

# Blawenburg Beacon

*Blawenburg Reformed Church*

*Serving God and the Community Since 1832*



October 31, 2025

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”  
– Ecclesiastes 3:1

We are well into the fall now, and winter is just around the corner. This is the season where the earth takes a break from growth, and rests. This is an important rest – it gets the earth ready for new growth in the spring.

Ironically, the fall is when the church gets busy with a number of special events and annual chores. In the winter, the church does quiet down a bit.

That rest between two years of growth is necessary to replenish the land.

And in the church, that rest is needed as well. Between seasons, between years, and between pastors.

And that is why the Consistory is working so hard to find an Interim Pastor to guide us through the season of rest and study and preparation for our new permanent pastor. We are continuing to review resumes and conduct interviews. We are hopeful that we will have a new Interim Pastor soon.

We are thankful that we have Nancy Curtis and others to preach. We are thankful to have Nancy and the Care Team to support our members. We are thankful for the Consistory and Barb Reid and all of our volunteers to handle the rest of our work.

For the Consistory,

Elder Mark Smith

## **Our Mission Statement**

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.

## Fall 2025

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## Contact Us

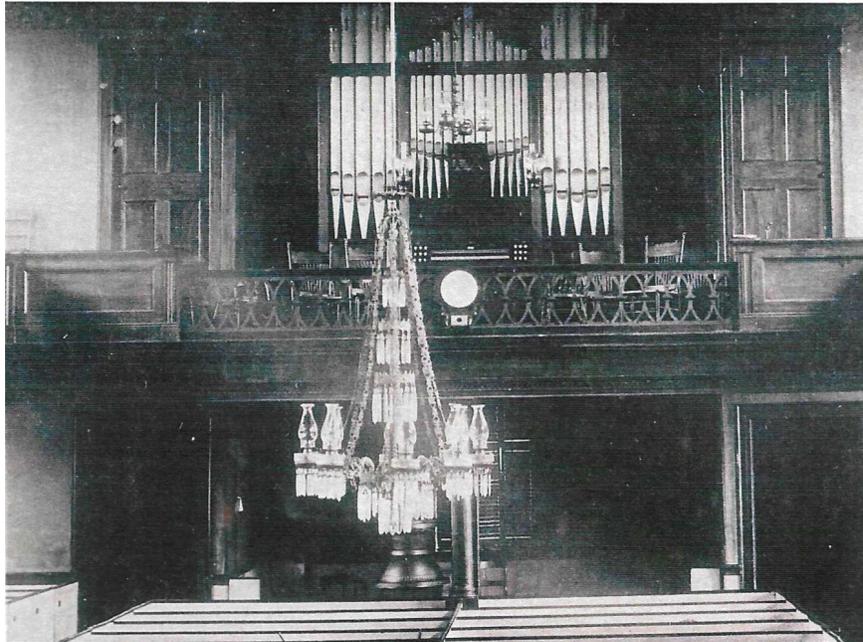
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## Special Interest

You never know what Dave Cochran might find in his files. The first section below is an introduction written by Dave, and following that is an article about our old (new) organ written in 1873.



Ken Chrusz, who helps me with research for my blog, sent me the following article about our “new” organ. It appeared in the Princeton Press on June 21, 1873, just after the new organ was installed. I thought you would get a kick out of this local journalism. Note that all the spelling, grammar, and punctuation are as they originally appeared in the article.

The article refers to a railroad being built in Blawenburg. This was the Millstone and Somerset Railroad, which ran through the property between Montgomery High School and the SAVE animal shelter. It only existed until 1880. You can read more about it in Blog 78, *The Frog War and M&S Demise*, at [blawenburgtales.com](http://blawenburgtales.com).

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### OFFICE HOURS

Monday - 8am - 1pm  
Tuesday - 8am - 1pm  
Wednesday - 8:00- 1pm  
Thursday - 8:am- 1pm  
Friday - 8am - 12pm

## Special Interest—continued

Blawenburgh is a pretty place, and a railroad is in course of construction through it, the depot is now being built, which will certainly give its business an impetus lying as it does in the centre of a rich farming country. The only church in the village is a Reformed Church, having a commodious and comfortable building. The outside being shingled gives it a more antiquated appearance than it deserves, as it is not a very old structure.

