



The Blawenburg Beacon

March, 2011

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

Sin Boldly

Martin Luther, the agent provocateur of the Protestant Reformation, wrote and uttered several quotable quotes, but none is better known than this: "if you're going to sin, sin boldly." One can envision nods of approval from his youthful clergy protégés as they shared a stein of beer and debated the consequences of their fledgling movement. They were leading a revolution in Christian theology and practice, shaking off the yoke of Roman Catholic oppression and embarking on a new and extremely dangerous venture, which would result for many in unrelenting incidents of official contempt, imprisonment and untimely death.

For the powers that be, the Protestant Reformation represented the ultimate in sinful behavior, an open, unabashed indictment of authority and convention. Of course, Luther's call to reject the policies of an institution that had lost its way was not intended to encourage sinfulness. He did not advocate anarchy in human behavior. His emphasis lay on boldness, standing up for what we believe, being true to ourselves and unafraid of the consequences.

That boldness, expressed through peaceful demonstrations, toppled the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and continues to sweep through the Middle East. Millions of people chanted "freedom" and "peace" until the walls of greed and cruelty tumbled to the ground.

Our better selves champion those who rise up to improve their situation in life. We prefer to think we'd do the same if our own social condition became intolerable. Certainly, it's the example we want to set for our children - that is until the changes undermine our own conventions, or threaten to lure the next generation away from the lives we envision for them.

We are living in the midst of a virtual tsunami of social change right here in our beloved U.S. of A., some of which causes parents to swallow hard or wipe beads of chilly perspiration from their foreheads. The rules of behavior are relaxing dramatically in our culture, made evident by an unrelenting media onslaught. Whether it's an open acceptance of homosexuality on TV shows like "Glee" or outlandish dress and behavior from pop idols like Lady Gaga and Madonna, the cry to be open and confident about one's true nature promises mixed consequences.

On the bad side, there will be those who think that any tendency or desire should be indulged because it is "natural," which will add to the burgeoning ranks of victims, too many of whom remain unprotected and unavenged. On the good side, those who are different in ways that harm no one will find greater confidence to express themselves and contribute to the world around them. Openness is risky, but the potential benefits are enormous.

This kind of openness used to be associated with the Christian faith. The pioneer of that faith, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, was vilified by the powerful for his association with tax-gatherers and sinners, the outcasts of his society. He dared to suggest that God loved them, too,

that the kingdom of heaven was theirs for the asking, along with the acceptance and encouragement of a community set free. For this, among other things, he was executed publicly.

During our last Tuesday morning Bible study as we were discussing the Grammy Awards from the previous Sunday night, someone asked me what I would do if Lady Gaga showed up at our church, the suggestion perhaps being that her lack of public inhibition might somehow scandalize a service of Christian worship, demean or profane it. After a brief pause I answered: not only would it be the best attended service in the history of our congregation, but her outspoken message of open-mindedness towards self and others seems strangely consistent with the gospel.

I have no idea whether Lady Gaga has a spiritual life, but I do know that at one time I would have barred the church door to the likes of her. Now, as Christ continues to lead a revolution in my own heart, I'd be very, very pleased if she ever showed up.

Maybe I'm finally getting it.

Peace, Pastor Rich



Dear BRC Congregation,

Thank you so much for the beautiful flower arrangement that was sent for mom's funeral. Thank you, too, for the many cards and kind expressions of sympathy.

We are very appreciative.

Susie and Rich

Consistory Highlights

by Wendy Herbert, V.P. of Consistory

From the Consistory meeting on February 10, 2011

- Consistory is preparing for the transitional period following Pastor Rich's retirement in August. Our denomination, the RCA, generally recommends temporary engagement of a Specialized Interim Minister (SIM) when a pastor with a long tenure leaves a church (and Pastor Rich's ten year tenure is considered long term). A SIM has special training and experience to help a church bridge the gap while we conduct a search for our new minister.
- Pastor Rich reported on progress with the Natural Church Development (NCD) process. Rich and Church Health Team co-leader, Alan Taback, have met with our NCD coach and have begun plans to administer a church health survey. (*See related article elsewhere in this issue of the Beacon.*)
- Plans are underway for worship services during Lent and the Easter season. We will continue to utilize the very capable services of Chi Yi and Jeremiah for keyboard accompaniment, and Pastor Rich is heading up planning and practice scheduling for our instrumental combo and chorus.
- A schedule for communion services was set for the spring. Communion will be celebrated on:
 - o Sunday, March 13th — 1st Sunday of Lent
 - o Thursday, April 12th — Maundy Thursday
 - o Sunday, June 12th — Pentecost and Confirmation
- Hospitality Team members Lisa White and Nancy D'Alessandro continue to make regular visits to elderly and disabled members of the congregation and our community.
- Pastor Rich is conducting a bible study on "The Emotionally Healthy Church"
- Our teen and pre-teen Christian Education program continues to be enthusiastically received by participants. The Mysteries and Heroes of the Bible group (otherwise known as the confirmation class) continues to faithfully attend classes. A younger group, the Junior Joggers, has even asked Rich to continue their classes through the summer.

