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**South Branch Reformed Church**

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## TREASURER'S NOTE

The year is nearly over. And what a busy year it has been, especially, completing some major projects. In the late spring, repairs were made to our steeple including a fresh coat of paint and a new cross. In the fall, the chapel roof was replaced. Also, long overdue repairs were made to the crumbling foundation at the parsonage. Thanks to our dedicated property committee members who put things into motion and to the endowment fund investments, we were able to complete these projects to our aging buildings.



However, we still had our regular monthly expenses to pay, which comes out of our current expense budget. I am happy to report that the October pledges were over \$16,000, which is outstanding. Our chicken francaise dinner was an enormous success, making a profit of \$1,936. We started October, \$14,219 in the red, and ended the month, \$5,855 in the red. Way to go South Branch! Keep up the excellent work and we will end 2025 in the black.

May God continue to bless SBRC and its people.

~ Robyn Friedlander

## FLOOD WALL

As 2025 comes to a close, we give thanks that SBRC did not have to worry about potential flooding in our area. In fact, there were zero threats of hurricanes or tropical storms for our area.



While we are happy that we didn't have worry about it this past year, we must not become complacent or lax in our preparations!! So, as we welcome 2026, we need to be realistic and prepared for what might happen. Please be sure to watch for opportunities to practice deploying the Flood Wall around May through June of 2026. As always, we pray that we only have to practice and never actually have to used it. Practicing helps us to be ready in the even that it will be needed.

Bill Munro



- 4 Fred Neske
- 12 Glenn Hicks
- 14 Mary Nunn
- 15 Judith Coates  
Sherry Marlatt
- 17 Pattiann Kletz
- 28 Harriet Seibert
- 31 Barbara Merdinger



- 4 Anthony and Sue  
Cole
- 9 Scott and Vera  
Wengryn



Wednesday,  
December 24<sup>th</sup>

Candlelight  
Service at 8:00pm

## FROM THE PASTOR...

Given the age of our buildings, the property committee remained busy with a variety of projects! The roof over the Chapel (Blue Room) was replaced, the exterior foundation of the Parsonage was re-pointed, and the interior foundation of the Parsonage received some much needed repair, re-pointing, and seal-coating. We extend our thanks to Wagner Roofing and WeatherTest Co. for their professionalism and their wonderful work. Also, deepest thanks to Bill Munro for overseeing the completion of these projects.



As 2026 approaches, there are a number of projects already on the list to be considered and, hopefully, completed! Estimates are being gathered and it is our hope that work will be able to begin in early 2026.

### Parsonage:

- replace the roof of the side porch
- repair/replace the columns, and install a railing on the side porch
- power washing & repainting the Parsonage & the garage

### Church:

- replace the glass in the Sanctuary windows
- re-pointing the steps at the main entrance to the Sanctuary
- repairing/rebuilding the columns on the Education Wing

In the midst of all the property projects, the signs of the Christmas Season are all around us. The bulletin is full of reminders to submit poinsettia orders, bring in community dinner items, donating socks for the homeless, and reserving tickets for “Breakfast with Santa” with our Preschool. Also, there are opportunities to sign-up for the Advent Study, “Christmas in the Parlor”, and Holiday Lights at Norz Farm.



In the midst of all this busyness, I have one request of each of you - slow down, watch, listen, and feel God’s love. I pray that you will take some to appreciate the Seasons of Advent and Christmas. These are special times for the Church as we wait in hope to celebrate the birth of Jesus. We have opportunities to gather in worship, praise, and fellowship as the SBRC family. These are times when our hopes are secured as we celebrate the birth of Jesus with our SBRC family.



As we gather in excitement and anticipation of that is come this Advent and Christmas Season, I look forward to seeing you all, worshiping with you all, and celebrating with all of you! It really is the most wonderful time of the year! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

*Pastor [Signature]*



## 2025 ADOPT A FAMILY!

There is a meme going around that depicts someone being asked “What do you want for Christmas” and the answer is “lately I’ve been into gas and groceries.” It may make you chuckle, but the truth is that it hits close to home for many families – even in our community. For most of us Christmas is a time of overindulgence – of gifts under the tree, filled stockings, and large family gatherings.

Imagine wondering how to be able to celebrate Christmas at all. Who has bath towels as the first item on their Christmas list? Simple things that we all take for granted mean the world to those struggling during this holiday season.

Once again, we are working with the Hillsborough Food Pantry to fulfill some holiday wishes by adopting some of the client families. Each client has submitted a “wish list” of three items each under \$35 to the food pantry. South Branch will be “adopting” 12 of these clients for a total of 48 gifts.

