



## The Blawenburg Beacon March 2009 Issue

A newsletter for the members and friends  
of *The Blawenburg Reformed Church*

### The Fire Below (First written in 1991)

Four of us approached the tiny, fragile vessel feeling various degrees of excitement and dread. We were about to embark on a journey into prehistoric times to confront nature's most ferocious and primitive activity. Every few months, some failed to return, yielding their souls in a twisted, frying wreck on a steaming plain - or worse. Our pilot, anxious to avoid unnecessary delays from last-second cowards, lifted off without warning. The earth dropped away with sickening finality, and suddenly my survival hinged on the sobriety of anonymous mechanics, the structural integrity of a scratched and dented whirlybird, and the sanity, competence and will-to-live of a total stranger.

"Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen," he began, "Welcome to the adventure of a lifetime. Let me first fulfill FAA regulations by pointing out our fire extinguishers" (FIRE EXTINGUISHERS!). On finding mine, I first noticed that the floor beneath me consisted of Plexiglas. I could look straight past my shoes to the treetops below. (Was that a scratch in the pane, or a crack?)

Regulations fulfilled, our pilot routinely identified passing cane fields and banana groves, ignoring the thick smoke that furtively devoured the tropical sun and brilliant azure skies. Sudden thrust lifted us through the haze into another dimension. A colossal anomaly loomed before us, a monstrous mound of charcoal dust, oozing wispy streamers of deadly gasses. Mount Kilauea, the only active volcano in the world at that time, menacingly challenged us to join that exclusive fellowship which had dared to expunge its secret by gazing within.

As we approached the rim, our pilot warned us to take pictures quickly. The cauldron lay quiet today, but any moment could bring an explosion of lava to shower the terrain, and us, with projectiles of molten death. We climbed the last few feet with hearts pounding from anxiety and anticipation. Then, suddenly, we cleared the crater ridge and found ourselves staring down into the churning viscera of a living beast. There, a hundred yards below lay the fabled Ring of Fire, brilliant orange fountains of liquid stone, stretching up oh-so-languidly as if to tickle our feet - like a disturbed child calmly pondering violence.

For uncertain moments the pilot lingered over the seductive fury as if hypnotized, tempted to drop lower, then reigned the chopper in a sweeping arc back over the rim and down the slope toward a new danger. Before us lay the lava plain, a shiny, metallic gray vista textured like a cake iced by a madman - limitless acres of relentless destruction harboring snares of incineration called lava tubes. Straight ahead a brilliant orange beacon anchored in the twisted earth drew us like a moth. For a moment we hovered, transfixed, barely fifteen feet above a small cave-in, peering down through a roasting heat into the dawn of time - a pipeline of lava, spectacularly beautiful, roaring beneath the surface to the sea beyond - an island in its moment of creation.

Racing forward now, our trip near an end, we swept past the charred, half-buried wreckage of the Visitors' Center (one of countless sacrifices to the ruthless goddess Pele). A lone street sign jutted from the cooling morass below, an eerie monument to human futility. Onward we flew to the battlefield of earth, air, sea and fire, from which blossomed mountainous mushrooms of blinding white steam. The vast, cool, tranquil ocean could not thwart the magma's inexorable advance, but in smug silence promised revenge elsewhere.

Every day the island grows by at least fifteen acres. In the time we spent aloft, it had grown by nearly one.

I have never felt fully earthbound since. Part of my mind and heart still soars over that alien, prehistoric place, and will as long as I am blessed with conscious thought.

The Lord willing, I may still go after that..

p.s. I took about 150 slides of this experience, and I'd be delighted to show them to you, maybe at a pot luck, or something.

*Peace, Pastor Rich*

Save the Date!!!!

**Sunday April 19th** , 7pm for Wenonah Brooks' annual concert at **Off Broadstreet Theatre in Hopewell**. Returning this year is **Houston Person, tenor saxophonist** to help Wenonah pay **tribute to Ella Fitzgerald** with a concert entitled "**A Tisket, A Tasket.**" Joining Houston and Wenonah this year is:

**Matt Parrish** at the **bass**  
**Aaron Graves** at the **piano**  
**Joe Brown Jr** at the **drums**

Tickets are \$25. Buy your **tickets by March 20th** and take advantage of one of **two specials: 10% off your ticket price or For party of 6-one person free admission.**

Call now for tickets: **908-249-3403 ask for Nona** or **609-466-3665 ask for Cathy** .

**See you there!**

# Administration & Finance

## BRC Fund Efforts Continue

The BRC Fund continues to seek new ways to fund our preservation efforts. Our spring fundraisers include:

Gold Party - March 24

Rummage Sale - April 23-25

Art Festival and Sale - May 9

We are in the second year of our three year quest to raise \$500,000 to repair our sanctuary. If you have made a pledge to the BRC Fund, we would appreciate receiving your gift. If you have not been approached to donate to the Fund, feel free to make a donation. Be sure you write BRC Fund on the bottom of the check.