The congregation has just received a new organ, a superior instrument, made by Mr. Alexander Mills of No. 539 Broonie St., New York, at a cost \$1,600. A concert usually follows hard upon the setting up of a new organ, to show the power and beauty of the instrument, and Blawenburgh is no exception to the general rule in this case. Consequently an Organ Concert was given on Thursday evening, at which Mr. Henry Eyre Browne of New York was expected to preside at the organ, and the choir was to assist with vocal music. Mr. Browne from some unknown cause, failed to reach Blawenburgh, and so a couple of gentlemen who were present were pressed into service, and the concert passed off very creditably, although the audience was small. Mr. Murphy, of Princeton Seminary, played several selections in good style. The name of the other gentleman who took part we have been unable to learn. The singing was very good. In this Miss Emma Weart took a leading part, in the duets and choruses, as well as singing a solo, which received an encore, bringing her a second time before the audience. In response to the special invitation, she also sang "Coming thro' the Rye." The concert closed with "Coronation," by choir and audience.

Certainly the good people of Blawenburgh have no reason to feel ashamed of their choir, altho' we hope the choir don't do all the singing on Sunday, to the exclusion of the congregation from this delightful portion of worship. We should also mention that a Festival was given in connection with the concert in the ground adjoining the church. We hear the receipts were light, as several similar Fairs were being held in the surrounding country.

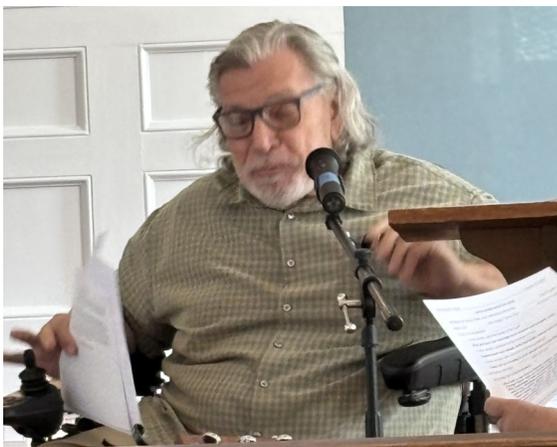


Autumn beauty at BRC

## Summer Worship



Alan Taback spoke to the congregation.



Lee Bekir led us in the liturgy.



Barb Antoniewicz led the hymns when Kevin was on vacation.



Back from their honeymoon, Mr. and Mrs. Van Haisma (Ben and Maria) led worship in September.

## Worship—continued



Nancy Curtis led the blessing of the new driveway in September.



Gina Williams read her Prayer Corner meditation, *Being Called*, in church on October 19.



Jean Beachell's beautiful handiwork is evident in the sanctuary as we begin the fall season.

# Fellowship

We thanked the Fundraising Team for a job well done. More information about the Fundraising Team and improvements to our campus can be found later in this issue of the Beacon.



We never go hungry at fellowship hour!



Dave holds the cake that references SOS.  
(Save Our Steeple/Save Our Sanctuary)



A display board depicting improvements made to our campus over the past few years

We remembered Katherine Smith's son, Chris, on Sunday, October 12. Chris, a beloved music teacher in the Montgomery school system for over 30 years, passed away recently after a long battle with cancer.



Nancy Curtis led the service of remembrance.



Beautiful ladies  
Katherine Smith, Bernice VanNostrand,  
Peggy Querec



Family and friends came to celebrate Chris's life.



Katie Connolly was back at the organ bench. Music was a big part of the service.

