



The Blawenburg Beacon

September, 2011

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

GROWING OUR CHURCH

“NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT” – *THE SURVEY* – AND WHAT’S NEXT

As we come off a hot summer, a farewell to Pastor Rich, and all that has happened in our various lives, it may seem like ages ago that we met and talked about this. But we’re about to embark on a new church year – and a new era here at BRC. It’s time to re-engage, to look forward, and to take the next steps in the process known as *Natural Church Development*.

It was June 5th when we gathered after church, saw the results of our early-March survey, and engaged in quite a lively discussion about what those results could tell us. You may recall that, of the various church health “characteristics” tested in the survey, our most well-developed trait was **gift-based ministry**; and our least developed was **passionate spirituality**. In other words, we seem to do a pretty good job here at BRC of applying our talents where they are most appropriate... but we seem to have something of a **passion deficit** in carrying out our mission as we understand it.

In the meeting on June 5th, the *Church Health Team* posed two questions:

(1) What church experiences of any kind have brought you closer to God?

(2) What is one factor that contributes to Passionate Spirituality being our least developed area?

We all listed key words and phrases on *Post-It* notes, and left them in the care of the Church Health Team (Alan Taback, Wendy Herbert, Andrea Eberly, Mike Vande Woude, Dave Cochran and Bob Bradsell).

A few days later, the team began the process of *sorting* the various *Post-It* notes. We dealt with the second question first (“*What one factor contributes to Passionate Spirituality being our least developed area?*”). What we found was very interesting. Responses seemed to fall into three broad categories...

- Those who blamed **The Church** (“*too much emphasis on money*”; “*lack of inspiring leadership*”)

- Those who blamed **The Environment** or **Lifestyle** (“distractions of daily life”; “not enough time in the day”)
- Those who blamed **Self** or **Individuals** (“lack of personal commitment”).

The team took a break and met a week later to sort through the responses to the first question (*What church experiences of any kind have brought you closer to God?*). It was clear that most people interpreted this question to mean: *What church experiences have made me feel good, or drew me back to church?* And the responses again fell into three broad categories...

- **Worship experiences** (*beautiful music / inspiring sermons / meaningful prayer / healing services...*)
- **Other church functions** (*Bible studies / small group experiences...*)
- **Personal experiences** (*childhood experiences / life crises...*)

The team met again on July 5th – this time with our *coach*, Steve Sayers, pastor of The Reformed Church of Bushkill in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. We discussed what to make of the various responses, and the *sorts* we had come up with. It took a while, but with Steve’s help, we emerged from the meeting with a direction, and something of a plan. *We resolved to meet again with the entire congregation – and to pose what we believe are two key questions that have arisen from our work so far.*

We’d like to schedule the meeting this fall...probably in the **late-September – early-October** time period. Stay tuned as we work on a date agreeable to most people.

The two key questions...

- (1) *How can we help ourselves and others move closer to God?*
- (2) *How can we resolve the ‘Pressures of Life’ dilemma that comes between so many of us and God?*

We know that “inspiring worship” is a key factor in addressing these questions, and that “music” is high on the list of important subjects to be talked about. Consistory has already taken steps to improve the music elements in our worship.

Looking beyond the subject of music, *The Church Health Team* invites you to ask yourself the above two questions...and to **think big...think bold...think creatively** as you consider how to answer them.

– The Church Health Team / Alan, Wendy, Andrea, Mike, Dave & Bob

Transition Team

by Gracie Johnson

Since last winter, in addition to the Church Health Team working on the NCD process, all members of our Consistory have been invited to serve on a team to plan for the immediate needs of the church following Pastor Rich's retirement. After first thinking we might need a full-time Specialized Interim Pastor, we faced the reality of our 'deficit spending' and the need for us to do major belt-tightening [sound familiar?]. Upon further analysis, and, with the energy and enthusiasm of our Church Health Team taking us into the Natural Church Development process, we decided that we would look for a part-time transitional pastor. Of course we would want someone with all the skills of a successful full-time pastor, with the energy of a youthful pastor, who could preach us into spiritual renewal, but who was a tent-maker and didn't require a full-time salary!! It's a tall order, but we have faith that the Holy Spirit will lead the right individual to us. We have already been fortunate enough to have had conversations with some very qualified and talented pastors.

