



The Blawenburg Beacon

April 2009 Issue

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

Reduce...Reuse...Recycle: Blawenburg Reformed Church
Community Rummage Sale
April 23-25
Memorial Hall

Thursday, April 23rd from 4 to 7 PM
Friday, April 24th from 9 AM to 4 PM
Saturday, April 25th from 9 AM to Noon (Bag Sale)

Time to clean those closets and sort those drawers.
Time to find a new designer wardrobe at bargain prices!

Drop off clean clothes, books, toys and household items at Memorial Hall, 416 Route 518, next to the church, on Wednesday and Thursday, April 8th and 9th from 9am to Noon, and Wednesday through Saturday, April 15th through 18th, from 9am to 1pm. Please, no electronics, large furniture or appliances.

Proceeds from the sale will be used for the *BRC Preservation Fund* to restore and renovate the church's historic sanctuary in the village of Blawenburg, Montgomery Township. Call the church office at 609-466-3108, or visit the website: www.blawenburgchurch.org for further information, directions or to make special arrangements for drop-off.

We need help to set up (moving furniture & boxes, putting up tables, etc.) sort items, work during sale hours and clean up on Saturday following the sale. In the past we have made a few thousand dollars on this sale. With these castoff items no longer wanted by original owners, it is a great way to recycle, as we make them available to those who are in need of clothing or household items. **We are in desperate need of help this year. May we count on you for a few hours? We will be working during the day and evenings over the next two weeks. To volunteer, or for info call Jean Beachell 609-924-7637 or Ethel Terhune 908-359-6027.**

Thank you BRC congregation for your expressions of condolences during the recent illness and death of my sister, Arlene. Your cards, kind words and especially your prayers have meant so very much to her sons, my self and our entire family. Sincere Thanks. God Bless each of you. Ethel (Terhune)

ANNIVERSARIES

5 Richard & Susie Van Doren

April Birthdays

1 LaFerne Keller
2 Patrick Fritzinger
Doug Hill, Sr.
Katie Mueller
8 Cara Hume
11 Val Reyes
13 Greg Jovolos
15 Joe Weingart, Sr
17 Mike Vande Woude
29 Esther Jovolos
Vickie Hug

News from BVS:

The Scholastic Book Fair is running in the basement of Cook Hall through Friday, April 3rd. There is a large selection of reasonably priced children's books available, and they make great Easter gifts.

The students at BVS will have their "Bee Themed" art work displayed at the second Hopewell Valley Green Market kickoff event on April 17, 2009. The event will be at the Masonic Hall, 88 East Broad Street, Hopewell, NJ. Stop by and check out the fabulous work from our budding artists.

On Saturday, May 9th the school will be holding an Open House from 10:00am - 12:00pm, and a Car Seat Safety Check from 10:00-2:00pm. Please help us spread the word.

It's also time to register for summer camp and fall classes. The camp will be running weekly from July 6th - August 14th from 9:00am-1:00pm, for children ages 3-6. Call the school office at 609-466-6600 if you're interested.

BRC Preservation Fund News

Landmarks Grants Awarded

We are pleased to report that the Montgomery Landmarks Commission has awarded two grants to our church to help in our preservation efforts. One grant for \$1000 was awarded for the painting of the church. A second grant for \$8500 was awarded for the replacement of the roof. We thank the Landmarks Commission for their generosity.

Roof Completed

T&L Home Builders (aka Tom Hunt) completed the new church roof in just nine days. It looks great, and the best news is that we are very close to having the money for it. We anticipate receipts in the coming weeks that will complete our payment. Special thanks goes to the Properties Committee for their diligent work in securing bids and overseeing the process.

Gold Party

The Gold Sale on March 24th made \$300. The majority of people who attended were connected with the preschool—thank you BVS. The gentleman who was purchasing the gold, Tom Green, said he would return and buy peoples gold if they left it in the church office. If you would like to get cash for your gold without getting ripped off, you can give the bag with your name to Nancy Curtis in the Church Office. (The most received was \$1500, and the average was \$400.) Even if you don't know if your gold is valuable, drop it off and let Tom decide.