Ornaments with gift tags were distributed on Sunday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>. Please bring your unwrapped gift, with tag attached, and place it under the tree on or before Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>. If you have questions, please speak with Joanne Powell.




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## SBRC COMMITTEES & CHAIRPERSONS

Committee chairpersons are looking for individuals who are interested in helping out, offering new ideas, lending a hand, or even just supporting the current work. Think you could help? Need more information? Wondering if you would be a good fit for a committee? Simply speak with the chairperson or with Pastor Steve.

Worship - Emily Muller

Fellowship & Church Life - Tyson Stramaglia

Christian Education - Dan Davenport

Congregational Care - Holly Kowalenko

Property - Bill Munro

Mission & Social Witness - Irene Foley

Finance & Administration - Joe LiBrizzi

Church Growth & Outreach - Holly Kowalenko

*All help in keeping our committees active is greatly appreciated!!*

## PRESCHOOL NEWS

Merry Christmas! Our favorite time of year has arrived at South Branch. You can feel the excitement of Christmas in the air!

We just finished up our Thanksgiving study with our Thanksgiving Gatherings with our Preschool Families. During the Gatherings the children sang their Thanksgiving songs and shared apple bread and corn bread that were made during school. Each family decorated a feather for our huge Tom Turkey listing all the wonderful things they are grateful for. Families also donated personal items for the food bank. We are certainly thankful for all our Preschool Families.

We have a very exciting December ahead of us. We will start the month off with our Breakfast with Santa on December 6<sup>th</sup>. This event is a favorite of not only our current and former students but also the staff here at South Branch. All proceeds of the breakfast with benefit the Preschool. The students will then learn all about the Road to Bethlehem and the special visitors they met along the way. On December 16<sup>th</sup> the students will perform in our annual Christmas Program.



When the children return from Christmas break, we will start the year off with sign study. This study is so much fun as we love noticing all of the signs that we see everyday – even some right in our building. Enrollment for the 2026-2027 school year will begin at the end of January. If there is anything you would like to find out more about, please feel free to call at (908) 369-7885 or email at [preschool@sbrchurch.org](mailto:preschool@sbrchurch.org).

Wishing you all a blessed Christmas and happy new year.

~ Jenn Feaster

## SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

The Sunday School is having a wonderful year!

On October 26<sup>th</sup> the children celebrated Halloween. Starting out in the Sanctuary with our annual Costume Parade for the congregation before heading downstairs for some fun and games. Our Senior class led the games for our younger students in the Fireside Room and then proceeded to the Dining Room to carve pumpkins. Our Mini and Junior classes enjoyed some activities and crafts in the Fireside Room, each one taking home a pumpkin courtesy of Norz Hill Farm, thank you Norz Family!



On Sunday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, Jessica Estevez led a program-wide event to commemorate All Saint's Day. Hopefully you had a chance to check out our creative memorial collages on the Sunday School bulletin board.

We are excited to meet up with our Church family at Norz Hill Farm & Market for the Holiday Lights hayride at 5:30 PM on December 6<sup>th</sup>. Sign up on the *Church News* bulletin board, tickets are \$12/per person. All are welcome!

Our students will spend the month of December learning God's Word and preparing for Christmas. Our Christmas Program will be presented to the Congregation on December 21<sup>st</sup> during Worship. This is a school-wide, rehearsal-free production and we welcome audience participation!

There will be no Sunday School class on December 28<sup>th</sup>. We'll be excited to welcome the students back on January 4<sup>th</sup>.

All children ages 2-1/2 – 7th grade are invited to join us on Sunday mornings. The Sunday School staff is excited to continue along this journey with their students.

~ Tracy Davenport

## WOMEN'S GROUP

The Women's Group met Sunday, November 9th during coffee hour to clip stamps while enjoying the yummy homemade treats prepared by Patti Kletz, Judy Coates, and Jan Hubscher. A total of 230 stamps were sent to the Alliance Stamp Ministry in Fort Myers, Florida, to raise money to publish Sunday School materials in Spanish. As always, our deepest thanks to the faithful stamp savers in the congregation. You're the best.

Also, since Sunday, November 2nd, the Women's Group is collecting new warm socks for the homeless in Hillsborough Township. This is the eighth year that the socks have been collected, and last year we gave 178 pairs of socks to the township. The drive will continue through December 7th. Once again, our thanks to the generosity of the congregation in meeting the basic needs of people nearby.



