



PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

DECEMBER 2020, VOLUME 68—ISSUE 12

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

From Reverend Troy Hauser Brydon

This will be an Advent and Christmas unlike any other. COVID has made sure of that. I'm choosing to look at our situation as an opportunity for us to be intentional about observing a holy Advent. While we are severely limited in our ability to do things in person, the vast majority of us are home with our schedules far more free than usual. Of course, I will miss much of what makes this season special, but I'm going to do all I can to make this season what it should be. Not the commercialism. Not the trips to visit Santa. It's a season about the coming of Jesus Christ into our world, bringing light into the darkness and hope to our sorrow. Our church will be doing all we can to point to that eternal truth in this season, and I pray you make space to join in us in worship and prayer this Advent.

I urge you to mark your calendars and join with your church to prepare you and your household for Jesus' coming. Let me highlight much of what we will be doing this December, beginning with worship. Of course, we will have **live-streamed worship on Sundays at 10 a.m.** via Facebook, marking the four Sundays of Advent. You can watch those at your convenience later on Facebook or via fpg.org. On the first three Wednesdays of December, we will hold **midweek Evening Liturgy services**. These will be live on Facebook as well, and they are a chance for some quiet and prayer in the middle of the week. On Monday, December 21, we will have our annual **Service of Light and Hope**, once again online. This service is a space for those grieving on the way to Christmas. On **Christmas Eve** we will hold two services. At 4:00 we will have a version of the Gathering Service. At 8:00 we will have a traditional service, working in video of our choir singing and doing all we can to make Christmas Eve feel as normal as we can. As with all things during this pandemic, things are subject to change. We are still coming up with ideas that we might be able to implement closer to Christmas Eve to help you stay connected to the season, so stay tuned. We know worship is a vital piece of what makes Advent and Christmas special.

There will also be opportunities for personal and family devotions this Advent. Our Faith Formation Committee is releasing an **Advent Devotional** written by members of our church. I know I am looking forward to spending some time daily in the prayerful meditations of our congregation. Our **December Spiritual Practice** is available for pickup at the Clinton Street entrance. It's an Advent wreath that you can color and construct, along with weekly reflections on the meaning of Advent. Additionally, we are having **live storytelling on the Sundays of Advent over Zoom**. While these are intended for children and their families, all ages are welcome to join in.

It's been a hard year, but we have much to be grateful for. We also follow a Savior who enters our brokenness and brings wholeness. My prayer for you, dear church, is that you seek Jesus in the coming weeks. Let's let this Advent be transformative.

In Christ,
Pastor Troy

Upcoming Events

- Dec. 2** Advent Midweek Meditation
- Dec. 6** Giving Tree Gift Card Deadline
Children's Zoom Meeting
- Dec. 9** Advent Midweek Meditation
- Dec. 13** Children's Zoom Meeting
- Dec. 16** Advent Midweek Meditation
- Dec. 20** Children's Zoom Meeting
- Dec. 21** Service of Light & Hope
- Dec. 24** Christmas Eve Services
4 p.m.—Gathering Service
8 p.m.—Traditional Service

FPC Financial Update as of Oct. 31, 2020

Offerings Received

Year-to-Date:

818,955

Expenditures Paid

Year-to-Date:

792,957

To all who give to support the mission of the church—thank you, you make the ministry go! If you are not a regular giver, please consider becoming one. Not only is it healthy for the church, it is also spiritually healthy for you! Giving online is easy. Just follow this link: <https://bit.ly/2xTbGMG> or call (842-6760) We would love to help!

Church & Pastor Contact Information

Pastor Troy Hauser Brydon:

616-604-2617,
church: 616-842-6760 x1005,
email: TroyHB@fpgh.org

Pastor Kristine Aragon Bruce:

616-604-2618,
church: 616-842-6760 x1006,
email: KristineAB@fpgh.org

Church Office:

616-842-6760,
staff@fpgh.org

Prayer Concerns:

Brian Anderson and Joan Tandler, Mary Fullerton, Anne Guimond, Marilew Helmers, Beverly Purcell, Lisa Stoner, and Sandy Teunis

Our Sympathy:

to Tom and Susan Joelson Lentz and family on the death of Tom's mother, Leona Lentz, on November 4, 2020.

to Tim and Jane Stoeper and family on the death of Tim's mother, Dorothy Stoeper, on November 14, 2020

to the family and friends of Mary Coats, who passed away on November 20. The family is planning a memorial service in the summer of 2021.

to Kay McCrea and family, on the death of her husband, Joe McCrea, on November 26, 2020.

