Pink, etc., clearly showing that our doctrine is no novelty but is that of many of the strongest theologians of the Christian church.

In the past two months, 23 new translations in 8 languages have been added to our website (www.cprf.co.uk/languages.htm): 6 Hungarian (including Prof. Hoeksema's pamphlet, "The Marks of the True Church"), 4 Portuguese (including 3 PR pamphlets), 4 Afrikaans, 3 Russian (so now all of Rev. Hanko's *Doctrine According to Godliness* can be read on-line in Russian), 2 Swedish (by a new translator from Sweden), 2 Italian, 1 Swahili, and 1 Luo (with these last two African translations being made by our new helper in Kenya). Our thanks to those who contribute to our Translator's Fund, thus making this witness possible.

Finally

Mary and I express our appreciation for the many cards we received recently. We send out thousands of items of mail each year, especially with the *Covenant Reformed News*, the *British Reformed Journal*, and the CPRC Bookstore, so we know you will understand our not posting a return letter.

The British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) Family Conference in Scotland is drawing nearer (26 July–2 August). The booking forms are available on-line, both in UK paper size and currency and in US paper size and currency, as is travel information, etc. (<http://brfconference.weebly.com/>). It should be a wonderful week of sightseeing and fellowship, with the main speeches by Profs. Engelsma and Hanko on "Be Ye Holy: The Reformed Truth of Sanctification." We hope that some of you can join us!

May the Lord be with you all this new year.

Pastor and Mary Stewart