The Missions Team is continuing its hands-on projects in support of Crawford House, a transitional housing and treatment facility for women recovering from addiction. We recently offered residents a chance to learn some kitchen skills in the form of a soup making class ably led by Nancy D'Alessandro. Weekly computer training sessions are also being taught at Crawford House by Dave Cochran, Bob Bradsell, Mike Vande Woude, Nancy Curtis and others. This work is not only a wonderful support to Crawford House, but is also extremely rewarding to the BRC volunteers sharing their time and talents with the residents.

MEET YOUR CONSISTORY

BY BOB BRADSELL

GRACIE JOHNSON was elected to Consistory in the spring of 2010 as an Elder, and is serving the 1st year of her term – but she’s been here before, both as an Elder and a Deacon. Indeed, Gracie is such an embedded fixture here at BRC, it’s hard to imagine our church family without her. This time, she’s taken on the added role of Clerk of Consistory. That office has traditionally been filled by a Deacon, but it was felt that Gracie’s experience in church governance would be helpful in this year of change at our church.

Gracie is visible in almost everything we do, from Sinterklaas in the fall to spring rummage sales, and Crop Walks and the Heifer Project in between. But she’s not an ‘old timer’, at least not on the scale we often apply here in our nearly 200-year-old house of worship. Gracie grew up in Rye, New York, a Long Island Sound shore town in Westchester County, just north of New York City. She was baptized (“christened”) in a Presbyterian church, but gravitated to the church of her father’s roots...the local Episcopal church. Gracie was the youngest of four. She has a brother, an architect in Connecticut, and a sister in California. Another sister passed away some years ago. Earlier in her life, Gracie’s mother passed away while she was off at boarding school. Loss is perhaps an ingredient important to her faith journey.

Soon she was off to Sweet Briar College, an all-girls school in Virginia, where she majored in French and minored in *Religious Studies* (hmmm). After college, Gracie came back north and signed on as a *caseworker* in the NYC welfare department. Her turf? The South Bronx...a part of town made famous in the eighties film “*Fort Apache – The Bronx*”. Gracie says she liked the work, and felt she was contributing something positive in the beginning. But it didn’t take long for the bureaucracy, the paperwork – and a mugging – to frustrate and overwhelm her. Gracie moved to California to live with her older sister, Sally, and her husband for a year.

Back in New York, Gracie signed on with Citibank and learned a lot about the banking business. Through a friend, she met a tall former Marine and Princeton graduate named Jotham. It was 1970, in the fall. Early on a Friday morning late in November, Jotham called and said (approximately): “There’s a football game tomorrow... Princeton plays Cornell...wanna take the bus down and go to the game...?”

Gracie said ‘yes’, of course. Rushed around to buy something to wear (in those days, Ivy League football games were more dressy affairs than they are today), and took the old Suburban bus from the Port Authority Bus

Terminal to Palmer Square. According to Gracie, Jotham was there to meet her...a little more “dressed down” than she had anticipated. It seems he’d just had two wisdom teeth extracted and was not quite his usual radiant self. But after the game, a dinner at Good Time Charlie’s in Kingston, and a car ride back to New York, these two were – in the parlance of the day – *an item*.

Jotham and Gracie were married on August 14, 1971, at the Episcopal church in Rye she’d grown up in. Jotham worked for Princeton University, and they took an apartment not far away. In 1973, after checking out a listing by realtor Diana Pfannebecker, the Johnsons bought the cute shake’d house on Route 518 in Blawenburg, right at the head of Mountain View Road.

Children followed. Alex in ’76, Tom two years later, and Sarah in 1984. Sometime after Alex was born, the young married couple two houses away were instrumental in introducing Gracie to Blawenburg Church. Evelyn Cochran invited her to a mid-week *book study group* run by the pastor. The fact that she could leave little Alex in the nursery down the hall clinched the

deal...and Gracie Johnson has been an active participant ever since.

