

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

8 September, 2010

Dear saints in the
Protestant Reformed Churches,

Ordination of Rev. McGeown

This bi-monthly letter is easily organised in terms of major events, the first of which is the ordination of Candidate Martyn McGeown (30 July) as CPRC missionary with the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (LRF).



I preached the ordination sermon on “The Missionary as Soldier, Athlete, and Farmer” (II Tim. 2:3-6) and the CPRC consistory performed the laying on of hands ceremony. Deacon William Graham read the fine letter from the faculty of the PR Seminary and passed on gifts to Rev. McGeown of a GPS system from Southwest PRC (where he served his internship) and a Bible from the CPRC.



This auspicious occasion was the first service in our new church building. A good number of Missionary McGeown’s friends and family, plus Stephen Rushton from England (with us 30 July–2 August) and Marco Barone from Italy (23 July–16 August), joined the saints from the CPRC and the contingent from the LRF who drove over four hours to be present. Tea and sandwiches were provided by the ladies afterwards. The programme, report, photos, video, and audio are on-line (www.cprf.co.uk/audio/ordination-service.htm). A fuller account of this blessed evening was published in the *Standard Bearer (SB)*—see the September 1 issue.

Reports of Rev. McGeown’s ordination were carried in the *Mid-Ulster Mail* and the *Tyrone Courier* (local newspapers in brother McGeown’s home region of Northern Ireland), the *Ballymena Times*, and *Evangelicals Now*. All of these included colour photographs, and the *Evangelicals Now* article was in an especially prominent place on page 3.

Missionary McGeown has settled well in Limerick and is labouring profitably in the LRF. Tomorrow night’s CPRC Council meeting will include his first report. But I’ll say no more on this, for Rev. McGeown will be sending you his own bi-monthly letter!

Dedication of Church Building

In early August, several saints from the PRC arrived in Northern Ireland for the official dedication of our new church building (5 August), with many of them staying with members of the CPRC. It was great to see them all again!

Things were very busy that day. People were putting the finishing touches on things at the church building or getting things ready for the tea afterwards. Visitors had to be picked up at the airport and the programme had to be prepared, in consultation with the various participants in the service. Then I got word that the pallet of books shipped from Grand Rapids had finally cleared customs in Belfast. About half the pallet (some 16 boxes) consisted of books and personal effects of Rev. McGeown and he needed them for his work in Limerick. So we got these ready for him to bring with him in his car on his return journey to the Republic of Ireland the next day.

The dedication service ran smoothly; the church building was well filled. Tommy Hamill, our project manager, has done a fine job; the visitors remarked enthusiastically on the beauty of the building.

Prof. Hanks preached on “Ichabod” (I Samuel 4:19-22); Prof. Engelsma brought the personal greetings of himself and his wife; Elder Pete VanDerSchaaf conveyed congratulations from the Synod of the PRC.

Before the service proper, the two professors cut the tape at the main entry to the building and unveiled the dedicatory plaque in the narthex or foyer—two ceremonies often used here to open buildings.

Two special cakes were decorated to commemorate the special evening. These were enjoyed with tea and sandwiches after the evening.



The programme, a report and photos, plus a video and an audio of the service are on-line (www.cprf.co.uk/audio/dedication_programme.htm) and the *SB* will carry a fuller account in due course. The *Ballymena Times* featured a two-page colour spread of the church building and its dedication.

Thank you for all your prayers and financial help with our church building. A special word of appreciation is due to Southwest PRC's catechumens, who donated \$912.63 to our church building fund! Some bills yet remain to be paid. Once these are sorted out, we hope to start saving up to purchase equipment for live webcasting (DV).

BRF Conference

Two days after the dedication of our church building, many in the CPRC, plus guests from America, Italy, and Germany, flew from Belfast to Cardiff in South Wales for the 10th biennial British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) Conference in Hebron Hall (7-14 August). There we were joined by English, Welsh, Irish, and Scottish saints, plus believers from China, Portugal, Spain, and France, as well as Protestant Reformed people from the US and Canada.

Many reckon this to have been the best BRF Conference to date. Hebron Hall was a good “fit” for our group. The day trips to the historic city of Bath, Caerphilly Castle, and Tintern Abbey were very enjoyable and there was a good spirit of unity and fellowship.

The six main speeches by Profs. Engelsma and Hanks developed the theme, “The Word of God for Our Generation,” very well, covering the Reformed worldview; the development of sin; the abuse of sex, money, and truth; and the coming one-world government. The two professors preached at Sunday services at Hebron Hall, and Prof. Hanks and Michael Kimmitt (the editor of the *British Reformed Journal*) led a



Sunday afternoon discussion on baptism. Dr. David Allen of the Trinitarian Bible Society gave a very informative, special lecture on “The Preservation of the Biblical Text.”

