

# Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

9 December, 2023

Dear saints in the  
Protestant Reformed Churches,

It has now been almost 5 months since our last letter (14 July) so it is high time for an update from the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church (CPRC), your sister church in Northern Ireland!

## Hungarian Conference

On Monday 6 November, Mary and I flew to Budapest for 5 days for a conference in the Hungarian Reformed Church of Pécel, about 12 miles east of the centre of the capital city. I was asked to deliver 5 speeches on the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of that week that developed the theme of “The Local Congregation: Seeking the Welfare of the Church.” These are the titles of the lectures, which were accompanied by slides: 1) The Importance of the Local Church, 2) The Universal Invisible Church and the Local Church, 3) The Autonomy of the Local Church, 4) Unity Between Individual Churches, and 5) Membership in a Local Church.

Each speech was followed by a profitable question and answer session, with Bálint Vásárhelyi doing the translating. The audios of the lectures are on-line ([www.cprc.co.uk/languages/hungarian](http://www.cprc.co.uk/languages/hungarian)). We should soon be receiving the videos of both the speeches and the 5 Q. & A.’s to add to our YouTube channel.



Around 40 people came to the conference, consisting of ministers and elders, as well as members, with almost all being from various Reformed and

Presbyterian churches. We had good fellowship with the people of God, including Gabor and Balázs, who have stayed at the manse in Kells, and Ádám, with whom I have corresponded for a couple of years.

The saints in Pécel put a lot of work into the conference. Besides the programme, all attendees received three specially produced Hungarian booklets. The first consisted of sections from various Reformed creeds on the doctrine of the church: the *Heidelberg Catechism*, the *Second Helvetic Confession*, the *Belgic Confession*, the *Canons of Dort*, the *Westminster Confession*, and the *Westminster Larger Catechism*. The other two pamphlets contained Hungarian translations of Rev. Steve Key’s “Church Membership in an Evil Age” and several articles on Christ’s church that I wrote in the *Covenant Reformed News*. The ladies of the church prepared tea and snacks, and on Thursday the conferees dined together at a local restaurant.

The conference book table included hardback copies of Rev. Ron Hanko’s *Doctrine According to Godliness* and soft back copies of the British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) book *Ye Are My Witnesses* in Hungarian. A good number of these titles were sold.

Our connections with Hungary have come through our good friend Bálint (whose name is the Hungarian for Valentine). He is our main Hungarian translator and has been sending the *Covenant Reformed News* to people on his growing e-mail list for over 11 years. We first met Bálint at the 2012 BRF conference outside Belfast, and since then he has attended a number of our conferences and stayed at the CPRC manse several times, including with his wife, Kati. More recently, Janos Nagy, the pastor in Pécel, and his wife Alexandra have also visited us at our home.

It was lovely to see them all again and enjoy their warm hospitality. When we had some free time, Balint, sometimes accompanied by Kati and their children or Janos, took us for some sightseeing. We enjoyed hiking at Lake Balaton (the largest lake in central Europe), strolling along the cobblestones of Szentendre (“St. Andrew”) and checking out Budapest on the River Danube, including a guided tour of the Hungarian Parliament which was modelled after that in London.

In preparation for the Budapest conference, we interrupted our Tuesday morning studies on the Pentecostal and Charismatic doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit with 10 classes on “The Local Church.” We also had 7 Sunday sermons on “The Local Church: Autonomy, Unity and Membership Rolls” ([www.cprc.co.uk/other-sermon-series](http://www.cprc.co.uk/other-sermon-series)). As one of the ladies who attends the Tuesday meetings put it, “The CPRC received the first blessing and the Hungarians got the second blessing!”

### Visitors

Prof. Doug and Teresa Kuiper visited the CPRC with their son Daniel this summer (28 July-14 August). Our brother’s preaching was much enjoyed by the congregation, including his 4-sermon series on III John: “Three Churchmen in Relation to Truth” ([www.cprc.co.uk/visiting-preachers](http://www.cprc.co.uk/visiting-preachers)). The *Ballymena Guardian* carried an article entitled “Theological Historian for Covenant Church” (1 August). The Kuipers were fondly sent off with a congregational tea on their third and last Lord’s Day with us.