In the meantime, it is important that we understand that if we are lucky enough to find someone like this, we will each need to do our part for God's little kingdom here in Blawenburg. Whether your gifts are administrative, spiritual, musical, educational, physical, digital, communication oriented or . . . , we need you to share them with us! We all have a ministry here, to sow the seeds of love with each other and with the community: by paintbrush or spoken or written word; and with God's help, we/He will reap the harvest. Key to this is lots of open communication!

We told the Church Health Team that we value beautiful music, inspiring sermons and meaningful prayer. The latter two we hope will be a fact by the time you read this column next month. The former will be a fact when Andrew Long returns to us in October. Andrew is entering his Senior year in the M.Div. program at Princeton Seminary. Those of you lucky enough to have heard Andrew accompany our services in July, were amazed not only at his expertise on the organ and keyboard, but also by the Spirit which resounded joyfully throughout his playing. We are very excited that he has agreed to be our Organist/Music Director for the coming year. Unfortunately, he can't begin until October 23rd. We will do our best to bring you high quality music in the meantime. We have two very accomplished subs lined up for September and October, as well as our own talented Barb Antoniewicz. In October, we'll share more about Andrew's exciting plans for us!

September Worship Schedule

- 4th Combined service at Rocky Hill at 10 AM- postponed from 8/28. Preaching: The Rev. Linda Pepe
- 11th Special 10th Anniversary Service Remembering 9/11/01
Preaching: The Rev. Lynn Rubier-Capron from Hopewell Presbyterian Church, recent interim and Spiritual Director at Kingston Presbyterian Church
Organist: Jan Westrick, founder and former director of the Princeton Girlchoir and organist at Christ the King Lutheran in Kendall Park
Special Appeal for Montgomery EMS. (See related article in the Missions section.)
- 18th Rally Day and Church Picnic (See related article in Hospitality section.)
Preaching: The Rev. William Robert [Bob] Sharman, Dir. of Alumni/ae Relations at Princeton Theological Seminary
Organist: Laurel Sproul, a member of Faith Lutheran in Hillsborough; Laurel has played at many neighboring Reformed Churches.
- 25th First day of Sunday School
Preaching: The Rev. Bob Sharman
Music: Barb Antoniewicz

The 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.

Worship

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

Farewell and God Bless Rich and Susie

by Gracie Johnson

Those who were able to take time away from summer vacations to be here on August 7th were rewarded for their effort! It was our traditional combined service with Rocky Hill, Harlingen and Griggstown churches. In addition to that, it was Pastor Rich's last Sunday service with us at Blawenburg. We had 150 congregants; Rich gave one of his best sermons ever; we had communion; and finally, we had a special farewell blessing and laying-on-of-hands for Rich and Susie! To our amazement, the service lasted one hour and three-quarters and not a creature was heard stirring!

Fellowship after church was a grand time highlighted by a special cake and presents for Rich and Susie. Calvin and Marie made drawings for them; and the Congregation gave them a ticket package to the Indiana Pacers basketball games. A quilt was on display that the Mary and Marthas had presented to Susie the day before thanks to Bernice Van Nostrand's talents. It was signed with messages from the M&M's and prayed over while the threads were being tied by them. (See picture in the Life-Long Learning section.)

New Bookmarks for the Occasion

As a gift to our sister Reformed Churches and a memory for Pastor Rich and Susie, Catherine Murphy suggested bookmarks, skillfully designed by Judy Christensen. Thanks to both of you! One side lists the four churches, Blawenburg, Griggstown, Harlingen and Rocky Hill, with the RCA logo and the phrase "Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Stronger Together". The other side has our BRC logo and the quote from John 3:34.

Hospitality

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

First Friday Group

The first First Friday Group will meet on September 9th at 6:30 PM in Cook Hall. We will enjoy pizza together. Please let Joe Pavlicek know if you are coming (609-683-3735.)

RALLY DAY – September 18th !!

Please join us for our traditional kick-off to the church/school year which will be on September 18th following church. Feel free to dress casually or bring casual/play clothes. If the weather cooperates, we'll picnic outside behind the sanctuary. If it does not cooperate, we will picnic in Cook Hall. Hamburgers, hot dogs, rolls, condiments, sodas, and plates and utensils will be provided. Bring a side dish or dessert of your choosing to share.

[Remember, we always have lots if you forget! Stay, with or without a contribution, and enjoy the company.]

Life-Long Learning Team

"We commit our gifts to ... life-long learning..."

Men's Breakfast Group

The Men's Breakfast Club meets every Thursday at 7:30 AM in Cook Hall. Contact Joe Pavlicek for more information (609-683-3735 or jpavl1999@aol.com).