The Work of the Holy Spirit, the book containing the eight speeches by Profs. Engelsma and Hanko at the previous BRF Conference, was unveiled at the conference. (Those in North America can obtain their copy from the evangelism committees of South Holland PRC or Faith PRC.) By the end of the week all the copies we had brought were sold, as were most of the other books and audio-visual resources. The BRF biennial general meeting decided to publish this year's conference addresses in book form too.

But you can read more about this blessed conference in an upcoming article in the *Standard Bearer* by Sam Watterson of the LRF. Start saving up for the 2012 BRF conference!

Francesco De Lucia's Farewell

The flight from Cardiff to Belfast and the minibus (driven by Philip Rainey) from Belfast City Airport brought many of us back to Northern Ireland on Saturday morning (14 August). Unpacking and sorting things were the order of the day, especially for Francesco De Lucia, in view

of his soon departure for America to begin studies at the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

That Lord's Day, Profs. Engelsma and Hanko preached at the CPRC morning and evening services respectively. After the latter, we held a short farewell for Francesco upstairs. The ladies provided tea, and Prof. Engelsma gave a short address, “A Professor's Perspective on the Protestant Reformed Seminary.” Francesco then made some moving remarks to the congregation. Stephen Murray has put both addresses on YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/CPRCNI#g/c/7B9A8A10262E4F3A).

Next morning (16 August), Philip Hall drove brother De Lucia to Belfast to catch a bus to Dublin to fly to Chicago, where Jack Lenting of South Holland PRC picked him up and brought him to Grand Rapids. Francesco is worshipping at Hudsonville PRC, as did Rev. McGeown and I. Four years of solid Reformed instruction—a grand seminary adventure—lies before him! And the PRC has its first ever Italian student!

Prof. Engelsma in the CPRC

On the next two Lord's Days (22 & 29 August), Prof. Engelsma took the CPRC services. All of his sermons and those of Prof. Hanko, both in the CPRC and at the BRF conference, are online, on audio

(www.cprf.co.uk/audio/visitorsermons.htm) and/or on video (www.youtube.com/cprcni). With our new church building, several special events, and such excellent pulpit supply, the CPRC has never had so many visitors.

Prof. and Mrs. Engelsma also did a lot of visiting in the CPRC, which was of great encouragement to the saints here. They also made time to travel to Limerick with their daughter, Jennifer Bleyenbergh, and Liz Griess, both from Hope PRC in Redlands, California. There Prof. gave a lecture on assurance for the LRF. But Rev. McGeown can tell you more about that in his letter!

While the Engelsmas were staying at our house and Prof. was filling the CPRC pulpit, Mary and I were in the Netherlands with her parents. We visited Amsterdam, Leiden (home to the Pilgrim Fathers before they headed to New England), Dordrecht (where the *Canons* were written), Leeuwarden (I stood in Bogerman's pulpit), Franeker (Profs. Maccovius and Lubbertus), Ulrum (Hendrik De Cock's church), Dokkum (Missionary Boniface's martyrdom), etc. We even met up with a Dutch *Covenant Reformed News* reader.

We also journeyed through Belgium (where we toured Waterloo, the site of Napoleon's famous defeat) and Luxembourg (a very pretty little country), en route to Giessen, where we worshipped with Rev. Klautke and the church there (the BERG) on the Lord's Day.

After exploring the military museum in Arnhem commemorating Operation Market Garden in World War II and the "bridge too far," we stopped at the British military cemetery in Oosterbeek, where thieves smashed the rear wind screen of our hired car and stole the suitcases belonging to Mary and me. Next day we spoke with a cyclist who had found some of our possessions that had been discarded by the

criminals. He showed us the place where he had discovered them, and with some amateur sleuthing we managed to recover most of our things. But that is a long story and this letter must soon be drawn to a close!

Since our return, Mary and I have been catching up on things (e-mails, letters, visiting, website work, yard work, etc.). Last Sunday (5 September), I began a new series on "Jerusalem and Antioch," with lessons for the relationship between the CPRC and the LRF. Jennifer Hanco, from Lynden PRC, who was in Northern Ireland for a few days, joined us.

CPRC Membership

In the middle of all these things, three other significant events concerning CPRC membership have occurred. Philip and Julie Rainey moved back to the States (26 August) and are joining First PRC in Grand Rapids. Rebekah Faith Halliday was born to Gareth and Leona (24 July) and was present at the first Sunday service in our new church building, aged just 8 days old. Anganeta Dyck, our main German translator, moved to Northern Ireland (4 August) to join the CPRC. May the Lord be with the two saints who are joining the PRC and the young lady and the even younger lady who are to join the CPRC!

Soon the new CPRC church season is to start in our new church building. We have had a blessed and uplifting summer—thanks in no small part to the support and visits from our sister church in North America. We look forward to the new church year with hope in the living God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. May He bless and be with you all.

By His grace,
Rev. & Mary Stewart