

A word of APPRECIATION.....

concerning :

Rev. Ronald Hanko, PRC Missionary

It is with a note of deep regret and sadness that we have to record here the fact that the Rev. Ronald Hanko and his family will be leaving Northern Ireland some time in the New Year, possibly, we are informed, in January 2001.

He has been stationed in Northern Ireland for some seven to eight years. He was appointed there in 1993 in response to a call made to the Protestant Reformed Churches of America by BRF supporters and others in that Province. At first he served as missionary, and later, from July 1996 onwards, as missionary pastor of the newly-formed Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland.

His presence in Northern Ireland, and on the old BRF Committee was indeed an enormous and welcome pillar of support for the furtherance of the Reformed Faith in the United Kingdom. Though his ministry was naturally mainly centred on the congregation gathering (and steadily growing) at Ballymena in County Antrim, he reached out to other areas of Ulster, and indeed to the United Kingdom as a whole.

Such ministry meant he pursued an exacting schedule of work output. He not only maintained a steadfast pastoral ministry at Ballymena, but also contributed lively articles to the British Reformed Journal throughout his time in the United Kingdom, and regularly wrote religious columns in local Northern Irish newspapers, preached at conferences, conventions, and all manner of small gatherings of saints assembled up and down throughout the United Kingdom. With this he set up and maintained an ever-increasing volume of correspondence with a steadily growing number of people awakened to an interest in the Reformed Faith. In all this he was most ably and faithfully supported by his wife, Nancy. Between them they also found time to raise eight children.

He won a great deal of affection amongst those to whom he ministered, and with broadening experience of practicing Christianity and preaching the Word of Life within the context of the UK life and culture, his tactful and respectful attitude drew numbers to his ministry from a large diversity of religious backgrounds. It was amazing to see how even folk who had been a life-time steeped in Pentecostalism would travel some distance to wait on Rev. Hanko's ministry even on Saturday afternoons and evenings. Several of them came to embrace the Reformed Faith with a

joyous alacrity, even becoming members of the British Reformed Fellowship.

It was commonplace, when ministering on the mainland UK, for Rev. Hanko to travel anything up to a thousand miles in a round trip. Leaving Northern Ireland on a Thursday evening, he would cross by car ferry from Southern Ireland into South Wales early on the Friday morning, minister on a Friday evening, then minister again on Saturday afternoon, again on Saturday evening, then twice on the following Sabbath. Interspersed with such meetings one would find him spending hours of discussion with interested folk. He would return home, crossing to Southern Ireland in the wee small hours of the Monday morning, driving up through the Republic to Ulster, and attending a meeting at Ballymena on the Monday evening. As if this schedule were not onerous enough, on several occasions he added to it by ministering in South Devonshire, and in the Glasgow area of Scotland. Such return circuits would soon involve him in a thousand miles of driving besides preaching.

Such ministry naturally attracted opposition from a variety of quarters. In meeting such opposition Rev. Hanko maintained without compromise a sterling defence of Biblical Truth and the Reformed Faith. In various quarters of the UK at different times this faithfulness brought on him the same sorrowful suffering, not to say even vituperative harassment, that is the common lot of faithful ministers of Jesus Christ who seek primarily to please God, and not man.

Faithful ministry like this takes its toll over the years, and we note with concern that Rev. Hanko's health has deteriorated somewhat in the last year. To add to his troubles his supportive wife, Nancy, underwent surgery early this autumn. We solicit the prayers of all our readers on their behalf that they will soon be restored to full health, and that God's blessing will follow them and their family as they return to the United States.

We give thanks to God for the Rev. Hanko's tireless labours in the cause of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, his wife, and his family will be greatly missed indeed. Speaking as the editor of the BRJ I know that I echo the thoughts of many people in these islands when I say that I feel a great pillar of support for the Reformed Faith and the work of the BRF is leaving our midst.

H.L.Williams, Editor.

Hence he (Jeremiah) calls the warfare which awaits all true pastors, the day of sorrow, for if they please men they cannot be the servants of God.

John Calvin....Commentary on Jeremiah 17: 16