

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

13 May, 2011

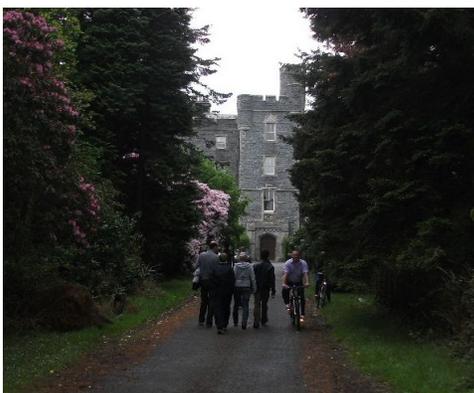
Dear saints in the
Protestant Reformed Churches,

Overnighter

For the first time, saints from the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church (CPRC) and the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (LRF) were able to meet up together for what we called an “overnighter.”



A group of 24 of us from the CPRC, LRF, Hope PRC (Alyssa Klamer from Grand Rapids), and friends from several parts of Northern Ireland stayed in Newcastle Youth Hostel, a stone's throw from the Irish Sea (Friday and Saturday, 6-7 May). Sadly, the three Caseys were unable to come because of a death in their family, and René Kuhs also had to withdraw because Limerick University set one of his exams for that Saturday morning. Others would have loved to have joined us but reckoned that it would have been too difficult with their young children. We were delighted at the interest and plan on doing something similar in the future.



Newcastle is a beautiful coastal town in the south of Co. Down in Northern Ireland “where the

Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea,” as the song puts it. Perhaps especially important for us, it is between Ballymena and Limerick, about 1½ hours from Ballymena and 3½ hours from Limerick. From late that Friday afternoon through the evening, people arrived in cars in ones and twos and threes and fours, as soon as they could make it after school or work. Rev. McGeown and I reached Newcastle before the Christian bookstore closed and were able to buy several titles.

We had a sort of ongoing meal that Mary had prepared beforehand and that we would heat up when a new batch of people arrived. After all had made it to the hostel safely and were fed, I led a study on the communion of the saints, with handouts.

Next morning, with some having gained more sleep than others, Rev. McGeown led an excellent discussion on the catholicity of the church, reading Ephesians 2:11-22. The saints contributed really well and there was a very good atmosphere.



After some of the ladies finalised the things for the picnic, we headed off to Castlewella Forest Park. Some of you will remember it as the venue for the British Reformed Fellowship conferences of 1998 and 2002, when we stayed in the castle on the hill and strolled around the lake after lectures. We enjoyed fellowship on walks, completed the hedge row maze, toured the arboretum, and saw some of the plant life in spring bloom. All too soon our time

together was over and we had to split up, with some going north or west or south.

This was the sort of thing we have been wanting to do for some time. Now with the growth of the CPRC and its witness and the establishment of a missionary in the LRF, there are enough people able to come to such events. The blessed time we had together makes more tangible the unity we share in the Reformed faith and is part of what we have been labouring for in years of missionary work in Ballymena and Limerick.

Limerick

After our time in Castlewellan Forest Park ended, we drove to Limerick, for Rev. McGeown and I had arranged a pulpit swap. We met for the first time five people who have been attending or soon will be attending the LRF. First, we visited Chris and Joanne Cesar and saw their baby girl, Charis Juliana, just 3 days old. We met Mr. Mansona, who, like the Cesars, is from the Philippines. George and Irene Meletes and Irene's mother, Jill, were also at both the Sunday services (8 May). We had a lovely time with these three saints from South Africa on Sunday afternoon at the Kuhs home.

Mary and I also were in Limerick on Sunday, 3 April, when we met for the first time the Mansona boys, Chester and Dale. By God's grace and through the faithful labours of Rev. McGeown, He is building up His saints in the LRF. But our missionary can write more on the LRF in his bi-monthly letter.

Church News

The church season is coming to a close. Two of the three catechism classes are now finished and the children did well in their end-of-year tests, especially those in Beginners New Testament History. One more meeting on II Thessalonians will see us complete this beautiful epistle; we have had a rich time together over about 30 Tuesday mornings. Similarly, next Wednesday night will be our last on the *Belgic Confession* this season. We will then have completed the first 11 articles on God, Scripture, and the Holy Trinity. I have found this to be immensely rewarding and have gained a much greater love for this earliest creed in our *Three Forms of Unity*. In September, Lord willing, we intend to continue our studies in the *Belgic Confession* with Article 12 on creation.

Recently, a new class started: the monthly Saturday night men's Bible study (on Daniel) led by Julian Kennedy and Philip Hall. It is going very well.

Currently, Alyssa Klamer is with us (4-18 May); this is her first time in Ireland (north and south). Her coming helped to fix the dates for our overnigher in Newcastle. She has been staying with the Murrays and enters well into the life of the congregation. The 16 copies of Prof. Hanko's new RFP commentaries on Galatians, *Justified Unto Liberty*, that she brought in her suitcase will be advertised with the next

Covenant Reformed News and so will soon find readers in various parts of the British Isles.

The CPRC has also enjoyed visits from Stephanie Adams of First PRC (16-26 March) and Hank and Barb DeVries of Randolph PRC, who left Northern Ireland yesterday.

The *Belfast Telegraph* (5 April) carried an abbreviated form of the letter I sent them in response to a false charge that the Bible commands violence towards homosexuals. We have had a relatively quiet two months as regards translating: just 6. But this includes our first Serbian translation of a Protestant Reformed piece: Rev. Houck's fine pamphlet "The Christ of Arminianism."

Further Afield

The lecture on "The Election of God's Church" (24 March) in South Wales went well and there was a good attendance. Earlier that day, we met with a brother in Southwest England who has applied for a job transfer to Ballymena or Antrim. When that comes through, he and his young family plan to join the CPRC (DV).

On 20 April, I gave the chapel speech on Psalm 16:2-3 for Trinity Christian High School in Hull, Iowa in my study live on Skype. Unfortunately, near the end, my internet broadband connection rate decreased and the quality was not so good. Still, it is a blessed thing to be able to assist in some way with the great work of PR Christian education.

Rev. Heath Bleyenbergh of Providence PRC is to preach for the CPRC this summer for 3 Sundays (24 & 31 July and 14 August) and for the LRF on Sunday 7 August. He and his wife, Deb, are to stay in the CPRC manse, while Mary and I are in Canada and the US. I am to preach in 6 Protestant Reformed churches (and give a PowerPoint presentation on the CPRC in 5 of them): 24 July, Edmonton (AM) & Lacombe (PM); 31 July, Lynden (AM & PM); 7 August, Spokane (AM & PM); 14 August, Hudsonville (AM) & Providence (PM). I have also recently arranged to give a speech on "The Reformation's Teaching on the Church" in Spokane on Friday 5 August. It will be great to see many of you again this summer.

Thank you all for your support and prayers for us before the throne of grace.

In Christ,
Rev. & Mary Stewart