

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

31 March, 2023

Dear saints in the
Protestant Reformed Churches,

Church Visitors

This year's church visitors were Rev. Michael DeVries and Elder Pete VanDerSchaaf, who were accompanied by their wives, Dawn and Dorothy (Friday, 27 January–Monday, 6 February). The two men met with the CPRC Council (30 January), and Rev. DeVries preached four fine sermons on the two Lord's days they were here and gave a presentation on men preparing themselves to serve as office-bearers (1 February).



Church visitors

Mary and I accompanied them on various enjoyable sightseeing trips, as did others in our congregation, besides their excursions on their own. Our four guests visited with several families and individuals in the church, and joined us at our congregational dinner at the Adair Arms in Ballymena (3 February) and tea at church after their last Sunday with us, when Ivan Reid made presentations to them on behalf of our congregation.

With Rev. DeVries preaching for us, we invited Gerard Smith, who lives in south Dublin about 2½ hours' drive from Ballymena, to spend a Sunday afternoon, between the two services, at the manse for then we would have more time to fellowship with him. Ger had bought some literature from the CPRC Bookstore and indicated that he would like to attend our Lord's day meetings. It was good finally to meet him (29 January).

Membership and Activities

Richard Burnside's membership in the CPRC was announced on 12 March. He is the younger brother of Helen Mawhinney and had been watching or listening to our Lord's day services for about five years. By God's grace, Richard has made a good recovery from a 10-hour operation upon his throat but he is not able to swallow solids. At the Lord's supper last Sunday, he was only able to drink the wine. Our Saviour knows our frailties (Ps. 103:14), which are no barrier to spiritual communion with Him and the blessings of His atoning sacrifice for us.

Sven Kuhs has moved from Germany to the island of Ireland in order to join the CPRC. He is the brother of Manuel and he attended the Limerick Reformed Fellowship for about two years while Rev. McGeown was the minister there. Sven holds a German passport and is living with his parents in County Clare in the Republic of Ireland through the week, while travelling to Northern Ireland to stay for the weekend at his rented flat near Ballymena. The congregation helped him furnish his Broughshane accommodation and 5 March was Sven's

first Lord's day with us under the new arrangement.

These and many other changes were incorporated into the new CPRC address, telephone, and email list (22 March) which has been handed out to the congregation. In the past few years especially, we have been growing numerically (and, we trust, spiritually) as a church, though, as has been our experience throughout our history, it is usually three steps forward and two steps back (Matt. 13:3-23).

Our Tuesday morning class has been looking at the relationship between faith and reason. We critiqued the notion of "double truth" and explored the question, "Is the Christian faith reasonable?" We also answered the charge that our rejection of a wishful and weak, failing and frustrated, contradictory and insincere god, the one who supposedly earnestly desires to save the reprobate, is rationalism.

In our Wednesday night classes on *Belgic Confession 37*, we have been looking at 10 individual signs of Christ's second coming: famines, pestilences, and earthquakes; the sun, the moon, and the stars being darkened or reddened or falling, etc.; wars and rumours of wars, false Christs, persecution, and global preaching. The audios of our doctrine classes are the ones that receive the most hits (www.cprc.co.uk/belgic-confession-class).

Websites and Translations

The CPRC YouTube page has passed 400,000 video watches and 1,700 subscribers (www.youtube.com/user/CPRCNI). Stephen Murray has put many hours of work into this project for almost 14 years. We have gotten good feedback from this work. Often the first contact people have with us is through our YouTube channel.

Recently Mary fixed over 1,500 dead links on our main website (www.cprc.co.uk). Even

though most of these were to external webpages and our website is sizeable with over 23,200 links, it is striking that there were so many! The more links a website has and the fewer dead links it contains, the better it ranks in the search engines. Maintaining a large website is a lot of work!

We now have 37 resource pages that draw together articles, audios, books, *Covenant Reformed News* pieces, pamphlets, quotes, videos, etc., from our website, as well as off-site materials, that deal with a particular topic (www.cprc.co.uk/topical-resources). We created a new resource page on "Martin Luther," and split the "Covenant and Baptism" page into two pages because it was getting too long.

Since 5 January (the date of our last letter), 56 translations have been added to our website. We now have some 3,660 pieces in 207 languages (www.cprc.co.uk/languages).

With 25 translations in the last 12 weeks, Polish has seen the most growth through the indefatigable labours of Marcin in Norway and his helpers. With the completion of the Polish translation of *Be Ye Holy*, we now have three British Reformed Fellowship books by Profs. Engelsma and Hanko in that language, with the others being *The Reformed Worldview* and *The Five Points of Calvinism*. The RFPA has kindly granted permission to Marcin to translate the whole of *The Gospel Truth of Justification* by Prof. Engelsma into Polish. So far Marcin has sent us six sections from this hefty tome. About two years ago, we had just 8 Polish translations: our 7 ecumenical and Reformed creeds, plus a translation by a postmillennial theologian of a Protestant Reformed article on Christian education. Now we have 185 pieces, either written or on audio (www.cprc.co.uk/languages/polish).

The 10 most recent Spanish translations have brought our total in that language to 300

(www.cprc.co.uk/languages/spanish). Since December of last year, Jorge Enrique Carbajal Aguayo from Lima in Peru has been sending out the *Covenant Reformed News* in Spanish by e-mail to those on his growing list. If any Protestant Reformed evangelism committees, or if any of you, have contacts who you know would like to receive the *News* free each month in Spanish, please send me their name, email number, and country, and I will forward these details to Jorge. Spanish is the third foreign language in which the *News* has been emailed out, with the others being Hungarian (from October, 2012 to the present) and Italian (from August, 2012 to November, 2014).



Jorge and Rosita his wife

Our other translations since 5 January are Russian 8, Hungarian 6, Tagalog 2, Italian 2, Chinese 1, and Dutch 1. Selam Kefyalew's Amharic translation of all of Rev. Ron Hanko's *Doctrine According to Godliness* was kindly sent to us by the RFPA. Besides this Ethiopian language, we now have all or part of this excellent book on-line in 13 languages, with the oth-

ers being Afrikaans, Burmese, Chinese, Czech, Tagalog, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Ukrainian.

Improvements were made to our small Romanian section by Mihaela from Braşov in Romania. She joined us for the congregational dinner and Lord's day services on the last weekend that our church visitors were with us.

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

Yours in Christ Jesus,
Rev. & Mary Stewart