Many of us have gotten to know Jotham as well. He’s a member at St. Charles, the nearby Roman Catholic church, but he frequently helps out here...cooking burgers at the spring picnic, and helping Gracie set up for one event or another. Gracie, meanwhile, has matured into a church leader in the

truest sense of the word, helping BRC through significant changes. She served for many years as our Elder Delegate to the Delaware-Raritan Classis, and continues in that role as an *alternate*. And on

the Regional Synod – *the Synod of the Mid-Atlantics* –

Gracie serves on the *Multi-cultural Ministry Team*. She’ll represent the Regional Synod at RCA headquarters in New York at a meeting of its *Council of Pacific Asian American Ministries*.

Say ‘hello’ to Gracie on Sunday morning and thank her for her service. Unlike many of us, she’s rarely in the same pew, but you’ll know her by her *just-in-time* arrival, and the coffee mug in her hand.



Gracie (far left) with Barb, Bill, Catherine and Sonya at the Caring and Compassion Workshop in Wyckoff.

CHURCH HEALTH TEAM

... planning for our future

GROWING OUR CHURCH

Like many ‘mainline’ churches in this part of the country, Blawenburg Church is facing pressures... financial pressures, cultural pressures, and pressures we bring on ourselves. This year we face an added pressure: The need to search for a new pastor, as Pastor Rich looks forward to the next chapter in his life. Consistory, in its wisdom, has embraced the idea that this daunting array of pressures presents an *opportunity...an opportunity to grow the church.*

Consistory has launched us on a course – a process, actually – called Natural Church Development, or NCD. NCD is a tried and trusted approach, used by thousands of churches world wide – and dozens within our own RCA denomination. It’s not a “program”...it’s not a step-by-step plan to grow the church. But if it’s done right, and conscientiously embraced, one of the normal outcomes IS *church growth.*

Consistory has authorized a **Church Health Team** to manage this process, and the team has reached out to an RCA “Coach” to help us. His name is Steve Sayers. Steve’s a pastor at The Reformed Church of Bushkill in East Stroudsburg, PA, where he successfully applied the NCD process. Steve and Pastor Rich know each other from their student days at

New Brunswick Seminary. You’ll have an opportunity to meet and talk to Steve over the next several months.

Next in the process is a survey, which a number of us will participate in during March. We could only invite 40, so we selected by age category. The results will help us focus. “Natural Church Development is an individual and a group (church) process”, says Church Health Team co-leader Alan Taback. “We are being asked to continue to grow in our walk with God, and as we grow so grows the community. The process is in motion. One of the steps along the way is to take the survey to get a clear picture of our strengths and soft spots, and focus on both. It’s a never ending process of living life with God as our Head Coach.”

We ask for your help...your comments...and your prayers.

The Church Health Team

Alan Taback, Pastor Rich, Wendy Herbert,
Dave Cochran, Mike Vande Woude,
Bob Bradsell, Andrea Eberly

Pray for Our Health Team and Our Future

by Bernice Van Nostrand

Two weeks ago our Church Health Team asked the congregation to support them in prayer as they assess and plan for the future of our church. Following is a prayer you may use in your prayer time:

Gracious and loving God, creator of the universe and Father of us all.

We come to you aware of our shortcomings and our need for your forgiveness and your help.

We thank you for members willing to take the time to investigate the best ways for our church to serve you in the future.

We ask for your wisdom and your guidance as they work together and search for your will for the Blawenburg congregation.

Thank you for the assurance of your love and your promise to hear our prayers.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Blawenburg Reformed Church is a covenant community 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.

Worship Team

We gather as a community to celebrate God's presence among us!

Lenten & Easter Seasons Begin

Wednesday, March 9th, marks the beginning of Lent with Ash Wednesday. Sunday, March 13th, is the first Sunday of Lent which we will observe by celebrating communion together.

Make a Joyful Noise! The musical **combo and the choir** will **commence practices** for music during Lent, Holy Week/Easter on **Tuesday, March 1st**. The musical combo will meet in Cook Hall on Tuesdays at 4 PM and in the Sanctuary on Sundays at 9 AM, and the choir will meet on Tuesdays at 5 PM and on Sundays at 9:15 AM. As Pastor Rich says, "The emphasis is on familiar melodies that are easy to play and sing, so anyone with instrumental music ability and/or a decent voice is strongly urged to join us."