## Birthdays

### November

- 2 Carolyn Smith
- 4 Vineetha Prince  
Yuri Pugliese
- 8 Celeste Blodgett  
Jim Corio
- 9 Ben Van Haitsma
- 15 Anika Prince
- 24 Wendy Herbert
- 25 Sam Prince

### December

- 2 Barb Antoniewicz
- 25 Christine Corio  
Shawn Krishnan  
Anne Woolley
- 31 Barb Pavlicek

### January

- 8 Brian Van Liew
- 9 Jim Eberly  
Alan Taback
- 17 Linnea Eberly  
Katherine Smith
- 20 Hilde Cavanaugh
- 25 Jim Beachell
- 27 Charlotte Malpeso
- 29 Catherine Murphy
- 31 Hilde Lewis

### February

- 6 Sonya Hunt
- 10 Lisa White
- 11 Emma Tufano
- 18 Maria Van Haitsma  
Gina Williams
- 22 Keith Sickafoose
- 28 Elmi Hill  
Barb Reid

# Blawenburg Village School

## Blawenburg Village School

PO Box 153, Blawenburg, NJ 08504

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info@blawenburgvillageschool.com



### BVS Farm



### Firetruck Visit



# Blawenburg Village School—continued

## Trunk or Treat



# Missions

*Below is the last letter from Tom O'Leary as the Executive Director of SHIP. He is retiring and turning over the administration of the beloved organization to John Grebeck. For many years, it has been the pleasure of our Missions Team to organize and make and deliver 60 brown-bag lunches whenever there is a fifth Tuesday in a month. We even include a summer picnic as you see in the photos that follow. With the help of Griggstown Reformed Church folks, this missions activity is very successful for us and a pleasant time for the guests of SHIP.*

## Samaritan Homeless Interim Program

### *"Safe Harbor - Port of Refuge"*

"A private, not-for-profit corporation providing interim housing and associated services for the homeless and working poor of the Somerset County Region."

Thomas O'Leary, LCADC, CCJS  
Chief Executive Officer

October 10, 2025

Dear Friends,

I founded Samaritan Homeless Interim Program (SHIP) on March 05, 1984, in response to the unheeded cry of many women, children and men who are in desperate need of food, clothing, emergency housing and related services. I am in awe that SHIP has served over 3,000,000 meals, provided over 60,000 nights of emergency housing, provided funds for those owing back rent and utilities, assisted with prescription medication costs and the list goes on and on.

What started out for me as a mission turned into a labor of love. After 41 years at the helm of SHIP, after much prayer, reflection and meditation, I have decided to retire from my post as Admiral of SHIP. As of November 01, 2025, I will be turning over my duties to SHIP's new CEO/Executive Director, John Grebeck. John has been with SHIP since 2018, first serving as MSK Support Person and since 2023, assisting me with office duties. I am confident that he will continue guiding SHIP on its current course and provide resources to those most in need of them.

SHIP's Board of Trustees recently bestowed upon me the Title of "CEO/Executive Director Emeritus." That means you will still be seeing me dropping by SHIP's Safe Harbor and at my much beloved Holiday Meals!

It has been my honor and pleasure to have been of service to the many volunteers who make our work possible. It humbles me to reflect on all the good works done by so many of you for our guests. You make it possible for SHIP to continue to provide critically needed services with absolutely no charge to our guests.

I will continue to remember each of you in my prayers, and I ask that you do likewise for me!

Sincerely,



Thomas J. O'Leary  
CEO/Executive Director Emeritus

# Mission—continued

At the SHIP headquarters in Somerville, a very tasty and ample meal of ziti, crusty bread, and salad was provided by Lucy's Kitchen and Market, 830 State Road (Route 206 South), Princeton.



Servers with a smile: Dave, Nancy (from GRC), Alan, Laura, Elmi, Evelyn, Barb P, with Barb R behind the camera



Wonderful salad and dressing



Chow Line



Coming to the end



A guest with a great sense of humor and pose



She loved her picture being taken.

## Adult Vacation Bible School

Each Monday in July, many adults from BRC, Neshanic RC, and other participants gathered to learn and have fun together. They listened, talked, sang, and crafted together. Thanks to Nancy Curtis for spearheading this enjoyable experience and for providing the lunch.



Bernice VanNostrand demonstrates the parable of the Good Shepherd.



Choosing materials to make a themed project

# Events—continued



“May the love of God surround you...”



Alan Taback gave the group a lesson in painting.



A project complete



There was always room for discussion after the day’s lesson.

## 4th of July Organ Concert



Thomas Hobson Williams, a friend of our beloved organist, Kevin Daly, gave us a beautiful, patriotic concert.