Thanks for your help. Together we can reach our goal.

The BRC Committee

Dave Cochran

Todd Quackenbush

Rick White

### **BRC Committee Budgets Due April 1**

All church committees are asked to submit budget requests to Nancy Curtis by April 1. Each committee chair will receive a copy of the current budget for reference by March 2. Budgets will be sent by email, and the Administration and Finance Committee requests that the budgets be send back to Nancy electronically as well.

If you have any questions about the budget, please contact Dave Cochran (davidc99@aol.com) before your committee meets in March.

### **Gold Sale**

**We will be holding a Gold Sale to benefit the Preservation Fund on March 24th from 3 to 7 PM in the Memorial Hall Theater.**

**Clean out your jewelry boxe bring your old and/or broken jewelry and receive top dollar. The church will receive a percentage from the gentleman buying your gold but you may contribute part of your profits to the Preservation Fund.**

**Invite your friends and neighbors for this fun(d) gathering.**

**Light refreshments will be served.**

**If you are interested in helping out with this fund raiser, please contact Nancy Curtis at 609-466-3108.**



The Blawenburg Village School  
PO Box 153, Blawenburg, NJ 08504  
609-466-6600

## News from BVS

On Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup> the school will be holding an Open House from 10:00am - 12:00pm. Please feel free to stop in and tour the school, meet the staff and obtain literature on our programs.

The Big Apple Circus is coming to town! Join us at the TD Bank Ballpark, Route 287 in Bridgewater on Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup> at 11:00am. The cost per ticket is \$17.00; children under 3 are free on the lap of a paid adult. Tickets can be purchased by calling Sharon at 609-466-6600. Hurry, purchases must be made by the first week of March.

Visit the Scholastic Book Fair during the week of March 30<sup>th</sup> (basement of Cook Hall). We will be selling a variety of children's books at very reasonable prices. Proceeds will go to the playground fund.

### "Montgomery/Rocky Hill

#### Night Off"

Through the efforts of the Municipal Alliance, the Montgomery Township Board of Education, the Montgomery Township Committee and the Council for the Borough of Rocky Hill, **March 3<sup>rd</sup>** has been designated as "Montgomery/Rocky Hill Night Off."

**What does Montgomery/Rocky Hill Night Off mean?** It means a community-wide observance of the importance of family by taking the night off from regularly scheduled commitments. The schools, township, houses of worship, scouts, and various community organizations agree to a night without meetings, practices, games, rehearsals, and homework on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Each family decides how they wish to recognize the importance of family. A family can participate in a wide range of activities such as eating dinner together, playing board games or musical instruments, going skating or to a movie, or attending a sporting event, just to name a few.

**Why?** To encourage and promote quality family time.

## March Anniversaries

10 Harold & Jean Skillman ('46)

## Easter Egg Hunt

CALLING ALL CHILDREN

Please join us after church for the annual Easter Egg Hunt on April 12th. Everyone should meet on the steps of Cook Hall after church.

## March Birthdays

12 Colby White

18 Byron Gurzo

19 Joe Pavlicek

21 Christopher Reyes

24 Cheryl Soos

26 Mar Harris

28 Pat Wengel

29 Dot Dorey  
Pam Wanner

## Mary & Martha's—March 7

at 7:30 AM in the

Cook Hall Basement

## Part 2 of "Battlefield of the Mind"

### Self-Service Library.

The church has recently been given some excellent books. Rather than pack them with the rest of our library in Memorial Hall, these books have been "carded" and placed on the shelf outside Nancy's office. Please take a look and enjoy.

Our condolences to:

- Ethel Terhune on the passing of her sister, Arlene. Arlene passed away on Tuesday, February 24th.
- Alan Taback on the passing of his mother on February 20th.

Please pray for Tom Eversen

## Mission News

### One Great Hour of Sharing: “Where is your Treasure?”

This is our traditional Lenten mission. This year’s One Great Hour of Sharing campaign is entitled “Where is Your Treasure?”, based on Matthew 6:21 “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Treasure Chest coin banks and giving idea calendars will be distributed for your use during Lent. Take one for every member of your family. Keep them on the kitchen table and your bureaus. Use the calendars for helpful reminders for giving ideas and for the many things for which we give thanks daily, where our treasure really lies. The proceeds from OGHS go to the work of Reformed Church World Service. You can see the work and needs of RCWS through the link on our denomination’s website: [www.rca.org](http://www.rca.org). The filled Treasure Chests and other contributions will be collected on Easter Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>.