Thank you:

"Thank you to everyone for the many prayers, cards, and support during my recent illness. I am grateful for you all."

-Cheryl Wilkinson



Every month, we publish birthdays of our members and friends who are no longer able to come to church regularly. Bless their special day with a card from their church family!

Dec. 28 Ernie Schroeder
17046 Lloyd's Bayou Dr.
Spring Lake, MI 49456



Meijer Simply Give

Love in Action of the Tri-Cities is once again being blessed by Meijer's *Simply Give* program. It is running now through January 2.

The purchase of a \$10 *Simply Give* card at the Grand Haven Meijer store will help raise funds that are then converted into food-only gift cards used by Love In Action to stock its central pantry and by its 9 area church pantries to stock their shelves.

Double match days are December 1 and December 12. That means for every \$10 card purchased, Meijer will double match it. The total donation will be \$30 per card up to a maximum donation of \$10,000. Your help by purchasing a card will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, you may contact Love in Action at love@loveinactiontricity.org or (616) 846-2701.

Church Staff Update



Hello! My name is Kerri Roberts and I am a lifelong Michigan resident and graduated from Mona Shores High School. In 1996 I married my won-

derful husband, Matt, and we moved to Lansing while he attended law school. I am so thankful we were able to move back to the Muskegon area to be closer to our families before we had our children.

In 2006 we welcomed our first son, Cameron. He is our resident bookworm. Cameron also loves video games, coding and while he may be the smallest member of the Fruitport band he plays the largest instrument - the tuba!

Our family expanded in 2010 with the birth of our son Drew. During the spring and fall Drew can be found playing defense on the soccer field. If he's not playing video games with his brother he will be somewhere kicking a ball or cuddling a cat.

Speaking of animals, we are also a rescue family. We have two cats, Mario and Jedi and a big black dog Finnigan. We adopted Finnigan when he was five months old not knowing he was part Great Dane! He is now over 100 pounds and the largest lap dog I have ever met.

If I'm not spending time at home with my family I enjoy scrapbooking. I am about five years behind but one day I'll catch up! I also love to watch movies, play board games (our current favorite is Pandemic), read, run, crochet and do diamond art.

I am so grateful for the warm welcome I have received from the staff at First Presbyterian and I look forward to meeting more of the congregation once this COVID craziness is over.

Kerri started work at FPGH on November 15 as an office assistant. Be sure to say hi when you call or when you can once again stop in!



Advent & Christmas Worship Schedule

Although we won't be worshipping in person this Advent season, we invite you to join us in worship and prayer as we live stream our services on Facebook. You may also watch the services at your convenience later on Facebook or via fpg.org.

Advent Midweek Meditations Wednesdays, Dec. 2, 9, & 16 6:00 p.m.

These services are a chance for some quiet and prayer in the middle of the week.

Service of Light and Hope Monday, Dec. 21 6:00 p.m.

A service for those who are grieving on the way to Christmas

Christmas Eve Services 4:00 p.m.

This will be a version of the Gathering Service

8:00 p.m.

Traditional Service with recordings of the Geneva Choir

We know worship is a vital piece of what makes Advent and Christmas special, so stay tuned as we try to come up with new ideas to stay connected to the season.

From Rev. Kristine Aragon Bruce

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." -John 1:1-5

Dear Church Family,

A couple of years ago I went for a run early in the morning. Since it wasn't too long after sunrise and it was considerably light outside, I decided not to wear any reflective gear making me visible to other walkers, cyclists and of course drivers. I was doing fine until a short stretch of my run where the running path briefly ended and blended into the shoulder of a busy road. It was then that I felt a car slow down as it approached me and a woman rolled down her window to yell: "I can't see you and that is dangerous!" I thanked her for her honesty as she drove away. Needless to say I felt a bit sheepish, but also grateful that I got home safely that morning.