While the Kuipers were in Northern Ireland, Mary and I were in the US (25 July-14 August). We camped and hiked in the beautiful North Cascades in Washington around Mount Baker and Mount Rainier, the latter with family, and I preached in Lynden PRC (30 July & 6 August). Later, we spent time with friends and family in Grand Rapids, preaching in Trinity PRC and Zion PRC (13 August), before flying home with a good load of fine RFPA books.

Old friends of several in our congregation, Deane and Donna Wassink from Georgetown PRC, joined us for public worship on 20 August. It was great to catch up with them over lunch.

We enjoyed fellowship with Colin and Kim Lim from the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC), our mutual sister church in Singapore, when they stayed at the manse for a few days in September. Friends of theirs, a retired Singaporean pastor and his wife, also joined us for Sunday dinner (10 September).

Cheryl Lim, the daughter of Colin and Kim, is in the UK for a year in connection with her university studies in England. She flies over the Irish Sea for lectures in Loughborough but most of her time is spent in Northern Ireland. She is staying at the home of David and Kristin Crossett, along with Charlotte Higgs of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) of Australia.

Charlotte’s parents, Rev. David and Sue Higgs from Brisbane EPC, worshipped with us on several Lord’s days in September and October, while seeing their daughter and taking holidays in the British

Isles and continental Europe. It was good to renew fellowship with Pastor Higgs and Sue, after our first meeting in Australia 9 years ago.

### On-Line Witness

Among the many additions to our main website in the last few months is Rev. Ron Hanko’s excellent 135-page “Sprinkling, Infant Baptism and the Bible” on our baptism resources webpage ([www.cprc.co.uk/resources-on-covenant-baptism](http://www.cprc.co.uk/resources-on-covenant-baptism)). Mary has enabled “breadcrumbs” on [www.cprc.co.uk](http://www.cprc.co.uk), which helps our SEO (search engine optimization) rankings.

With the addition of 118 translations since 14 July, we have 3,850 non-English pieces on-line ([www.cprc.co.uk/languages](http://www.cprc.co.uk/languages)). Spanish has seen the most growth with 27, in part through the work of our new translator, Johann Daniela from Nicaragua, who now lives in Nevada. Polish (24) and Hungarian (20) are next. Lilian’s 16 translations bring our total in Swahili up to 55 and the 6 Dutch articles join 77 others on a newly created webpage ([www.cprc.co.uk/languages/dutch](http://www.cprc.co.uk/languages/dutch)). The others are 10 Russian, 6 Chichewa, 3 Afrikaans, 2 Bengali, 2 Faroese, 1 Cebuano, 1 French, and 1 Tagalog.

The whole of *Gospel Truth of Justification* by Prof. Engelsma (23 chapters in some 500 pages!), and *Ye Are My Witnesses* by Profs. Hanko and Engelsma, are now on our website in Polish (thanks to Marcin in Norway) and Hungarian (thanks to Bálint), respectively. Over 14 years, Stephen Murray has added more than 3,000 videos to the CPRC YouTube channel, which is getting a good number of hits ([www.youtube.com/user/CPRCNI](http://www.youtube.com/user/CPRCNI)).

As you probably know, Hope Protestant Reformed Ministry (Walker, MI) produces a podcast, which is accessible through various platforms, including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts (search for “Hope PR Ministry”). It recently published interviews that I gave on Iron Sharpens Iron Radio, discussing the important topics of regeneration and man in the image of God. Before that, the podcast contained seven speeches by Profs. Huizinga and Engelsma from the 2022 BRF Conference, titled “Union With Jesus Christ.”