Our ‘Fat Tuesday’ Pancake Supper for fun and fellowship and to kick off this year’s OGHS campaign fed 45 of us and also raised \$273, beyond the cost of food, for the OGHS Treasure Chest. Thank you to all those who cooked, cleaned and came to share yummy food with us! Special thanks to Barb Antoniewicz’ husband, Peter, for skillful service ‘above and beyond...’!

### Bessie Green Center

Sonya and Gracie delivered a carload of coats, warm clothing and a sleeping bag, as well as lots of convenience toiletries to the Bessie Green Center in the North Reformed Church in downtown Newark on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. They were very appreciative. It was a stark reminder of how very lucky we are here in Blawenburg, even in tough times. The Center serves senior citizens with bags of groceries and other needed items, as well as the needs of the many homeless in their neighborhood. The church hosts a group which provides hot meals for the homeless.

### Church World Service Kits

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, Sonya and Gracie finally delivered the many School, Baby & Hygiene Kits and Emergency Cleanup Buckets that you helped us collect for and pack up last Fall. They are collected at the Old First Church in Middletown and then shipped by truck, as warranted, to the warehouse in Maryland from where they are distributed globally. Thank you again, and please keep your eye out for sales on the items in these kits. We will collect again toward the end of next summer and into September when the back-to-school sales are on.

### Hands-On Mission Opportunities

Check out the volunteer and hands-on mission opportunities on our Mission Board in Cook Hall as well as by following the link on the RCA website (listed above). Please talk to Gracie Johnson if you would be interested in helping to organize, or just in working on day-long or week-long local/regional work projects this summer.

March Mission News cont'd....

BEAMM: Border Evangelism and Mercy Ministries

Barb Pavlicek forwarded the following from her friends who are involved in this mission/ministry. Follow the link below to learn more about this organization and their ministry. We print it here for your information and prayers, which are needed.

**Pray for Mexico:** *With drug-fueled violence and corruption escalating sharply, many fear drug cartels have grown too powerful for Mexico to control. 'The Mexican state is in danger,' says one official. 'We are not yet a failed state, but if we don't take action soon, we will become one very soon.'* Wall Street Journal. Saturday/Sunday (Feb. 21-22, 2009) p. 1,2

The Central Border team of Border Evangelism and Mercy Ministries working in El Paso/ Ciudad Juarez has cancelled all summer team projects for Juarez. They just can't take the risk. Those who live in El Paso and cross over to work in the Seminary in Juarez have had no problems.

**We are planning a trip to the border the first two weeks of March.**

We will stay in El Paso with the Bowmans, BEAMM coordinator, March 6-10. We will not visit in the barrios in Juarez like we have done in the past. We will meet with Mexican members of the team, Brenda and Juan Antonio and their two young children, and Samuel and Zeneida and their baby where and when they think it advisable. It will be easy to visit the four families who live in El Paso.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> we will drive seven hours to Nogales, Mexico and stay with Josue and Martha Mayo (March 12-15) and visit with the three families that moved there in the past six months with the hopes of planting a church there.

**We would ask prayer for these young pastors who are working under rapidly changing circumstances.** We would ask, too, for prayers for Nell who returns to Philadelphia for a procedure with the hope of eliminating atrial fibrillation.

As ever,

John and Nell Evans  
Pastoral Associates  
Mission to the World

[www.beamm.org](http://www.beamm.org)

## **New Sanctuary Roof**

The replacement of the church roof is schedule to start on the 3rd. or 4th. week of March. Start dates are based on material deliveries and weather. It's our goal to have the roof replacement completed before Easter Sunday. The church will be open for worship during construction. Some parking may be affected on the West side during construction and project duration will be about two weeks. Thank you for your continued efforts and support.

## Reformed Church in America Online Bible Background Course

*Opening Doors to Discipleship* is a series of three courses in the Presbyterian/Reformed tradition to help teachers and leaders equip themselves to be faithful teachers and leaders. Once you register with this site, you will have access to all three courses.

The three courses are:

- ▶ **Course A: Teaching Skills**
- ▶ **Course B: Bible Background**
- ▶ **Course C: Presbyterian/Reformed Faith**

Each course has 12 sessions which should, ideally, be done with a *Learning Group* from your own congregation.

The courses address questions like these:

- How can I tell a story and use activities in such a gripping way that my students long to be disciples of Christ?
- How can I communicate the broad sweep of biblical stories so that learners yearn to enter them?
- How can I speak with passion and enthusiasm about the particular “flavor” of Christianity which we identify as Presbyterian/Reformed?

To view the website go to [www.openingdoorsto-discipleship.com](http://www.openingdoorsto-discipleship.com). The courses are free to all members of the Reformed Church in America but you must register at the site.

