

The Blawenburg Beacon

January, 2012



A Letter of Vision

By Rev. Robert Sharman

Dear Blawenburg Church Family,

The year 2012 will dawn and flow as one of the critical years in the nearly 200-year history of our church. We are a wonderful, hopeful, gifted congregation. Our officers and Church Health team have begun an exciting process for the future of our church. The congregation has identified the first area for development, an area which I am calling foundational to the future—*passionate spirituality*. Building on that foundational area, I now share with you my vision for the coming years of life and ministry ...

~~Prayer, outreach, stewardship~~

The promise of prayer is that God will meet us, and answer us when we pray. To know where to go, what to do, how to prioritize our mission, money, and time, we need to ask God to show us. We do not need a program or a creative idea. The author of creativity is the one to whom we pray, and he will show us the way. The church of the book of Acts had no New Testament, no power, little money, and few people, relatively speaking. But they did have prayer and they used it. I believe we ought to develop prayer groups to ask the Holy Spirit to show us where our church should go, and to create miracles in our midst. We are at the place in our life as a church where we are wise to set aside ourselves and ask for power that is beyond us.

A wise member of the church remarked that we have much to maintain and protect in property and real assets. But, he said, when we openly engage in mission, the other things always seem to be taken care of We have a campus that many churches 10-20 times our size would love to have. But we do well to remember that the purpose of the church is never to accumulate assets. The church has only one purpose: *mission—reaching outward to a broken, lost world—outreach in ways of spiritual and physical transformation*. When we assume a posture of inward protection and maintenance, we violate the charter of our very being. We will never find God's blessing in this. *Outreach—mission to our community and to the world is where God will be at work*. There are thousands of people living within five miles of our campus who are dying on the inside and crying for something to give meaning to life. We dare not neglect these fields ripe for harvest. How will we know what to do and what form this will take? (See the paragraph immediately above.)

One absolute truth of the Christian faith is that *God meets us and works with us where we are*. He never says, "Once you are holy enough or righteous enough, then I will work with you." He starts with wherever we are. BRC, as stated above has a lot of buildings and cash needs. We *are* in a financial crisis. God knows this, and he will show us how to move forward. He also knows that debt often hampers mission and creativity, especially in institutions. We as a church will never be fully free to en-

gage in mission, while strapped for cash, and living beyond our means. Credibility is critical. We cannot fully, enthusiastically invite others to be part of an organization that is living above its means. We will soon develop a plan to deal with the endowment, spend what we bring in, and grow our mission giving. We will be starkly honest and outspoken with what must happen in this area. Again, the question comes as to how the answers to this will be known and met. (See two paragraphs immediately above - and perhaps the two below.)

The great prophet Habakkuk prayed a beautiful, hopeful prayer that I have been praying and singing for the past twelve years:

Lord, I have heard of your fame. I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord.

Renew them in our day; in our time, make them known.

In wrath, remember mercy. (Hab. 3:2 NIV)

The prophet is praying for renewal—of the great and famous work of God in our midst. This prayer is an affirmation of faith that God is a God of renewal, and that he has great plans in store for us. In a world of wrath, both God's wrath for the sin we commit, and the wrath of a broken self-absorbed world that often turns against us, we pray for mercy.

These two prongs of prayer—prayer for renewal and prayer for mercy—form the basis of restoration for Israel in Old Testament times, and for the Church in New Testament times, over and over again. This is a simple prayer which affirms our sinfulness, our need, our faith in God's power, and our submission to being renewed.

It is time for prayer, outreach, and stewardship. I do not know where it will lead us, but I do know that God is faithful. I am humbled and honored to be on the journey with you. The above is all subject to the wisdom of our officers, with whom I joyfully serve.

Your Pastor,
Bob Sharman

Stewardship and Generosity

by Pastor Sharman

In worship each week we have been hearing about stewardship, from a challenging piece written by a pastor in Michigan, called "P.L.A.N."

P~Pray for a generous heart. Make people a priority over prosperity. Don't think: "How much do I have to give away in order to be obedient?" Ask: "Give me opportunities to sow."

L~Lifestyle cap. As we earn more, we should give more. If you are wealthier than you used to be, have you done more to increase your standard of living or your standard of giving?

A~Accountability. Set goals and find someone you can trust who won't be threatened by talking frankly about finances. Sex and money—we don't talk about them nearly as much as Jesus did.

N~No less than a tithe (tithe = 10%). It is hard to imagine that western Christians who have seen the glory of God in the face of Christ and enjoy great prosperity would want to give less than the poorest Israelite

Please pray for a generous heart—for yourself and for others in our church.