Mary and Martha Group

The women's book study group will gather at 7:30 AM on Saturday, September 10, for breakfast and final discussion of the last two essays of Small Wonder by Barbara Kingsolver. The group has decided to consider the meaning of some of the Psalms as their next topic. Feel an earthquake lately? Read Psalm 46.



SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ALL

**AGES WILL BEGIN September 25th
IN COOK HALL!**

We will have Nursery and Sunday School through Grade 5/6 during church, and Sunday School for adults and teens after fellowship time. Nursery care will now be in the upstairs center room of Cook Hall, and Caitlyn Curtis has graciously agreed to be our caregiver for now. Sunday School will take place upstairs in a classroom off the west hallway.

Youth Group

By Catherine Murphy

PLUNGE Fall Schedule

It happened so quickly - summer vacation is almost over and we're all getting ready for back to school!

Much to the happiness of those attending last year, The Plunge Youth Group will be starting back up again this month, led by Annie Reilly from the Rocky Hill church. The Plunge was highly enjoyed by all participating last year!

Details of the Fall schedule was already sent by mail to a number of you. Annie has added a great new initiative this year - a 9 week Leadership study program from Sept 8 through Nov 17. More details from Annie to follow for those interested. If you want to join but know you'll miss the meetings please talk to Annie.

To anyone who didn't receive the schedule and interested (or just want to be kept in the loop) please provide Annie (copied on this e-mail) with your e-mail address so you can be added to the e-mail distribution list.

The Plunge Fall Calendar of Events (open to all Middle and High School students)

SEPTEMBER

- ; **Thurs Sept 8th: 7pm – 8:30pm Youth Leadership Study Break begins (9 weeks – every Thursday at the RHC Parsonage)**
- ; **Thurs Sept 15th: 7pm – 8:30pm Youth Leadership Study Break**
- ; **Sat Sept 17th: 6:30 – 8pm – Dinner and Games at the RHC Parsonage**
- ; **Thurs Sept 29th: 7pm – 8:30pm Youth Leadership Study Break**
- ; **Fri Sept 30th: 7:15 – 8pm - Fruti Yoghurt Social**

A very exciting year ahead for the Plunge! Thanks so much to Annie for continuing to lead this in addition to a very busy schedule of Seminary studies and a NY intern program! Annie's e-mail is reilly.ann.c@gmail.com if you want to reach out directly!



Blawenburg Village School

PO Box 153, Blawenburg, NJ 08504

609-466-6600

blawenburgvillageschool@yahoo.com

We have been very busy preparing for the start of the 2011-2012 school year, and eagerly await the arrival of our students on September 12th. All classes will be held in the school house this year, which has undergone a makeover this summer. We are excited to share the wonderful updates with our new families and returning students. Our teachers have begun preparing their classrooms, and planning wonderful experiences to enrich the lives of our energetic preschoolers.

Our programs this fall include preschool classes for 2, 3, and 4 year olds, an afternoon enrichment class, a Mommy and Me class and our Mom's Morning Out program. There are limited openings available. If interested, please call the school office at 609-466-6600 or send an email to blawenburgvillageschool.com.



Fresh Paint. Ready to go!
Welcome. Welcome.



Missions Team

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

By Gracie Johnson

SPECIAL APPEAL FOR MONTGOMERY E.M.S.

On September 11th, we will remember the losses on that tragic day as well as the heroic efforts of so many First Responders. As many of you know, we lost our Deacon and neighbor, Phil Parker, that day as other neighbors suffered losses as well. We remember the terrific outpouring of donations as neighbors contributed first aid and rescue equipment which we collected in our sanctuary to be delivered to Ground Zero. The church doors were open. People came with gifts and prayers and heavy hearts. The aisles overflowed with needed items, the only way we could help alleviate the desperate situation and our own fears.

To commemorate this 10th anniversary of that day, we will have a special collection during church to support the work of our own Montgomery EMS. Their ambulance and crew were sent to NY during the crisis and also served as back-up to the Northern NJ crews who served in NY then. Totally volunteer led, they are in desperate need of financial help. A copy of the letter from MEMS describing their duties and needs is posted on the Missions bulletin board. Please make checks payable to BRC noting MEMS on the Memo line or directly to Montgomery EMS for us to forward. [Mail to BRC at P.O. Box 266, Blawenburg, NJ, 08504, if you can't join us on the 11th.] Thank you in advance for your anticipated generosity.