Reflecting (no pun intended) more on that moment this is what the light of Christ does for us. The light of Christ continues to shine upon us and guides us even when we think we don't need it. Even when we choose not to accept Christ's light, much like I chose to not wear any reflective gear that morning, Christ's light is still with us and still shines brightly. Thank goodness the light of Christ burns brightly regardless of whether or not we choose to believe or accept his light.

I pray we are surprised by what the light of Christ illuminates for us this Advent season. While the world looks a lot different than it did a year ago and none of us could have predicted last March just how long COVID-19 would alter our lives, my hope and prayer for all of us is that we will be surprised and comforted by Christ's presence in our lives and how Christ remains at work in each of us. Even though we can't gather for worship, small groups or for fellowship over coffee and cookies, I pray you would be surprised by the ways we can still feel connected to one another. This will take some creativity on our part, but I pray we'd be open to Christ's leading this area! It could also be that you feel you're doing fine, but like me on that early morning run, you realized you needed Christ's light more than you realized. As always Christ calls us to love and care for those in need. Perhaps a new Christmas tradition will arise for you in the form of giving or serving one of our local mission partners such as Love in Action in a new way.

While we most likely aren't able to do most (if any) of our usual Christmas traditions I hope and pray we are still able to reflect on the true meaning of this season: In the midst of deep darkness in the form of a whimper of a helpless infant, God crashed onto the world scene. Since then, no darkness including countless pandemics or the worst atrocities committed by humanity, could ever extinguish the light of Jesus Christ.

Grateful to be on this journey of faith alongside you,

Pastor Kristine

Year End Giving and 2021 Pledging

This is historically the most generous in terms of giving to the church. The uncertainty of the pandemic has made this year a challenge for the church, and we need your help as we end 2020 and plan for 2021. As you are able, we hope you'll help us finish 2020 strong. It is also essential to hear from our members about pledges for 2021, which will help us hold steady and emerge well from the pandemic.

As you are meeting with financial/tax advisors and considering year-end charitable contributions, please consider the following giving opportunities which are open to receive the blessings of any and all gifts:

- 2020 General Operating Fund
- 2021 Prepaid Giving
- Designated Gifts (Hand2Hand, Omega Fund, Deacons, Pastor's Discretionary)

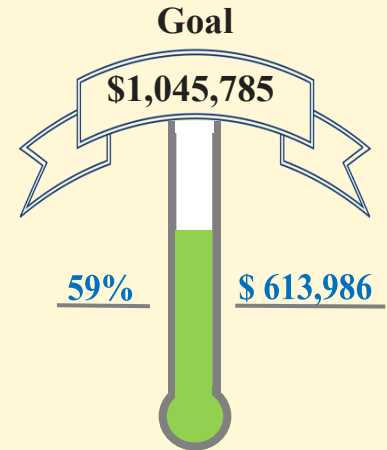
Please mark all checks accordingly. Checks must be postmarked or delivered to the church by December 31, 2020. Pledges can be turned in any time. Forms are available at the church, online, and through Realm.

Thank you for your generous support of the ministries of First Presbyterian Church.

Questions? Please contact Kelli Jullie at kjullie@fpgh.org or (616) 842-6760.

Giving online is easy! Simply go to:
www.fpgh.org/support-fpc/giving-to-fpgh

Call to Generosity Campaign 2021



As of November 30, 2020, we have reached 59% of our goal for 2021.

If you are one of the 177 households who have already pledged, **Thank You!** If you have not turned in a pledge, it's never too late! Pledge cards are located in the office or you may pledge online at fpgh.org.

First Presbyterian Church of Grand Haven

508 Franklin Avenue
Grand Haven, MI 49417

Phone: 616.842.6760

www.fpgh.org • staff@fpgh.org

Sunday Morning Worship Service:
Watch live on Facebook at 10 a.m.
(@FirstPresGH), or watch the video recording
on our website (wwwfpgh.org)

Staff and Leadership:

Rev. Troy Hauser Brydon, Senior Pastor
Rev. Kristine Aragon Bruce, Associate Pastor
Maryanne Beery, Director of Music & Fine Arts
Sally Bryant, Communications Coordinator
Laura Burns, Children's Ministries Director
Dan Coulier, Maintenance Director
Marc Felt, Gathering Band Leader
Rob Hlebinsky, Organist
Kelli Jullie, Church Administrator
Maddie Lambert, Youth & Young Adult Ministries Director
Karen Nienhouse, Congregational Care Ministries
Christina Ramones, Assistant to the Administrator
Kerri Roberts, Office Assistant
Mark Sanchez, Church Host
Sally Segers, Joyful Noise Director

Tidings article deadline for January 2021 issue: December 23, 2020

Submittals, suggestions or comments: sbryant@fpgh.org or staff@fpgh.org

FPC editorial staff reserves the right to accept or decline, edit for length and content all submitted material.

