

The British Reformed Fellowship Family Conference — July 1998

by Susan Adams

This past summer, the fourth family conference was held in Castlewellan, Northern Ireland. The British Reformed Fellowship has organized a week-long family conference in the British Isles every second summer since 1990, and this year's was probably the best one yet!

The members of the Fellowship from Scotland, Wales, England, and Northern Ireland really look forward to this contact, since they are in small and scattered groups. Many do not have an established Reformed church to go to.

The group that met this year was very diverse and included people of many spiritual backgrounds and from many countries. About 150 people attended, many of them young people traveling from the States. There were a month-old baby, a newly-married couple, and elderly saints as well.

Our sister church in Ballymena, Northern Ireland had arranged for the group to stay in a 15th-century style castle! It was built in the 1800's and restored to be a comfortable Christian Conference Center. It overlooked a beautiful lake, with gardens and a campground nearby. There were trails throughout the grounds and many of the young people walked around the lake after group devotions every evening. The castle, set on a hill with its windows lit up, was bright and inviting seen from the dark woods!

The conference theme was Eschatology, or the doctrine of the End Times. There were daily speeches with question and answer periods which became a source for much discussion. Professors Engelsma and Hanko presented the Scriptural Reformed perspective on a number of challenging subjects. They also led the Sunday worship services held in Ballymena, an hour's drive from the castle.

The issues of amillenianism and the place of the Law in church and state were debated by young and old. People could be found in the lounges till long after midnight, singing around the piano or talking heatedly over their Bibles.

There were several day-trips planned during the week. The tourists rode in a double-decker bus to see the church and statue of St. Patrick and tour a historical estate. One day was spent seeing the sights of Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland, and one afternoon a large group hiked up Slieve Donnard, the highest peak in the area. There was plenty of free time for recreational activities such as the favorite Irish sport, football (soccer.)

The conference was a great time of Christian fellowship and provided much food for spiritual growth. Everyone grew in appreciation for the universality of the Church, and all who can will try to attend the next conference in Wales in the summer of 2000! ♦♦♦

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