Finally, the River Blindness organization still needs our support. When we began this mission project several years ago, coins were still plentiful in our society. Now they are becoming rare, and pennies are no longer made. So perhaps you can now consider putting a dollar bill in the container by the sanctuary steps to help a child such as the toddler Jorine in Uganda who is blind with cataracts. She is unable to leave her house because the sun is too bright and she can't see where she's going. And even when she stays in her house, she trips and falls, almost at times into the open fire used for cooking. Her society thinks she is "cursed," and her father has abandoned her. A simple surgery can fix her problem, but her mother doesn't have enough money. This is just one example. There are many more. Please consider donating what you can.



## THE LEGEND OF THE CANDY CANE

According to legend, there was a candy maker who wanted to invent a candy that was witness to Christ.

First, he used a hard candy because Christ is the Rock of Ages. This hard candy was shaped so it would resemble a "J" for Jesus, or, turned upside down, a shepherd's staff. He made it white to represent the purity of Christ.



Finally, a red stripe was added to represent the blood Christ shed for the sins of the world, and three thinner red stripes for the stripes He received on our behalf when the Roman soldiers whipped Him. Sometimes a green stripe is added as a reminder that Jesus is a gift from God.

The flavor of the candy cane is peppermint, which is similar to hyssop. Hyssop is a mint that was used in the Old Testament for purification and sacrifice. Jesus is the pure Lamb of God who came to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

So, every time you see a candy cane, remember the message of the candy maker: Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, is the sinless rock of ages who suffered and died for our sins.

**The Legend of the Candy Cane:** Published by Chuck Gibson original story text anonymous source.

Dec 25, 2021 | Features | Lovelandbeacon.com



# BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

## South Branch Reformed Church Preschool

870 River Road, Hillsborough, NJ 08844

**Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup>**

**8:00am to 10:30am**

To alleviate long waits please sign up for a tentative seating time.

3 Seatings:      8:15      9:15      10:00

Admission: \$15.00    Adults  
              \$10.00    Children (ages 3 to 8)  
              FREE      Children (2 and under)

Menu: Pancakes, Bacon, Sausage, Coffee, Tea, Orange & Apple Juice

### PRINTED COMPLIMENTARY PICTURE

(RECEIVE A COPY VIA E-MAIL TO SHARE WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS)

Limited number of tickets available.

For ticket orders please call the Preschool office (908-369-7885),  
email: [Preschool@SBRChurch.org](mailto:Preschool@SBRChurch.org) or return this order form.

Proceeds benefit the South Branch Reformed Church Preschool

Join us for an evening of  
Holiday Fellowship  
with your SBRC Family!

## CHRISTMAS IN THE PARLOR

Sunday, December 14th  
at 5:00 PM

Please bring an appetizer or dessert to  
share!

Beverages will be provided!

*Feel free to bring adult beverages.*

Questions???

Please speak with Sherry Marlatt, Patti  
Kletz, or Jan Hubscher.



# December 2025



**Sun      Mon      Tue      Wed      Thu      Fri      Sat**

	1	2	3	4	5	6 <i>Breakfast with Santa from 8:00am to 10:30am</i>  Holiday Lights Hayride at 5:30pm in Norz Farm
7 Communion  Confirmation at 7pm in the Parlor	8  Lectio Divina at 7pm in the Parlor	9  Advent Study at 7pm in the Parlor	10  Knit, Pray, Crochet 7:00pm at Stockman home	11  Choir at 7:30pm in Parlor	12	13 Poinsettia Pick-Up
14 Poinsettias in Sanctuary Sacrament of Baptism Cong. Meeting Christmas in the Parlor at 5pm	15  Advent Study at 7pm in the Parlor	16 <i>Preschool Christmas Program at 11am &amp; 6:30pm</i>  Newsletter Items Due!	17  Consistory at 7:30pm in Parlor	18  Choir at 7:30pm in Parlor	19	20
21 Sunday School Christmas Program  Confirmation at 7pm in the Parlor	22 <i>Preschool Closed until Jan. 4, 2026</i>  Lectio Divina at 7pm in the Parlor	23  Advent Study at 7pm in the Parlor	24  Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 8:00pm	25 	26	27
28 No Sunday School	29	30	31			

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## 2026 CHURCH DINNERS



*Live & Love Like Jesus*

Rev. Stephen Eckert ~ Pastor  
Mr. John Colaiacovo ~ Music Director  
Mrs. Karen Abbatiello ~ Church Secretary  
Mrs. Jennifer Feaster ~ Preschool Director  
Mrs. Maritza Acosta ~ Sexton

January 17 - Roast Pork  
March 14 - Corned Beef  
April 25 - Roast Beef  
September 12 - Ham  
October 17 - Chicken Cordon Bleu  
November 21 - Turkey

*We are truly grateful for your  
continued support. We look forward  
to seeing & serving you!*