Choral and Combo Music for Lent 2011

3/13	Choir	Introit: Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days (vs. 1&2) Anthem: What Wondrous Love Is This?
	Combo	I Want Jesus to Walk with Me
3/20	Choir	Introit: Lord . . . 40 Days (vs. 1,2,3) Anthem: Turn Back, O Man
	Combo	Jesus Is All the World to Me
3/27	Choir	Introit: Lord . . . 40 Days (vs. 1-4) Anthem: Softly and Tenderly
	Combo	I'd Rather Have Jesus
4/3	Choir	Introit: Lord . . . 40 Days (vs. 1-4) Anthem: What a Friend We Have in Jesus
	Combo	I Saw the Light
4/10	Choir	Introit: Lord . . . 40 Days (vs. 1-4) Anthem: There in God's Garden
	Combo:	Love Lifted Me

Liturgical Learnings

The following is excerpted from our RCA website:

Planning for Lent and Easter

The liturgical season of Lent begins with the solemn observance of Ash Wednesday and continues for six weeks, culminating with the church's joyous celebration of Easter. The word Lent is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word for springtime, which is a literal translation of the lengthening of the days. In the early church, the Lenten period was used as a time for preparing new converts for Baptism on Easter Sunday. Today it is a time for preparation, reflection, growth, and change. The forty-day period of Lent was established in the middle of the fourth century. (Sundays are not included in the count, since Sundays are considered "little Easters," all of which celebrate the resurrection.)

The liturgical color for Lent is purple, a solemn color, a color for royalty and repentance. The liturgical color for Easter Sunday and the Sundays between Easter and Pentecost is white, signifying purity. White is the liturgical color also for Christmastide and All Saints' Day (November 1).

Shrove Tuesday, the eve of Lent, has become a time for celebrating. Also known as Fat Tuesday, it is a traditional day to serve pancakes and eat all the foods that will be forbidden during the fasting of Lent. "Shrove" is derived from the Latin word for "shriven" or "confessing of sins." The Mardi Gras (French for "Fat Tuesday") celebrations in Mobile, Alabama, and New Orleans include parades and parties, while the German celebration Fasnacht (eve of fasting) includes eating special donuts.



Ash Wednesday is the official beginning of the Lenten season. It is a day of prayer and public confession of sins. In some churches the sign of the cross is made with ashes on the foreheads of believers. The early Israelites took the ashes from burnt offerings, mixed them with water, and sprinkled them over unclean persons (sinners) and their belongings (Numbers 19:17-18). In the third century, the church began the custom of burning the branches used on Palm Sunday; saving the ashes and marking sinners, such as robbers and murderers with these ashes. Out of sympathy, family and friends of these 'marked' persons began using the ashes also.



Hospitality Team

“... care for those in our congregation and the greater church community. . .”

Pot Luck Luncheon

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the last of our winter luncheons on March 6th which will start right after church. Bring a dish to share.

Life-Long Learning Team

“We commit our gifts to... life-long learning...”

Children and Worship

The children will meet in **Cook Hall at 10AM** on **March 6th** to take part in the story of the healing of the paralytic. Last month we discussed being Good Samaritans, and now we will think about how to be “Stretcher Bearers” for our friends.

Marys and Marthas

All women of the church are invited to join the Mary and Martha group on Saturday, March 12th, at 7:30 AM to share breakfast, prayers, and thoughts on chapters 2 and 3 of *Small Wonders* by Barbara Kingsolver.

Sunday Adult Study Group

Join the study group at 11:30 after fellowship for a discussion of the book, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*. Emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable; you can't be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature. That is the premise of the Gold Medallion Award-winning book *The Emotionally Healthy Church*.

Tuesday Adult Study Group

Join this study group at 10:00 AM in the basement of Cook Hall for a discussion of the early church in the **Book of Hebrews** and how it relates to our lives today.



Taking the Plunge

“A really fun experience”

“A fun way for kids around the community to get together”

“Being able to share activities with friends from BRC makes it all the more fun”

The word “fun” seems to come up frequently when the youth group describes what they like most about The Plunge, the new youth partnership between the Blawenburg and Rocky Hill Reformed churches. Annie Reilly, the Youth Minister at RHRC started The Plunge last Fall:

“I’ve called the RHC/BRC youth group “Plunge” because my goal is to create a space and community for our youth to feel safe taking the plunge into a life of Christian discipleship and fellowship. Since October, Blawenburg and Rocky Hill churches have come together to eat, play, talk, and hang out. The turnout has been very encouraging”

At the heart of the program is the Sunday Night Lights dinner, social and fellowship held at the RHRC Parsonage every third Sunday of the month.

Annie has also organized many other get-togethers such as apple picking, cookie baking, a youth Superbowl party, and the highly successful Halloween party which combined a scavenger hunt with apple bobbing and manhunt for the 20+ kids who attended.

Annie’s explanation for the success of the program is simple: *“It’s about building relationships, asking questions, and having fun”*.

2011 promises to build an even stronger community between the two churches and their youth.

“The support and encouragement from both RHC and BRC congregations have been overwhelming. The kids have been nothing short of a joy and a blessing. I’m excited to see where God moves us and how this ministry will continue to grow”

The Plunge welcomes youth from both churches. For anyone interested in learning more about the Plunge, please feel free to reach out to me (Annie) or any of the regular attendees.