Rummage Sale

The next Preservation Fund event will be the Rummage Sale on April 23-25. Look for other information about this event in the Beacon.

Benefit Art Show

Plan ahead for the Benefit Art Show on May 9th. This reception will feature local artists such as Joan Quackenbush, Clem Fiori, Joseph Petrovics, Charles McCollough, our own Alan Taback, along with many others. Proceeds from this event will support the Preservation Fund. The Art will continue to be displayed from Sunday, May 10th through Saturday, May 16th.

New Grant Application

Todd Quackenbush and Sharon Stevens are currently working on a grant from Somerset County for historical preservation. They will submit it by April 15th. Thanks Todd and Sharon.

Our Next Priorities

As you may recall, our top priority for the preservation effort was painting the church. Our other two priorities were the shoring up of the foundation and resolving our septic problem. When it was discovered that the church roof was in need of serious repair or replacement, the Consistory and Congregation agreed to make its replacement a priority.

We have completed and (almost) paid for the painting and roof. We will need to raise significant funds to deal with the foundation and septic problems. All contributions toward these efforts are greatly appreciated.

If you have any comments or suggestions for the BRC Preservation Fund, don't hesitate to contact Dave Cochran, Todd Quackenbush or Rick White.

Bonds with great books enable creative thinking

As I try to teach seminary students to write, I often notice other basic deficiencies that also need to be addressed. Lately I have been focusing on the idea of reading. Reading books in particular.

What would your life be like if you had not had access to books in your formative years? What if no one particularly cared whether you read or not.

Like you, I had lots of early emphasis on reading. We Americans are taught from a young age to value books. Our parents take us to the library and read to us from colorful books that delight with fun pictures and rhymes and help us remember important life lessons or just indulge us in silliness. In every way we can think of, we encourage students to develop a love for books – from preschool to college. From that strong foundation, we Christians teach our children to value the Bible above all books as it contains words of life.

By contrast, the seminary students I teach were not encouraged to read as young children. Books were boring, and access to books was problematic. Most homes had few. Several people expressed frustration at the often archaic native authors they were forced to read in Croatian classes in high school, which turned them off to reading in general. Even many of the books written for primary school children were dark and depressing. Consequently, they never read outside of school assignments. They never read books for pleasure.

Can you imagine that?

This lack of emphasis on reading is noticeable in the community at large as well. While you will occasionally see someone reading a newspaper on the tram or in a waiting room at the doctor's, you rarely see anyone reading a book – not even college students. I am only now beginning to notice how much I stand out when I go armed with books for myself and my kids to read while we wait. These waiting times often stretch into hours, and there are no magazines in the waiting rooms. When I look around, mostly I see people waiting stoically with bored expressions on their faces.

Those who have talked to me about this, first view it as a problem of money. Because they are poor, they don't have books. Certainly they didn't have inexpensive paperbacks they could buy at school the way I did even with my meager allowance. But there are libraries here.

Some of my seminary students have noted that their attitudes towards books have improved because of their interaction with Americans and our love of books as well as the better quality of books they now encounter. Fortunately, at the seminary, they also have access to a library with tens of thousands of theological books, and they are beginning to see the potential that books of all kinds can bring.

When you think about it, it is not surprising that a formerly communist nation did not encourage the kind of reading we value. After all, that could lead to creative thinking, something which was very much suppressed even here in the former Yugoslavia which was better than most communist nations.

Though communism is proven as a failed system, it is still very much in the hearts and minds of the people, and is being passed to the next generation through the learning styles of the last generation. So even in the first and second grades, teachers do not read books to students the way my teachers read books to me. The concept is truly foreign to educators here. At the teacher's college in town, students still are not allowed access to the stacks of books. They go to a window and request the book they want. Then a worker brings it to them. Imagine that! No meandering among the stacks allowed.

So, while you thank the Lord for books that you have access to, pray for all the peoples in former communist nations that they would overcome this de-emphasis on books. Pray that they would have access to books worthy to be loved.

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, Valerie and Penny.