Talk with someone about lifestyle, a cap, and goals. Accountability partners would be a huge step in a great direction. It will grow us in faith.

Move off of base—whatever your percentage of giving is, move off of the safe base. If you are giving 3%, pray and plan to move now to 4% or 5%. Take a step; in a few years the tithe can be reached. It will change your spiritual life ... and perhaps much more

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

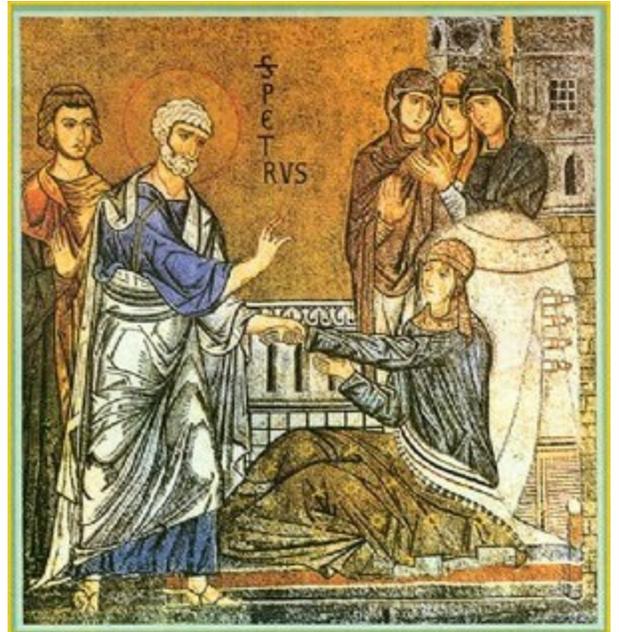
We gather as a community to celebrate God's presence among us!

Worship Schedule

January 1	Habakkuk 3:1-2 "Christmas Awe, Christmas Mercy" Luke 1:46-56
January 8	Luke 10:38-42 Sermon Series—Heroes Among Us: Lesser Known New Testament Folk John 11-12 (9) Martha: <i>The Strong Woman Whom Jesus Loved</i>
January 15	Genesis 17:9-11 "Baptism Meditation" Matthew 3:11; 28:18-20 Ezekiel 36:25-27
January 22	Acts 27 Series resumes (10) Julius: A Story of the Sea
January 29	Acts 9:36-42 (11) Tabitha--When What You Do Is Supplanted by Who You Are



Jesus speaking to Martha (Luke 10:38-42)



Peter raising Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:36-42)

Hospitality

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

Hospitality Ministry

We are a caring, friendly church. We are attempting to connect those who may have needs with those willing to help.

We have listed a few of the services some of us might need help with from time to time. We would like you to think about ways that you can help. Would you add your name to the list and indicate where you may be able to assist others or where you might need help.

Can Help	Need Help	
[]	[]	Drive to Doctor/Dentist appointment
[]	[]	Put trash / recycling to the curb
[]	[]	Shovel snow / clear walks
[]	[]	Mow lawn / Weed Gardens
[]	[]	Assist with shopping
[]	[]	Drive to church services
[]	[]	Small handyman jobs
[]	[]	A meal in case of illness
[]	[]	A friendly visit
[]	[]	Drop off homemade cookies / soup
[]	[]	Send cards for illness, loss, blessings
[]	[]	Welcoming new visitors
[]	[]	Other: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____ E:Mail: _____

Best days / times available: _____

Please return this form to Nancy in the church office.

Life-Long Learning Team

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

Nursery - Caitlyn Curtis - caregiver—Nursery is in the center room in Cook Hall for children up thru Pre-K.

K-6th Grade—meets in Cook Hall after the Children's Sermon. Resumes on January 8th.

Adult Sunday School Class resumes on January 15th.



Sunday School



Tuesday Study Group meets in the lounge from 10-11:30 AM. Nancy Curtis, with Barb Pavlicek and Bernice Van Nostrand as subs, is leading this with a study of Proverbs. The book that is used is entitled Wisdom for Life by William C. Brownson. Come whenever you are able and stay for our Tuesday Outreach lunch!

The Mary's and Martha's will meet for their regular breakfast and discussion on Saturday, January 14th, at 7:30 in Cook Hall. They will wrap up their discussion of the Psalms with each sharing her favorite. At this time a future book for discussion will be chosen. New members and book suggestions are welcome.

Come learn and grow with us!





