

Closing statement – 2014, Wales

The fifth meeting of the European Conference of Reformed Churches took place from 2nd to 5th September 2014 at Hebron Christian Conference Centre, Dinas Powys, near Cardiff, Wales. 36 people attended the conference, representing 14 churches from 9 countries. The location provided occasions to meet some of the members of the congregations in Cardiff which belong to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW). The conference delegates appreciated the opportunity to get to know their work better.

The theme of the conference was 'Reformed Piety'. This reflected a realization that, in the pluralistic, multi-religious situation in which many of the churches in Europe find themselves, where many 'spiritualities' are on offer, there is a great need to understand the principles of Reformed piety which were formulated by earlier generations of Reformed thinkers on the basis of Scripture and to apply them to contemporary Christian living and mission. In theological education, too, we are conscious that our pastors must be educated by teachers who are not only excellent in understanding and teaching their subjects but are also examples in their piety.

The conference sought to address these issues through lectures, workshops discussions.

Three lectures were presented:

1. 'Piety according to John Calvin' (Arie Baars, Netherlands, due to illness presented by David McKay, Ireland)
2. 'Communion with God' (Ian Hamilton, England)
3. 'The Holy Spirit and the congregation' (Hans Maris, Netherlands).

Opportunities for both group and plenary discussion were provided. Delegates from various churches were given opportunity to introduce themselves and to tell something of the work in which their churches are engaged. There was also a presentation on 'Missions Co-operation' (David Miller, Scotland) and three workshops were conducted on 'Handling conflict in the local church' (Andrew Lucas, Ireland), 'How to fund a missionary' (Piet Meijer, Netherlands) and 'Theological Co-operation' (Jos Colijn, Netherlands).

One of the key purposes of the conference is to promote co-operation in mission among Reformed churches. Information from all the churches on missions in Europe is being collected and made available to the member churches so that duplication of effort can be avoided and partnership in mission promoted. It is hoped that this information can be included on the EuCRC website (www.eucrc.org) in due course.

The conference also seeks to promote co-operation among the seminaries of the Reformed Churches. This project is ongoing and aims to provide opportunities for the stronger to help the weaker institutions. The workshop generated a number of ideas for practical ways in which potential faculty members and also pastors could be trained in situations where local resources are limited.

All of the delegates appreciated the conference, particularly the opportunities it provided for networking with Reformed brothers and sisters from across Europe, and are going back to their home churches stimulated to apply the things that they learned here. The challenge now is to combine a whole-hearted commitment to the biblical truths of the Reformed Faith with a warm devotion to the worship and service of our triune God that will transform all aspects of individual and congregational life and will enable the Lord's people to be salt and light in a very needy world.

In particular we emphasised:

1. The need to be thoroughly Trinitarian in our Reformed piety
2. The need for warm-hearted experiential Calvinism that provides a biblical alternative to Pentecostal spirituality
- 3 The significance of having fellowship with brothers from countries such as Albania, Italy, Russia and Ukraine.