The Rescue Mission of Trenton

We support this mission through our contributions of clothing and household items which they pick up after our Rummage Sales. They use these items both for immediate use for their needy as well as selling them in their store. Their summer newsletter is posted on the Mission Board in Cook Hall. It is interesting to read of the many things they do for homeless men and women in Trenton, as well as extensive rehabilitation and job training for men in their residence.

CROPWALK – October 16th

Mark your calendars now for our annual CROPWALK to stop Hunger on Sunday, October 16th. Walkers' envelopes will be available starting September 18th.



Church World Service Kits

We will be collecting for these kits and putting them together this fall. They are all so desperately needed. The items needed for each kit are listed below and on cards that are available in the church and Cook Hall. Keep one with you as a reminder when shopping. Patterns for the school bags, baby gowns and sweaters are available in Cook Hall. Check the list in Cook Hall for an update on what is most needed to round out kits. Donations for the cost of items or shipping are always appreciated.

Hygiene Kits

- One hand towel measuring approximately 16" x 28" (no fingertip or bath towels)
- One washcloth
- One wide-tooth comb
- One nail clipper
- One bar of soap (bath size in wrapper)
- One toothbrush (in original packaging)
- Six standard size Band-Aids®

Place all items in a one-gallon plastic bag with a zipper closure, remove excess air from bag, and seal. Please do not add toothpaste to the Hygiene Kit. Cartons of toothpaste that have an extended expiration date will be added to Hygiene Kit shipments just prior to shipment.

Hygiene Kit value: \$10

Processing/Shipping Cost: \$2 per Kit

School Kits

- One pair of blunt metal scissors (rounded tip)
- Three 70-count spiral notebooks or notebooks totaling 200-210 pages (**no loose-leaf or filler paper**)
- One 30-centimeter ruler (12")
- One hand-held pencil sharpener
- One large eraser
- Six new pencils with erasers
- One box of 24 crayons (only 24)
- One 12" x 14" to 14" x 17" finished size cotton or lightweight canvas bag with cloth handles. (Please, no reusable shopping bags or backpacks.)

Pack all items inside the cloth bag. School Kit bag pattern is online or in Cook Hall.

School Kit value: \$15

Processing/Shipping Cost: \$2 per Kit

Baby Care Kits

- Six cloth diapers
- Two T-shirts or undershirts (no onesies)
- Two washcloths
- Two gowns or sleepers
- Two diaper pins
- One sweater or sweatshirt (Can be handknitted or crocheted)
- Two receiving blankets (one can be a hand-knitted or crocheted baby blanket)
- Items must be new and under 12 months in size. Wrap items inside one of the receiving blankets and secure with both diaper pins. Baby gown and sweater patterns are available online or in Cook Hall.

Baby Care Kit value: \$39

Processing/Shipping Cost: \$2 per Kit

Emergency Clean-up Buckets

- One five-gallon bucket with resealable lid
- Five scouring pads
- Seven sponges, assorted sizes
- One scrub brush
- Eighteen cleaning towels (reusable, like Easy Wipes®)
- One 50-78 oz. box dry laundry detergent
- One 12 oz. bottle of liquid concentrated household cleaner (like Lysol®)
- One 25 oz. bottle liquid disinfectant dish soap (like Dawn®)
- One package of 48-50 clothespins
- Clothesline, two 50 ft. or one 100 ft.
- Five dust masks
- Two pairs latex gloves (like Playtex®)
- One pair work gloves
- 28-bag roll of heavy-duty trash bags (30-45 gallon)
- One 6-9 oz. bottle of insect repellent (pump, drops or lotion, not aerosol)

Please provide all liquids in new, unopened plastic bottles. Be sure to send only new materials. Place all items in the plastic bucket, making sure they are packed securely to avoid damage during shipment, and seal lid with packing tape.

Clean-up Bucket value: \$56

Processing/Shipping Cost: \$3 per Bucket

Outreach Lunch Menus

September, 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, dessert and beverages

September 6

Chicken rice soup, salads, Cole slaw

September 13

Mushroom soup, chicken broccoli casserole with rice

September 20

Italian sausage soup, tomato soup, mac & cheese, apple walnut salad

September 27

Clam chowder, Salisbury steak with mushrooms

Smashed potatoes, succotash

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



2 Mark Meyer	16 Calvin Urbanski	23 Everett May
3 Jessica Weingart	21 Cassandra De La Cruz	25 Dale Weingart
8 Peggy Querec	Daniella De La Cruz	26 Robert Bradsell
15 Jotham Johnson	Jeremiah Van Doren	28 Jean Beachell
Ginny Doremus		