We’d love to see and hear from you!

Catherine Murphy and Annie Reilly

See pictures on page 11



The Plunge Youth Group having fun at the Rocky Hill Parsonage. See article on page 10 for more information.





Blawenburg Village School

PO Box 153, Blawenburg, NJ 08504

609-466-6600

blawenburgvillageschool@yahoo.com

Karen Hill, Director

During the month of March our students will be celebrating Dr. Seuss's Birthday and Read Across America Day. We are also looking forward to St. Patrick's Day and the first day of spring!

We are currently enrolling students for the 2011-2012 school year. If you are interested in a placement, please contact the school so we can be sure church members receive priority placement. The school will be offering classes for students 2 - 6 years old.



Ice and snow did not keep families away from the February 5 Open House

New for the 2011-12 school year will be a Fun with Fives class. This program is designed specifically for those students who miss the kindergarten cut-off date or who may simply benefit from another year to grow.

Summer Camp will be held July 11th through August 19th, from 9:00am-1:00pm, for children ages 3-6. Join us for one or all of the following:

Fun with Fitness: Join us as we explore various sports.

Exploring Nature: Let's spend a week with nature and see what cool things we can find!

Is it Magic or Science?: We're going to spend a week doing science experiments.

The Great Summer Luau: Get out your grass skirt and do the hula!

Jammin' in the Jungle: Come on a safari and meet some wild animals!

Sun, Sand and Water Week: Let's explore the beach!

Please call the school at 609-466-6600 if you're interested, and help us spread the word by telling your family and friends!

Missions Team

We commit our gifts to. . .serving those in need.

Because RCA congregations participated in our One Great Hour of Sharing offering this past year, Reformed Church World Service was able to:

- Support 56 food pantries in a year that has seen a nearly 30 percent increase in need in many areas of the country.
- Respond to immediate needs of Christians in Myanmar after their homes were burned down.
- Contribute to the response by our partner Church World Service to the 2010 floods in Pakistan. These are but a few of the specific ways in which One Great Hour of Sharing offerings were used in 2010 to bring new life and hope to God's children across the globe.

[One Great Hour of Sharing](#) is an ecumenical offering that has been widely observed throughout the church for the past fifty years. We invite you to join with us in our 2011 One Great Hour of Sharing offering--not only because it's good for the needy and good for the kingdom, but also because it'll be good for us. The 2011 materials mark the beginning of a



new approach to the OGHS offering; we are pursuing a theme that will be carried out over three years. This theme is called "All about Sharing," based on 2 Corinthians 9:8. The first year will focus on how "Sharing Brings Us Joy," the second will highlight how "Sharing Brings Others Joy," and the third year will focus on how "Sharing

Brings God Joy." This opportunity to respond to Christ's direct call to service will deepen our understanding of what it means to be a Christ follower and can be a rich and rewarding experience for our church family.

Soon you will receive in the mail a Sharing Calendar and a guide to help you use the calendar, as well as a fish shaped coin box. This is a "sacrifice calendar" for making daily offerings during Lent, to be given at a "One Great Hour of Sharing" offering on Easter Sunday. Using the calendar can be an excellent family activity, and also become a daily reminder of blessings we so often take for granted, as well as a daily opportunity for sharing with others.

Heifer International

by Sonya Hunt

Thank you to all the people to donated to our Advent Mission project. We were able to raise \$3200 for Heifer International, an organization that provides animals to people in need. Among the animals donated were a heifer and a water buffalo, as well as chickens, bees and rabbits.

Thank you

SOUPS, SOUPS AND A SOUP-R SALE!

by Gracie Johnson

If soups can take the chill off a winter day, we have certainly done our part.

Prior to Sunday, January 30th, we were preparing for a soup-making session with the women from Crawford House, when Susie Van Doren, our gourmet soup chef, planner and teacher for the evening, was called away suddenly to Indiana because of the passing of her mother. We were fortunate, however, to have Nancy D'Alessandro step in. Among her many gifts and talents, Nancy has been taking cooking les-

sions and is learning to be a coach in nutrition...for kids, but we're all kids! Nancy and her wonderful friend Mary planned and shopped for all that was needed for Lentil Soup with bread and Apple Crisp for dessert. Under their tutelage, eight of us representing the Mission Team prepped the ingredients for these two recipes and got them started, while Nancy gave instruction out in Cook Hall to 20 women from Crawford House. Then they all came into the kitchen and made their own batch of each recipe, all practicing the individual skills needed in each step. Bill Herbert and Jean Butcher brought appetizers for them to enjoy while they gathered. (Bill sharing with them before departing to Boston for surgery the next day!) When our first batch of soup was done, we all sat down together and enjoyed the fruits of our labor. When you read this, we will

have enjoyed another session with them on February 27th. They've asked for Nancy to take them shopping to learn about buying the most healthful foods they can at a reasonable price! Look for

the artistic and thoughtful card the women designed to thank us. It is posted on the bulletin board downstairs in Cook Hall.