Blawenburg Village School

P.O. Box 153, Blawenburg, NJ 08504
609-466-6600
blawenburgvillageschool@yahoo.com
Karen Hill, Director

Enrollment for the 2012-13 school year has begun! Classes will be available for children ages 2-5. We will be holding a closed enrollment for current BVS students and BRC members until January 20th. After January 20th open enrollment will begin. Please join us on Saturday, January 28th (10:00am-12:00pm) for an Open House. Stop in for a tour of the school and to obtain information on our programs. Information can also be found on our website blawenburgvillageschool.com.



Budding Angels

Mom's Morning Out is available January 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th, 8:30-11:30. Children ages 2-6 are welcome to join us for a morning of fun! The cost is \$30.00/session. Please call or email if you'd like to reserve a spot, as spaces are limited.



Blossoming Shepherds



Sprouting animals

Pictures from the BVS Christmas Concert

Missions

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

Heifer—Allelulia! Thanks to you all and our Christmas Eve mission collection, We think we've surpassed the \$5,000 needed for an Ark for Heifer International!! The materials will be up through Epiphany. Thank you for your generosity. We'll put a final accounting in the February Beacon.

Food Bank—Continue to donate to the local food bank. The box is at the bottom of the stairs in Fellowship Hall.

CWS KITS Ongoing collection. Check the list in Cook Hall for items most needed.

Cup of Cold Water Ministry (Matthew 10:42) - We collected many items for this ministry to our troops at our **Community Christmas Celebration**. We will continue to collect travel-sized toiletries, chap stick, and hand/foot warmers for our troops. The Rev. David Leung Kahler, Pastor of Griggstown Reformed Church, is stationed for three months at the Chaplains' Office overseas, and their office hosts a mini-USO. Please place items downstairs in Cook Hall, and we will ship them to Pastor Dave. We also collected \$423 to help defray shipping costs (\$12.95 per box).

Outreach Lunch Menus

January, 2012

by Nancy Curtis

"We commit our gifts to ... Hospitality"

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.

January 3

Nina's Soup (zucchini, mushrooms, pasta, & ham)
Grilled Cheese, Salad

January 10

Minestrone, Macaroni & Cheese, Spinach Salad

January 17

Clam Chowder, Lentil Soup, Lemon Chicken

January 24

Potato Soup, Sliders

January 31

Corn chowder, Stuffed shells, Sausage & peppers

Croatia Update

Stuff purge shows substance of our lives not stuff

By Nancy Titus

Personal effects. Stuff. Things. Objects. Odds and ends. Some (increasingly my husband) might even say, well, junk.

I've got it. As I write this, still before our return to the United States in a few days, I'm trying to get rid of *a lot* of it.

As I do so, I am beginning to notice some interesting things from the culture around me. People are perplexed by what they see as a cavalier attitude toward what is really a huge investment of time and money done over our five years here. The reality is we can't take it with us. We are giving most of it away for free not so much because we are noble but because we recognize that the people we serve cannot afford to pay and we would like to see our stuff go to good use somewhere, especially to people we know and love. Besides that, as a practical matter, we have been too busy with our work to organize a massive sale.

Colleagues here have seen lots of missionaries, mostly Americans, come and go. They have seen the big buy-up of things when they arrive and the big dumping of things when they leave. This only adds to the perception that I recently heard from a close friend who was surprised by how emotional I am about having to decide what to keep and what to get rid of.

I told her that most people looking at the object in my hand see a casserole dish. I see Nancy Overgaard, a friend and fellow missionary who gave it to me when she left Croatia a few years ago. Every time I have reached into my cupboard for that type of dish, I selected from among a few options, often choosing this one specifically because of that connection with my friend. Even so, it didn't make the cut because the dish is heavy and I have one I kept in storage in the United States specifically because another close friend I miss had given it to me.

The reason my friend said she was surprised by my emotion is that she did not think that Americans were attached to their stuff, an odd perception based on what I know of Americans. Seen in the light of Americans that come and go, that buy and dump, it makes a little more sense and it feeds the general misbelief that Americans are, by definition, wealthy. After all, they give away things the people around them cannot afford to buy in the first place or do not even have space to take.

We have heard it said that you can have stuff as long as stuff doesn't have you. In many ways, that might be one of my biggest personal lessons of life as a missionary. I am not saying that I understand all that lesson is. I do know the lesson is not that you must purge everything. Modern living requires modern accoutrements for which I am not complaining, but even if we lived as hermits in a cave somewhere, we would need supplies for survival that we don't have.