## RUMMAGE SALE April 23-25

### Reduce...Reuse...Recycle: Blawenburg Reformed Church

Blawenburg Reformed Church is hosting its annual community Rummage Sale from Thursday to Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>. Time to clean those closets and sort those drawers. Time to find a new designer wardrobe at bargain prices!

Drop off clean clothes, books, toys and household items at Memorial Hall on Wednesday and Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, from 9am to Noon, and Wednesday through Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup>, from 9am to 1pm. Please, no electronics, large furniture or appliances.

The sale will be open for three days: Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 4 to 7pm; Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup> from 9am to 4pm; and Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup> from 9 to Noon. On Saturday, items that remain will sell for half price, or \$3/bag.

Proceeds from the sale will be used for the *BRC Preservation Fund* to restore and renovate our historic sanctuary.

Please plan on committing some time before and during the sale to help us make this a great success! The economy predicts this being a big year for rummage sales and your help will be needed more than ever. Look for the volunteer sign-up sheets going up soon in Cook Hall and let us know when we can count on your help.

Call the church office at 609-466-3108 or Jean Beachell (609-924-7637) or Ethel Terhune (908-359-6027) for more information or to make special arrangements for drop-off, if needed.

## Annual Book Sale at Princeton Theological Seminary

The Annual Book Sale at the Princeton Theological Seminary will be held on March 23, 24, and 25. They are accepting donations of books until March 20 at the Whiteley Gymnasium at the corner of Stockton Street and Hibben Road. For more information you can contact Cindy Schwartz at 731-443-9403 or [ptsbooksale@gmail.com](mailto:ptsbooksale@gmail.com).

## Croatia Update

**by Rev. Eric Titus**

As most of you are aware, I am nearing the end of the fourth month I have spent in Germany learning the language as part of the requirements for my doctoral degree, which I must be engaged in for the position I hold at the seminary in Osijek. I wanted to share with you some wonderfully unexpected things that have happened while I have been at the Goethe Language Institute, both for my two months in Bonn in 2007 and these two months now in Munich.

The Institute is broadly international, and I have had the opportunity to meet people from all over the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. What has been wonderfully unexpected is that when I tell them that I teach Christian theology, I am immediately engaged in open friendly dialogue about what I believe, why I believe, what I teach, my understanding about other religions, etc. This happens not only in the classroom, but even more often when a few of the students get together for coffee or lunch.

I have spoken with Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and no small portion of people who feel they are somehow Christian, but don't know why. There are also those that have been hurt by the Church and have left for one reason or another.

These conversations are possible I think for a couple of reasons. I am to them an "official" representative of my faith, and we are on neutral ground at the Institute. It may be for many the first time that they have had this sort of contact, as it is not the habit of most to walk into a house of worship of a different faith and start to ask questions of the clergy person there!

For those who are culturally Christian, it is an opportunity, again in a neutral environment, to say "Pssst, Eric, what do I believe?" without the risk of embarrassment or anxiety that might come from asking the local clergy (although I shouldn't find cause for anxiety or embarrassment here —but sometimes they do). For those that have suffered at the hands of a church, it is a chance to maybe get some resolution.

I might also add that in these conversations, we are leveled by language. Most of these discussions happen in German (really poor German!) and must be basic. Yet, in spite of this basic-ness, the content is substantial. It has really been an unexpected joy, and an extension of the ministry for which you have sent us here. I have also gained a good deal of knowledge, understanding, and good-will toward those I have had the good fortune to meet here. Without exception they have enriched my life by generously sharing a part of their lives with me.

While the time away from my family is difficult, I feel very fortunate and blessed beyond measure to have been at the Goethe Institute. It is really one of the finest language schools in the world. The serendipity of people and ministry was more than I could have hoped for.

You our friends, supporters, and family, have bestowed upon my family and me a good many blessings. We hold those blessings as sacred and know as well that you have entrusted us with a great deal. Knowing this we work to be faithful to our call and to you the community that set us aside for such a great work. May God bless you richly and abundantly for all that you give and do on behalf of Christ's Church.

We are planning our first home assignment later this year and would appreciate your prayers. We will be visiting some of your churches as well as working to raise needed additional support. While we would like to say that we will visit you all, it is just not physically possible given the number of contacts we must make.

We do ask you to pray for all the many details involved in this return to the U.S. The two greatest needs at this point are: a car to drive while we are Stateside and a volunteer to come and teach English here in Osijek for the fall 2009 semester while we are away. We trust God will supply all that we need to make this a reality. Again, thanks for your important part in it.

# **The Blawenburg Beacon**

P.O. Box 266

Blawenburg NJ 08504

Dated Material

*Blawenburg Reformed Church is a family of God's people united in Christ through the Holy Spirit. We commit our gifts to worship, hospitality, life-long learning, serving those in need, and proclaiming the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.*

**March**  
**2009**