Then on Saturday, February 12th, we held our second annual frozen soup sale. The Missions Team had voted to put any money raised from this toward our

mission with Crawford House. Thank you, thank you, thank you to the 22 people (and the Crawford women) who made 103 quarts of delicious soup and to all who supported our mission by buying soup for themselves or others! Because of your efforts, we raised \$677.00, which will be used to support our mission with Crawford House. Although it seems light years away with this snow we've had, we will soon be working on a vegetable garden with them at the home on Sunset Road and this money will help us provide needed materials for that project. In the meantime, stay warm and enjoy your soup!



Gregory Jovolos preparing the dinner drinks for the Crawford House ladies



Volunteer(s) sought to help students in Croatia

by Nancy Titus

Wanted: help!

As we begin our second semester this month, we are looking ahead to our next academic year, and it is apparent that we will be in need of volunteer teachers.

The English Department has operated last year and this year with Croatian instructors teaching the English as a Second Language courses and me teaching the advanced composition courses. Next year, we will need to offer more advanced courses than are offered now, and we will lose one of our current teachers. In addition, the course load in our homeschool will require more one-on-one instruction with our children. These two additional elements on top of the load I already have add up to more than I can do alone.

So, we are asking you for help. First of all, we ask you to pray that the Lord will send us a volunteer or volunteers to come and help fill the gap. We are thankful that our supporters have been so faithful to pray for us, which is apparent in so many ways in our everyday lives. We know that God has a solution to our needs, and when we pray together for that solution, God always provides.

Second, we ask for you to talk to members of your congregation or others you know who might be able to spare some time to give of themselves for the benefit of the Kingdom of God and to gain a wider perspective that living in a cross-cultural environment can provide. These can be college students or retired people: those with strong Christian character, a heart to serve and willingness to be stretched by the rough edges of life in a former communist country.

There are several ways that volunteers could help. Obviously, one person could come teach English and help in our homeschool for the entire academic year, from September through June. Or a volunteer or volunteers could come just for one semester: the fall semester runs from October through January, and the second semester runs from late February through June. Or, we would even welcome a volunteer who could come to tutor our children in our homeschool for a month or two, while also assisting some in the English program at the seminary. There is room for lots of creativity when it comes to dates and functions. While our greatest need is during the academic year, we could also use help during the summer months when we plan class sessions for our courses and our children finish independent study subjects.

Skills needed vary with the task the volunteer would do. Obviously, if the volunteer wants to teach English at the seminary, then he or she needs strong English and classroom skills. Previous experience in ESL or a degree in English is not required but certainly helpful, but students can still benefit greatly from having native-speakers of English to model. On the other hand, someone who just wants to work with our children at home would do a great service if they have strong skills in math, as Samuel will be finishing a geometry class this summer and taking Algebra II next year, neither of which is a strength for Eric or me.

Volunteers would have to pay their own expenses, but room and board could be provided in the seminary dorm.

There is even a project that a volunteer could do without ever leaving the United States: preparing class handout materials for a reading seminar. This would include vocabulary and content questions for an inspirational book students will read. This project would be immensely helpful by saving me time and effort during the academic year. In the past, a Sunday school has provided these books to students, so it could also be a mission project for a group within a church to buy and ship the books to us.

If you have any interest in any of the volunteer opportunities described, please email me at nanntitus@aol.com or call and leave a message at 845-704-2494 (the cost to you is the cost of a U.S. phone call).

Proclaiming Team

... and proclaiming the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Spring Lecture Series

by Chip Parmele

The Blawenburg Church's Proclaiming Team will again host a *Lecture Series*, coordinated by Deacon Chip Parmele, in our sanctuary this spring. The program proved extremely popular last year when local celebs like pollster George Gallup and motivational speaker Natalie Gahrman spoke and answered questions. This year's series will kick off on Wednesday, April 6th at 7:30 pm, with noted local entrepreneur and adventurer Greg Olsen talking about his *Voyage to the International Space Station* aboard a Russian Soyuz spacecraft.

Olsen is president of GHO Ventures in Princeton where he manages "angel" investments, a South African winery, a Montana ranch, and performs numerous speaking engagements to encourage children – especially minorities and females – to consider careers in science and engineering. Olsen is also "Entrepreneur in Residence" at Princeton University. He was the third private citizen to orbit the earth on the International Space Station (ISS), after training for five months (900 hours) at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Moscow. He launched on a Russian Soyuz rocket TMA-7 on October 1, 2005.



