

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

8 January, 2010

Dear saints in the Protestant Reformed Churches,

May the Lord be with you in 2010! Another year to serve Him, as this world runs swiftly to its goal, the glorious return of Jesus Christ!

Limerick

From Sunday morning, 8 November, to Sunday evening, 22 November, Mary and I were in Limerick, staying in a semi-detached house in Murroe, a little town 15 minutes drive from the city. Our rented accommodation was cheap, given it was off-season and they were offering two weeks for the price of one.

I preached twice on three Lord's Days for the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (LRF), gave two formal Bible studies on I Peter 3 at the house of a young family interested in the LRF, led several informal Bible studies in different homes, and gave two lectures: "The Last Days" (Friday, 13 November) and "The Glory of God" (Thursday, 19 November). I met three foreign students at some of our meetings: a Hungarian, a South Korean, and a Greek. Mary and I had people over for dinner several times, visited folk, and called with Bill Davies, a member of the LRF, twice after his hip operation. We were also able to take a couple of day trips with the young adults of the LRF, with the last one to the pretty coastal town of Kilkee (Co. Clare) being especially good.

The core group is small but well-grounded doctrinally, united, and zealous. We made some progress in drafting a budget, for, in the summer, we hope to have two ministers in the British Isles (Martyn McGeown and me) with two fields of labour (Ballymena and Limerick).

Prof. & Mrs. Hanko's Visit

Prof. and Mrs. Hanko's time in the CPRC (6-30 November) was much appreciated, especially the eight sermons he delivered and the three Bible studies he gave.

In God's good providence, on the day we took them to Northern Ireland's north coast, there had been a storm at sea in just the right place at just the right time and we enjoyed the spectacle of the largest waves I'd ever seen.

Near the end of their stay, the Hankos and Mary and I flew to mainland Britain for Prof. to give a speech that evening on "Corporate Responsibility" in South Wales (26 November). The lecture was excel-

lent and well attended. We also enjoyed the company of Mrs. Beaton, a friend of the Hankos and ours, with whom we spent the day.

Next day, back in Northern Ireland, we were visited by Sam, Manuel, and Emily-Kate from the LRF and Daniel (the Hungarian student we'd recently met in Limerick) and his compatriot, Tibi. Some stayed at the manse, while others lodged with Francesco De Lucia. The young people wanted to spend some time with Prof. Hanko, and it was great that they made the long trip (five hours one way) to fellowship with us.

CPRC Activities, Etc.

The next weekend, we had six Americans fly in from Malaga in the south of Spain to stay with us (4-7 December). Mitchell VanOverloop and Kristin Prins of Trinity PRC brought four friends: Amy, Brittany, Christina, and Daniel. We had some good Bible studies, discussions, and walks with them.

On Friday, 11 December, I spoke on "Adam and Christ" at a nearby old people's home to about 18 people. The elderly folk were in good form and we had a time of singing and discussion afterward.

John McAuley was received as a member of the CPRC (20 December). John had left us when our church disbanded in March, 2002, and it is good to have him back with us where he belongs, for we share the same Reformed faith.

Northern Ireland is currently experiencing the longest spell of cold weather that I can remember. Nothing like what most of you experience in winter, but very bad for us. We even had to cancel a Sunday morning service and that evening most were not able to attend the service that we did manage to hold (20 December). Since then some catechism classes and Bible studies have been called off because of snow and ice.

Anganeta Dyck from Germany arrived in Northern Ireland for a couple of weeks over the holidays (26 December-11 January). This is her third visit with us; she is becoming like part of the congregation!

Last Sunday, we concluded a series of twelve sermons on Romans 11, entitled "God's Purposes with Israel in the New Testament Age." My usual pastoral labours of leading classes, study, prayer, visiting, etc., continue. God always uses His Word,

for Christ's sheep hear and obey the voice of their good shepherd (John 10:3-5).

Websites

Two more "Resources" pages were added to the main CPRC website (www.cprc.co.uk), ones on justification and creation. Twenty-six new translations have been put on-line: 12 German, 8 Italian, 5 Portuguese, and 1 Ukrainian. We also linked to two Indonesian translations of the *Belgic Confession* and the *Canons of Dordt*.

The past two months have seen a large number of videos added to our YouTube site (www.youtube.com/cprcni), which has gone from 49 to 80 sermons or lectures or debates, etc., which come in the form of 495 audio-visuals of up to ten minutes long each. Sam Watterson from Limerick put on-line the seven speeches of the PRC's Calvin Conference, as well as the Question and Answer session. Stephen Murray has spent long hours uploading videos, including the Romans 11 series.

British Reformed Fellowship Conference

"The Word of God for Our Generation"—that is the theme to be developed at the British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) Family Conference in South Wales this summer (7-14 August). Profs. Engelsma and Hanko will be our main speakers.

Our conference centre, Hebron Hall (www.hebronhall.org), is a few miles southwest of Cardiff, the capital city of Wales, and only a short taxi ride from Cardiff Airport (CWL). The BRF has booked the whole conference centre for the week. The cost is as low as we can make it with full board and en-suite accommodation. Two day-trips by coach are arranged. One is to the old Roman city of Bath, with its naturally heated spring waters (and much else). The other is to the largest castle in Wales (Caerphilly), complete with large moat and leaning tower, and the picturesque Tintern Abbey, where our guide will be suitably attired in monastic garb.

I do not believe that I am overstating the case in saying that the BRF conferences (by God's grace) have proved to be rich times of blessing, fellowship, and sightseeing. The BRF wants to see a good contingent of brothers and sisters from the PRC joining us in Wales in August. Hopefully, a booking form will be included in your church's monthly publication. It can also be accessed on-line (cf. www.cprf.co.uk/articles/brfconference.htm). Cyndi Kalsbeek is taking care of North American bookings (16247 State Street, South Holland, IL 60473; (708) 331-1026; ckalsbeek@yahoo.com). If you're still undecided about attending the BRF conference, perhaps this might sway you to a "yes." We're planning on having the official opening of the new CPRC building, the week before the conference. So you could kill two birds with one stone by coming to Northern Ireland first and then going to South Wales.

Church Building



Almost all the slates are laid on the roof of the CPRC church building. All the windows have been fitted and many of the interior door frames. Plasterers, plumbers, joiners, and electricians have made progress, despite the holidays and the very severe weather (for Northern Ireland). I've included a couple of photos: one of the outside of the building and one of the auditorium or sanctuary, which will hold some 128 people.



Tomorrow morning, God willing, Prof. Dykstra and Elder Pete Vander Schaaf, our church visitors, arrive. Great!

Please continue to pray for us. The devil is busy, but Christ is building His church. "God is our refuge and strength.... Therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed.... There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.... God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved" (Ps. 48:1-5). May this be the confidence and experience of us all in 2010! He is faithful who calls and promises.

Yours by grace,
Rev. & Mary Stewart