Update from the Session

Stay in the loop about the actions of your Session! Following is a synopsis of the main points of the last Session meeting:

Highlights:

- We elected our four elder commissioners to the December presbytery meeting.
- We discussed the current generosity campaign and considered what could be done to engage more broadly with the congregation on generosity, particularly in the pandemic.
- We discussed a proposal for a complete redesign of our church's website and authorized funds for that redesign. That work should be complete in the first quarter of 2021.

It is our joy to serve Christ as the Session for First Presbyterian Church. Please continue to hold us in your prayers.

In Our Church

The Hope of Advent Sunday Morning Class

Hal Fitzgerald and Warren Trimble invite you to join them for a Sunday morning Advent class on Zoom.

During the class they'll be exploring Bible passages related to the *Hope of Advent* sermon series. Class will run from 9:00 to 9:40 a.m. to allow participants to watch the worship service at 10:00 a.m.

Please contact Hal at hfitz@sbcglobal.net or Warren at warrentrimble@gmail.com or the Church office for the Zoom meeting link.



December Spiritual Practice: Build-Your-Own Advent Wreath

For the month of December, our spiritual practice will be a build-your-own Advent wreath with colorable candles. This practice is designed for all ages to reflect on the moments of hope, peace, joy, and love that were present throughout this tumultuous year, and how we can seek these out in the coming year. Each wreath comes with a collection of prayers (from our own Jess Hauser-Brydon) and reflection questions to return to throughout each week of Advent. Wreath kits and reflection questions are available to pick up at the church during open hours and on Sundays. If you have your own Advent wreath, feel free to use it and email Tommy Langejans (thomas.langejans@westernsem.edu) if you would like a copy of the prayers and reflection questions.



Catching Falling Stars: Poems for COVID and Beyond

Since the start of the COVID pandemic, Dale Swihart (retired PCUSA pastor) has been writing blank verse poetry. Some of the early poems were posted on the church's Facebook page. The poems have also been combined with his photos. He has now put the first 3 months of writings into book form. That book is available through Amazon.

If you are interested in purchasing a copy, enter Dale C. Swihart, Jr. in the Amazon site search line, or enter this link in your browser search bar: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B08P29KMTL>. The full title of the book is *Catching Falling Stars: Poems for COVID and Beyond*. You may also direct inquiries to Dale at daleswihart@gmail.com.



Presbyterian Disaster Assistance at Work

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is busy using our support from the One Great Hour of Sharing offering to provide assistance nationally and internationally, working with local presbyteries and congregations as appropriate. More information about this agency can be found at <http://pda.pcusa.org>.

Activities in Michigan have included response to the Flint water crisis and to spring flooding and tornadoes in 2019.

Current National efforts include the following:

- **Wildfires in Colorado and California**
PDA has shared information on resources to support the presbyteries of Denver and of Plains and Peaks congregations and communities. While at this time there are no reports of church damage, many congregations have members and staff that have evacuated and many congregations are providing direct support to evacuees. PDA is in communication with all affected California presbyteries. National Response Team members are virtually deployed to assist the presbyteries. We have disbursed several grants to address immediate needs such as feeding programs and emergency housing for displaced residents.
- **Responding to Hurricanes Sally and Laura**
Prior to COVID-19, PDA deployed National Response Team members who would travel to Presbyteries following a disaster. Now they are being virtually deployed. They are helping presbyteries in disaster prone areas to recruit, train and prepare volunteers who are willing to respond to a nearby disaster. These are "commuter volunteers" who typically provide their own transportation to a work site, and return home the same day to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

Internationally they are responding to Hurricane Eta in Central America and to the effects of COVID-19:

- PDA has been in contact with our partners affected by Hurricane Eta in Central America. This hurricane has caused great damage in many low-income communities. Continued rains and strong winds have wreaked havoc on several rural communities, especially in coastal cities. We look forward to supporting our partners in these countries in assisting so many affected communities.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance enables congregations and mission partners of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to witness to the healing love of Christ through caring for communities adversely affected by crises and catastrophic events. For more information on Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and how you can help, go to the PC(USA) website: <https://pda.pcusa.org/>

A "Green" Christmas!