Two additional lectures have been scheduled. On Wednesday, May 11th, Dr. Deforest B. Soaries, Jr., senior pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset, New Jersey, will speak on *Breaking Free from Financial Slavery*. Dr. Soaries is the author of a book by the same title. He and his "dfreeTM" strategy were the focus of an installment of CNN's Black in America documentary "Almighty Debt." Dr. Soaries served as New Jersey's 30th Secretary of State and is a popular speaker at colleges, universities, conferences and churches around the world as well as a frequent advisor to major corporations in the areas of diversity, philanthropy and community relations.



On Wednesday, May 25th, journalist John Patten will speak on *New directions in online news media*. Patten has been a journalist and editor for more than 15 years. He's worked for the Princeton Packet and North Jersey Newspapers, and for the AllAboutJazz.com website. He is currently the editor of the hyperlocal online news site, Warren.Patch.com, using social media and other Internet resources to report local news.



All lectures will be open to the public, and will be offered free of charge. Voluntary donations will be accepted. Lectures will begin at 7:30 pm and last for about an hour. Refreshments will be served following the programs, and those who attend will have an opportunity to chat with the featured speaker.

Lecture Series Volunteers

This year's lecture series is set for April 5, May 11, and May 25 (see article on previous page). We have some needs for these lectures to be successful and for Blawenburg to be presented in its best light.

Refreshments—We will be offering a time of refreshments after the lectures. We need people willing to “host” and people willing to bake or purchase food to be served (cookies, brownies, fruit, cheese, crackers).

Greeting—We want to have at least two people in the sanctuary before the lecture to greet individuals, help them unlock the pew boxes, and to be ambassadors for Blawenburg Church.

Sound System—We have several people trained to be sound engineers. Please step-up and let the church office (609-466-3108) know that you are available on one of these evenings to run the sound system and record the lecture. If you are not trained to work the sound equipment, but are interested, please see Mait Van Nostrand (908-359-6579).

Men's Breakfast Club

Join long-time church members, newcomers, and friends for the weekly Men's Breakfast Group. The group meets at 7:30 AM in Cook Hall on the first and third Thursdays of the month and at the Red Oak Diner on Route 206 near the corner of Route 518 on the second the fourth Thursdays. Join the seven to 14 men early on Thursdays for good food, conversation, and fellowship. It was particularly nice to see Winston Peters on the last Thursday in February.

March 3—Cook Hall

March 10—Red Oak Diner, Route 206 in Skillman

March 17—Cook Hall

March 24—Red Oak Diner, Route 206 in Skillman

March 31—Star Diner, Route 206 in Hillsborough

Basketball

We have the use of the Otto Kaufman Center Gym from 7:15-8:45 the following Friday nights: March 4, 18, and 25, and April 8. It is for anybody, all ages and even a friend or two. A lot of play and maybe a little instruction. Spectators welcome. – Alan Taback

Outreach Lunch Menus

March, 2011

by Nancy Curtis

Every Tuesday, from 11:30 to 1:00, we serve lunch in Cook Hall. Lunch is served buffet style and a free-will donation is accepted (anonymously). This lunch has become a great outreach to the community. We average 25 people but occasionally have 40. I can always use extra help either during the morning hours setting up the dining room or later for kitchen clean-up.

(Perk of helping—leftovers!)

Lunches will always have salad, bread and beverages

March 1

Minestrone, Chili, Baked Potatoes, Hot Dogs, Dessert

March 8

Potato Soup, Chicken & Vegetable Pasta, Dessert

March 15

Clam Chowder, Salisbury Steaks, Mashed Potatoes, Dessert

March 22

Chicken Rice Soup, Chicken Mac & Cheese, Dessert

March 29

Hamburger Vegetable Soup, Chicken Salad, Tuna, & Egg Sandwiches, Dessert

Reformed Church in America Church Growth Fund

The RCA Church Growth Fund (CGF) savings certificates offer local churches and their members an opportunity to earn a fixed rate of return on investments of \$1000 or more and at the same time support RCA church multiplication endeavors. For information about rates and terms, contact Paul Karssen (CGF Director) at pkarssen@rca.org or (888) 722-4958, or visit www.rca.org/investingcgf, click “Yes” for residing in a state where savings certificates are sold, and then click “Yes” on the following pages when it asks, “Would you like to receive an offering circular and subscription form?”

This is neither an offer to sell nor a solicitation of an offer to buy savings certificates from the CGF. The offerings of CGF savings certificates is only made by an offering circular available from the CGF. Investments in the CGF involve certain risks more particularly described in the offering circular.