Neither is the lesson that you must always sacrifice and do without because sometimes children far from home need chunky peanut butter or homemade cookies in a special tin mailed at great financial cost by caring friends or to have their rooms re-decorated.

I do know that you cannot let issues about stuff keep you from doing whatever God calls you to do. I also know almost as soon as the plane touches down in my hometown, stuff will start attaching itself to my family and me like iron shavings to a magnet. It is inevitable. God help us to hold it all lightly!

Many of you have asked about our personal plans. We will visit family members in Oklahoma and Texas and then drive to New York, where we will stay in the Koinonia House of the Pultneyville Reformed Church as we did before we left for Croatia and during our home assignment in 2009. We will continue as missionaries through the first part of April and will visit churches whenever possible. We do not know yet what door God will open for ministry beyond that, so we appreciate your prayers about this uncertainty.

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, 17, Valerie, 14, and Penny, 12.
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Proclaiming

We commit our gifts to ... proclaiming the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Sinterklaas was a huge success this year! This fund raiser garnered over \$4500 for missions and our church. We will be sending \$535 to the local food bank and \$375 to the Reformed Church World Service for local flood relief.



Our biggest money maker—Soups!



Our Crafters helped make the day a financial success.

We hosted the annual Community Christmas Celebration this year on December 18th at 4:00 PM. We had close to 200 people for worship and many stayed for soup, salad, and cookies following the service.



The luncheon helped make the day a fellowship success—Rick and Lisa enjoying the fruits of their labor.

Sinterklaas

By Gracie Johnson

Many thanks to all of you who stitched, baked, cooked, set up, sold, bought and generally supported our effort for Sinterklaas this year! We raised \$4550 in addition to the \$760 start for our Heifer campaign. Of the former, we are sending \$535 to the Montgomery Food Bank and \$375 to the RCA to help our regional churches flooded after Irene. The food bank dollars are totally from Nancy D'Alessandro's Toy Sale. She had advertised at her booth that all proceeds would go to feed hungry children and, not surprisingly, shoppers were happy to contribute extra for that cause.

We were so happy to have our 'resident artist' Suzanne Hunt join us this year. Among her many beautiful watercolors, was a print she made from her watercolor of the church, highlighting the steeple or cupola. She and her husband Chase seemed to know so many of our visitors too, that they added tremendously to the spirit of fellowship of the day! Having our fearless leader, Dr. Bob, greeting everyone with his always friendly and welcoming demeanor was the icing on the cake! And that spirit of fellowship was felt throughout the day and was one of the highlights of the event for most of us.

Thanks to Booth Chairs Bernice Van Nostrand, Lisa White, Evelyn Cochran, Bill Herbert, Sonya Hunt and our capable money man Mike Van de Woude for everything running so smoothly. Special thanks to Nancy D'A. for agreeing to take on being co-chairman once again and for all her work in turning our humble space into *Sinterklaas*' wonderland.



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



8 Brian Van Liew
19 Doug Wengel
24 Paula Peters
25 Jim Beachell

Pot Luck Luncheons

January 8th
February 12th
March 11th

Mark your calendars and plan to attend these fun social events that start right after church. Bring a dish to share.

Summary of Dates

(Please see complete information in body of newsletter.)

* * * * *

January 4	7:30 PM	Mission Team at Herberts' House
January 6		The Epiphany of the Lord (liturgical color - white)
January 8	11:30 AM	Pot Luck Lunch (see above)
	2:30 PM	Soup making with Crawford House
January 9	9 AM	BVS Trustee/Parent Coffee
	12:30 PM	BVS Staff Lunch
January 10	5:00 PM	Properties Team
January 12	6:30 PM	Admin & Finance Team
	7:30	Consistory (but may be deferred to a Retreat on January 21st - stayed tuned for more information)
January 14	7:30 AM	Mary's and Martha's (see page 5)
January 15	11:30 AM	Adult Study Group resumes
January 23		Beacon Deadline
January 28	10 to 12	BVS Open House (see page 6)

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Sundays	10:00 AM	Worship with Dr. Sharman unless otherwise posted (see page 3)
		Sunday School - after Children's Sermon (resumes January 8th)
	11:30 AM	Adult Sunday School - Cook Hall lounge (resumes January 15th)
Tuesdays	10:00 AM	Bible Study - Cook Hall lounge
	11:30 to 1:00	Outreach Lunch (see page 7 for menus)
Thursdays	7:30 AM	Men's Breakfast Group - Cook Hall basement

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