### Others

On Tuesday 22 August, Mary and I drove to Limerick, accompanied by Manuel Kuhs and Sam Watterson, for the funeral of Bill Davies. Welsh by birth, Bill was our first contact in Limerick. Through his witness and sharing of the *Covenant Reformed News*, we started giving lectures in Limerick and the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (LRF) was born. Bill’s departure to be with Christ and our fellowship with friends in Limerick at his funeral

marked another sort of closure after some 20 years of contact with God's people in that city.

The date of 17 September marked a momentous event. Sven Kuhs was baptized and took his membership vows in the CPRC. A brother of Manuel and carrying a German passport, Sven is currently living with his mother in the Republic of Ireland through the week and in a rented house near Ballymena on weekends, while working remotely for a German company. He is seeking a legal way to live permanently in post-Brexit Northern Ireland. It is great to have Sven as a member of the church!

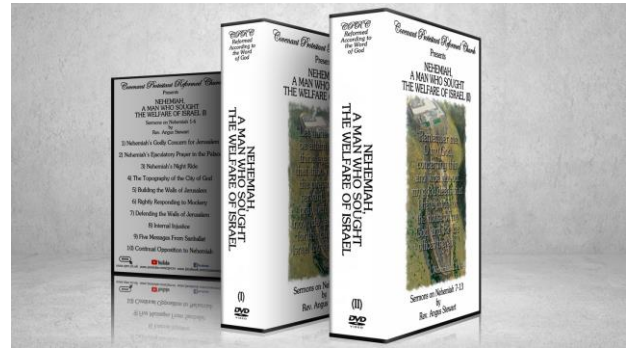
Three days later (20 September), we held a well attended Annual General Meeting (AGM). Reports were brought by Julian Kennedy, David Crossett, and myself. Besides the less quantifiable but more important spiritual and numerical growth in the congregation, the finances are also going well.

We granted permission for a Christian organization to include the 500 or so translations of our ecumenical and Reformed creeds in their Bible micro SD (secure digital) cards ([www.cprc.co.uk/languages/foreigncreedslist](http://www.cprc.co.uk/languages/foreigncreedslist)). These free-to-copy cards are sent to missionaries and pastors in various parts of the world, as well as to stores in East Africa and India.

For some time, we have been trying to find a cost-effective way to send a lot of books to a Presbyterian pastor who runs Christian bookstores in Kenya and is keen to get solid, edifying literature into the hands of his countrymen. Finally, a company was found that charged us only £220 to send 22 boxes containing 1,544 free books in a container by ship to this East African country, along with their own literature. The bulk of these titles are the 7 paperback British Reformed Fellowship books that we had published. They are ideal since they cover substantive subjects, and are short and not too difficult ([www.britishreformed.org/books-pamphlets](http://www.britishreformed.org/books-pamphlets)).

We posted 36 complimentary box sets of CDs (minus their plastic cases in order to reduce postage costs) to another pastor in Kenya who has helped us with translations. He, in turn, will pass on the CDs of these sermon series, doctrine classes, and Reformed conferences to his friends in the ministry and other interested parties.

Three of our recently produced box sets of DVDs and CDs concern the book of Nehemiah ([www.cprc.co.uk/bookstore](http://www.cprc.co.uk/bookstore)): "Nehemiah, a Man Who Sought the Welfare of Israel (I)" (10 sermons on Nehemiah 1-6) and "Nehemiah, a Man Who Sought the Welfare of Israel (II)" (12 sermons on Nehemiah 7-13), which were produced in preparation for, or in connection with, June's CERC conference in Malaysia: "Come, Let Us Build the Walls!" (4 speeches based on Nehemiah 3-6).



More details should soon be available regarding the British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) family conference next summer at Cloverley Hall, Shropshire, England (3-10 August, 2024). Eschatology is the wonderful subject that will be opened up to us by our main speakers, Prof. Brian Huizinga and Rev. Ronald Hanko. We hope that many of you from America and Canada will be able to join saints from the various parts of the United Kingdom, as well as believers from Australia, Brazil, France, Norway, Singapore, etc., for good fellowship in Jesus Christ and a spiritual feast from His Word!

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:20-21).

May the Lord be with you all,  
*Rev. & Mary Stewart*