Anniversaries

The Rev. Richard & Susie Van Doren
 Bloomington, Indiana

11 Val & Kristin Reyes
 13 Brian & Barb Van Liew
 16 Ray & Hope Hunt
 23 Doug & Pat Wengel

Summary of Dates

September 4	10:00 AM.	First Reformed Church of Rocky Hill
September 8	9:00 AM	BVS Orientation
	6:30 PM	Administration & Finance
	7:30 PM	Consistory
September 9	9:00 AM	BVS Orientation
	6:30 PM	First Friday Group - Cook Hall
September 10	7:30 AM	Mary & Marthas - Cook Hall Basement
September 11	10:00 AM	Worship - Service of Remembrance - The Rev. Lynn Rubier Capron
September 18	10:00 AM	Worship - Rally Day - The Rev. Dr. Robert Sharman
September 25	10:00 AM	Worship - The Rev. Dr. Robert Sharman
September 26		Deadline for October Beacon articles, information and photos

Tuesdays 11:30-1:00—Outreach Lunch—Cook Hall basement
 Thursdays 7:30 AM Men's Breakfast - Cook Hall basement

Titus family to end mission, return to U.S.

By Rev. Eric Titus

After more than five years in Croatia, Nancy and I are ending our missionary service and returning to the United States. We target the end of the year for our return and do not know yet what we will do. You may have heard this news already, but we wanted all our supporters to understand what went into this decision.

Among our back and forth conversations about Croatia over the past months, we said things like, “How is it possible for us to stay longer?” to “Maybe it’s time for us to go home; maybe we have accomplished what we came to do.” Eventually we decided the latter.

The foremost question on everyone’s mind will of course be the reason that we decided to leave. While that question is easy to ask, it is not easy to answer. There is, in the end, no one reason that finally ruled, or final straw that broke the camel’s back. Rather, a number of factors came together, some of course weighing more heavily than others, but none being the lynchpin of the decision. Still, while not getting into great detail, we do feel we want to share with you some of the elements going into our decision.

To begin with, there have been changes with our partners here in Croatia. A new bishop was elected in the Reformed Christian Church in Croatia, which brought to the fore the question of communication since the new bishop and I shared no language in which we could communicate. In addition, much of the work that I did with the former bishop was transferred to an indigenous person who is capable of the ecumenical tasks that I was often called on to perform. That an indigenous person was appointed is exactly what should happen, and we rejoice in this.

There have also been changes within the seminary. We are one of (if not the last) remaining missionaries on the faculty. More and more, the seminary is being funded, both intellectually and economically, by regional personnel and financing. More often than not students are paying tuition rather than being sponsored by western scholarship money. This is a good thing as well. These are very different realities from our arrival five years ago and show the ways the seminary is adjusting to its changing environment. While the seminary would like to see us stay for years to come, we have to ask if our missionary task is done. We believe that it is.

There are also issues within our family that we had to consider. As many of you know, the education of our children has been an ongoing struggle. We did our best to make the public schools in Croatia work for us, but in the end had to remove each of our children for different issues. Homeschooling has provided a stopgap solution for the last few years, but we are simply at the point where this will no longer work for all our children. Longer-term solutions were simply out of the question given budgetary constraints. We also have the consideration of our extended families, especially with aging parents.

We have been proud to represent the RCA as missionaries. We have received unimaginable support from you, our partner churches and individuals. There is no possible way for us to thank you enough, or to tell you how deeply your spiritual and financial support was and is appreciated. Your remembrance of us as we were so far away from you was simply overwhelming, moving us often past the point of tears. Those of you at the grassroots level of the RCA are simply marvelous. No less so was our supervisor Duncan Hanson who met us at every crisis, supported us through every need, and did all that he could to make sure that we realized our full potential. Truly, the RCA is a remarkable mission agency with which to work!

We have gained and been enriched by our time here and will always be grateful to you for making this possible. We also thank you in advance for standing with us through all the details to come as we transition home.

Eric and Nancy Titus are RCA missionaries in Osijek, Croatia, where they work at the Evangelical Theological Seminary and with the Reformed Christian Church in Croatia. They have three children: Samuel, 16, Valerie, 13, and Penny, 11.

The Blawenburg Beacon

P.O. Box 266

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Dated Material

The Blawenburg Beacon is a publication of the
Blawenburg Reformed Church
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