Barb Antoniewicz and her family, visiting from South Carolina, attended the concert.



We were invited to sing along to well-known patriotic hymns. Familiar faces included Hilde Lewis, Gina Williams, Bernice VanNostrand, and Nancy Meyer.



The audience stood for the *Star Spangled Banner*.

# Campus Life

On behalf of Consistory, Barb Reid made the following presentation in church on Sunday, October 19.

“Over six years ago, in the spring of 2019, a new team was formed here at the church. It was born out of the realization that we had bats, not only in the belfry, but in the entire attic as well, they weren’t going anywhere, they had created an awful mess, and it was going to cost a boatload of money to get rid of them and clean up that mess.

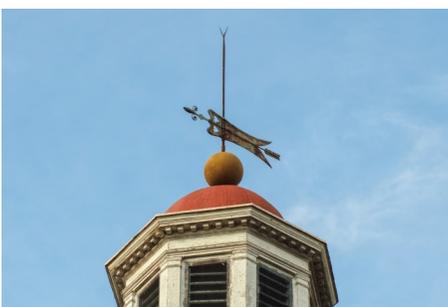
The team, known as the Fundraising Team, and chaired by Dave Cochran, was organized to raise money to pay not only for the bat clean up, but for other large improvement projects that the church was faced with and desperately needed to address as well. The members of the team included Jeff Knol, Wendy Herbert, Eric Perkins, and Blawenburg residents Anne Allen, Bruce Daniels, and Charlotte Malpeso.

It was clear from the outset that a great deal of money needed to be raised, over \$150,000, so Project SOS (Save Our Steeple, and later Save Our Steeple/Save Our Sanctuary) came to life, with Dave being responsible for coining its name. Hundreds of letters were mailed out to the congregation, friends, neighbors, BVS families, and to those who attended other events hosted by the church, including Sinterklaas. Over 200 donations came in and each donor was sent a letter of thanks, hand signed by Dave. A couple of interesting facts – Our largest donation by a single individual was \$30,000. Our most perplexing donation, to perhaps some of us, was \$1,832. Does anyone know the reasoning behind that donation? When all was said and done, \$168,590.21 was raised.

Besides the steeple restoration, the church was desperately in need of both exterior and interior painting. The organ needed a major overhaul, and the driveway needed repaving.

Financially, we were in a position to begin some of the projects, but in March of 2020 the world turned upside down and we at Blawenburg hit a brick wall.

It wasn’t until the summer of 2021 that we were able to have the exterior of the church painted. The Knols were away that summer on Jeff’s sabbatical and for the most part I was here by myself. The painters kept me company tho, and it was a delight to witness the transformation. And it was fun to watch the brave individual who got into a bucket and was hoisted up to what seemed like into the clouds so that he could paint the steeple.



## Campus Life—continued

In the fall of 2021, much of the interior of the church was painted. Again, I was here and in the thick of it. One day the owner of the painting company told me that he made sure that his crew was extra careful while in the sanctuary. He told them in no uncertain terms that they were in God's house and weren't allowed to make a mess of it.



In April of 2022, the organ came apart piece by piece and pipe by pipe, and I wondered how it was ever going to be put back together with all the parts in the right place. It looked like a giant puzzle. But as you can see, and more importantly hear, the organ is an important enhancement to our services with Kevin doing it more than justice.



## Campus Life—continued

In the winter of 2022, after all of the bats had been excluded, it was time to clean the attic. Unlike when the other projects were in process, I didn't get too close when this was going on. However, I did see guys walking around in hazmat suits, and full industrial-sized garbage bags were being dropped from second-floor windows onto the patio. I'll leave it to your imagination the contents of those bags, and that's all I have to say about that!



When it was time to repave the driveway this past August there was approximately \$15,000 left in what was at some point renamed the Restoration Fund. We used the last of the money in that fund to help to pay for the project. At its meeting this September, Consistory voted to officially close the Restoration Fund.



On behalf of Consistory, it is my honor and my privilege to thank the team that started it all in April of 2019, the Fundraising Team. It is also my honor and privilege to thank the man who took on the formidable challenge of heading up that team. Thank you, Dave, from the bottom of our hearts.”