With the invasive species COVID-19 polluting our personal worlds, the idea of being earth-friendly for the holidays seems like too much. Here are easy ways to be more sustainable AND make a difference on some social issues, too:

- Shop local, look for handcrafted, Made in the USA and reusable gifts. Dune Dollars (paper!) are a great idea and can be bought at the Chamber of Commerce. You'll cut gas use, get outdoors to walk and support our area economy.
- Think through and don't rush on-line shopping. "I need it now" and "free" returns increase the number of diesel trucks polluting your neighborhood and those near warehouses and depots.
- Reimagine cardboard boxes! Use the Give Back Box program; see givebackbox.com/works. Save cardboard to mulch next summer's garden or compost - see bit.ly/32qS8. Big boxes trigger creativity in kids: ships, forts, dollhouses and more for cheap recycled fun.

Don't let your Christmas tree be the only "green" in your holidays!

From the Earth Care Committee



Children's Illustrated Christmas

Calling children of all ages! We need your help illustrating the Christmas story! Your drawings will be used in a slideshow to help tell the story of Christmas.

Using unlined paper, in landscape position (long sides of paper at the top and bottom) and in BRIGHT colors (markers are best), draw one scene from the Christmas story: Luke 2:1-20, Matthew 2:1-12

Please return your drawings (unfolded) to the basket in the Clinton Street entrance (open Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-4 p.m.) The sooner the better, but no later than Monday, December 7.

Questions? Contact Laura Burns, lburns@fpgh.org



Children's Sunday Morning Zoom

Sundays in Advent:

Nov. 29, Dec. 6, Dec. 13, Dec 20

11:15 a.m. on Zoom

Each Sunday in Advent we will be hosting a Sunday morning Zoom meeting for kids and families. Join us as we share the Christmas story and wonder together.

Join us on Zoom at 11:15 a.m. Sunday mornings throughout Advent. Contact Laura Burns for the Zoom link, lburns@fpgh.org.



The Giving Tree Ministry

The Giving Tree Ministry is an expansion of our previous Christmas Angel Tree program. The Giving Tree ministry will still include requests from Salvation Army but will also include Love In Action, the People Center, Central High and possibly West Michigan Prison Fellowship and Ottawa Children's Advocacy Program.

Instead of purchasing gifts this year, The Giving Tree Ministry is asking for donations of gift cards in the amount of \$25 each from Meijer, Walmart or Target. These gift cards can be dropped off in the church office (or placed in the drop box inside the Clinton Street double doors) **until December 6.**

Thank you for your continued generosity in support of this ministry!



A way to increase your giving without spending more is to purchase the gift cards through Joyful Noise Childcare. Simply call the JN office (616-847-6600) to purchase the card(s), and they will deliver the gift cards to the church office. Joyful Noise earns money with each card purchased.



**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

508 Franklin Avenue
Grand Haven, MI 49417
616-842-6760

Sunday Worship:

10:00 a.m. on our Facebook page: @FirstPresGH

or watch the recorded service on our

website: fpg.org

December 2020

deliver to: (or current resident)

Christmas Flower Dedications



Your flower dedication contributions make it possible to decorate the Sanctuary, Gathering Area and Lounge with the beautiful flowers and greenery of Christmas.

Anyone wishing to make a dedication to be listed in the Christmas Eve bulletin may do so by completing the form below and returning it by Wednesday, December 16, to the church office or by dropping it in the Sunday offering plate. You may also submit your dedication and payment through Realm, our church information software program.

Please print the name of each person you wish to honor, along with your name and telephone number. Feel free to use additional forms as necessary. Suggested donation: \$12/per dedication.

DEDICATION 1. Please check one: in celebration in honor in memory of:

NAME: _____

DEDICATION 2. Please check one: in celebration in honor in memory of:

NAME: _____

GIVEN BY: _____

PHONE/EMAIL: _____

Make check payable to: First Presbyterian Church, with memo notation: "Christmas dedication"