Rummage Sale

by Jean Beachell and Jean Butcher

We need your help! Really!

Our Rummage Sale will take place on **April 7, 8, & 9, 2011**. The sale hours will be as follows:

Thursday, April 7th - 4 pm - 7 pm
Friday, April 8th - 9 am - 4 pm and
Saturday Bag Sale, April 9th from 9 am - 1 pm.

We will be accepting items starting Saturday, March 26th through Tuesday April 5th at Memorial Hall. We will be accepting clothing, linens, toys, handbags, household items, books, small working appliances and bric-a-brac. **Please, no** large furniture, electronics, computers, TVs, or large appliances.

The funds raised at the sale will be used for Missions projects and for repair and renovation for our historic buildings.

We are planning to start setting up Memorial Hall with tables and racks on Sunday, March 20th directly after Church. Please join us to help get this terrific fundraiser underway! We will continue setting up during the rest of the week as well. Come as often as you like and as often as you can!

We also need volunteers for chair people for the various departments. **Thank you!**

Daily Prayer Calendar

by Gracie Johnson

Because of work I do with the Regional Synod, I became aware of this monthly prayer calendar on the RCA website. When I wrote last summer in the July *Beacon* that we are not alone, I referred to the greater church body that supports us, and whom we need to support, as well as the fact that God is always with us in prayer. As a result of our Church Health Team's request, Bernice Van Nostrand is answering that plea with a prayer center, and others are responding. As we pray fervently for the work God is doing among us, may we also look beyond ourselves and pray fervently for the work God is doing all around us. *The following is from the RCA website:*

The denominational prayer calendar highlights the importance of prayer and its significance for the ministries to which God has called the RCA. Our prayer is to connect and equip the church as a whole to pray for particular aspects of the six areas of [Our Call](#).

The calendar will be updated monthly and will feature specific prayer requests from each area of Our Call--[discipleship](#), [mission](#), [leadership](#), [multiracial future freed from racism](#), [multiplication](#), and [revitalization](#). Sunday prayer requests will focus on the ministry of specific classes, or they will lift up particular holy days.

www.rca.org/dailyprayer
(type into your browser)

Tear out or print this page . Put it on your frig.
 Make someone's day! Wish them a happy birthday/anniversary!




March 12	Colby White
March 18	Byron Gurzo
March 19	Joe Pavlicek
March 21	Christopher Reyes
March 24	Cheryl Soos
March 26	Mac Harris
March 28	Pat Wengel
March 29	Dot Dorey Pam Wanner

Summary of Dates

See earlier articles for more details.

March 1	Choral & Combo Rehearsal—see page 7 for times 7:30 PM—Finance Team Meeting—Cook Hall
March 3	7:30 AM—Men's Breakfast Group—Cook Hall
March 6	10 AM—Children & Worship—Cook Hall Mini Coffee Hour / Pot Luck Luncheon
March 8	5:00 PM—Properties Team Meeting—Cook Hall
March 9	Ash Wednesday—OGHS Campaign Begins— See page 13
March 10	7:30 AM— Men's Breakfast Group—Red Oak Diner
March 12	7:30 AM—Marys and Marthas—Cook Hall 9 AM to 1:30 PM—Classis Leadership Workshop
March 13	First Sunday of Lent with Communion Day Light Savings Time Begins (Spring Ahead)
March 17	7:30 AM—Men's Breakfast Group—Cook Hall
March 20	Dress Down Sunday—Set up for Rummage Sale
March 24	7:30 AM— Men's Breakfast Group—Red Oak Diner
March 31	7:30 AM— Men's Breakfast Group—Star Diner
Tuesdays	10 AM —Bible Study—Cook Hall basement 11:30-1:00—Outreach Lunch—Cook Hall basement
Sundays	11:30 AM in Cook Hall—Adult Sunday School

We have a tradition of filling our sanctuary with an assortment and abundance of potted flowers on Easter Sunday – daffodils, lilies, hydrangeas, hyacinths, tulips, etc. If you would like to purchase plants, which you may take home with you after the service, please fill in the form below. You may mail it to or leave it in the church office or on the table at the entrance to the sanctuary through April 15. As with Christmas, we will have a page dedicating the flowers however you wish.



Easter Flower Order Form

Name _____

Phone _____

Number of Flowers _____ x \$15 = _____

Check Enclosed \$ _____ Cash \$ _____
(payable to Blawenburg Reformed Church)

Dedication – From: _____

In honor or memory of: _____
(circle one)

The Blawenburg Beacon

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Blawenburg NJ 08504

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The Blawenburg Reformed Church is a covenant community 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.