



PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

JULY 2020, VOLUME 68—ISSUE 7

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

From Reverend Troy Hauser Brydon

Worship matters. The most Presbyterian of catechisms, the Westminster, begins with this question – “What is the chief end of man?” – and it answers, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” Worship serves many purposes and meets many needs, but chief among them is that God created us to worship. It is core to who we are.

Worship has continued every Sunday and on many Wednesdays since we were last able to gather in person. We certainly miss worshipping in person, but live streaming worship is still worship.

I urge you not to take that for granted, particularly in this season when interaction interpersonally is hard to do. Still, I miss you, and I know you miss gathering together. Live streamed worship cannot replicate the experience of sharing space, prayer, and song with the gathered people of God.

I do have some good news for us. The Session has been prayerfully discerning how and when we can start bringing people back into the sanctuary for worship, and **the Session recently adopted a phased approach to returning to in-person worship that will begin on July 19 at 10:00 a.m.** We will have space for around 50 worshippers each Sunday, and there will be a system for signing up to come to worship. If things go well for a few weeks and if we have the proven ability to sanitize the sanctuary, then we will consider returning to two services.

Last month almost 250 of you responded to an online survey about the life of the church in this pandemic. Thank you for sharing your opinions. One of the questions was about what concerned you the most about returning to in-person worship. By far the top concern was others not wearing a mask or practicing social distancing (78%). The next two were the number of people in attendance (59%) and pre-existing health conditions (26%). We believe the plan for returning to worship seriously addresses these significant concerns.

Being wise and safe in how we handle ourselves is going to be essential. Our top concern should be considering how to keep others safe and healthy, which aligns well Jesus’ command that we should love our neighbors as ourselves. We are making sacrifices in order to preserve and promote the well-being of our neighbors. I also strongly urge all considering a return to worship to take a good look at your own health and susceptibility to getting sick. Worship matters, but if each individual doesn’t take



(Continued on page 3)

In Our Church

PAGE 2

Church & Pastor Contact Information

Pastor Troy:

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

Pastor Kristine:

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

Church Office:

616-842-6760,
staff@fpgh.org

Happy 100th Birthday Virginia Weenink!

On July 4, Virginia Weenink is celebrating her 100th birthday!

To help her celebrate, send a card to:
4905 Rosabelle Beach Avenue,
Holland, MI 49424



Are You Missing Our Worship Services?

If you or another church member you know has not been able to listen to or view the online worship services, please contact the church office at **616-842-6760**.

Someone from the Worship Committee will get back to you to discuss what other alternatives might work for you.

Prayer Concerns:

Christine Bahl, Carol Folkert,
Karen Fox, Stan Johnson,
Barbara Race, Jim and Sandy Teunis,
Gerry VanStratt, and Carol Winton

Thank you:

"We want to give a big thank you to our church family for all of your prayers, cards, phone calls, emails, gift cards, and meals following Scott's surgery. He is doing great! We appreciate and love each one of you."

Love, Deb and Scott Stanley

July/August Upper Room Devotionals

...are now available!

Pick one up from the rack in the Clinton Street entrance at church.

Plastic Free July

Join millions of people reducing their plastic waste.

Plastic Free July is a global movement that helps millions of people be part of the solution to plastic pollution so we can have cleaner streets, oceans, and beautiful communities. Will you be part of Plastic Free July by choosing to refuse single-use plastics?

Plastic Free July provides resources and ideas to help you (and millions of others around the world) reduce single-use plastic waste everyday at home, work, school, and even at your local café.

This movement has inspired over 120 million participants in more than 177 countries. You making a small change will collectively make a massive difference to our communities. You can choose to refuse single-use plastics in July (and beyond!). Best of all, being part of Plastic Free July will help you to find great alternatives that can become new habits forever.



Go to plasticfreejuly.org and take the challenge!

Ways to Give

The church is managing its resources carefully, and your generosity will allow us to be strong in this time and emerge even stronger when this period ends.

Until we can again worship together and you can offer your gifts in person, methods of giving to the church's ministries include:

1. Mailing a check (508 Franklin, Grand Haven, MI 49417)
2. Giving online through Realm or by following this link: <https://onrealm.org/FPGH/-/give/now>
3. Dropping off your check to the new deposit box located inside the first set of doors on Clinton Street
4. Text to Give. **Texting FPGH to 73256** will link you to our secure giving page.

Thank you for your support!

From Rev. Troy Hauser Brydon

PAGE 3

(Continued from page 1)

seriously these very real health risks, then we are jeopardizing our personal health and the health of those around us. Let's be careful because that's how we show God's love to each other.

Included with this article is a column highlighting the measures the Session is expecting worshippers to take if you choose to return in person. Please read them carefully and know that these are required. I know we'd all love to return to worship the way it was earlier this year. That's going to take time and likely a vaccine. For now, it's a joy to think we'll get to see each other again.

In Christ,
Pastor Troy

What to Expect for In-Person Worship

- Everyone will be wearing face-masks.
- People will sign-up the week prior to the service.
- Seating will be assigned to promote social distancing.
- All worship aids will be on the screen.
- There will be music but no congregational singing.
- There will be no nursery, no children's programming, and no coffee hour.
- Efforts will be made to make all the elements of the service no-contact.

From Rev. Kristine Aragon Bruce

Dear Church Family,

I'm tired and I bet you are too. There are times I'd like hide away in a hole in order to turn off my anger about systemic racism, COVID-19, or not being able to see my family in Seattle this year. I know it's perfectly fine and necessary to take a mental break. It's called a Sabbath. There is a difference, however, between taking a Sabbath and avoiding God's call to love our neighbors.

It's easy to avoid thinking about COVID-19 when our beaches are once again crowded. It's easy to avoid thinking about systemic racism as worldwide protests are no longer the major headlines. The reality, however, is that systemic racism and COVID-19 are still with us and only one can be made better by a vaccine. As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God." (*Micah 6:8*). It can be overwhelming wondering how any of us can make a difference in regard to systemic racism. Each one of us can start by listening and learning from people of color. Many of us have participated in the 21-Day Race Challenge where we've read, listened or watched resources by or about people of color. It doesn't seem like much, but it's a good place to start. The good news is that [Myers Park Presbyterian Church](https://myersparkpres.org), which organized the 21-Day Race challenge, has agreed to leave up all of the challenge resources on their website indefinitely (myersparkpres.org).

As for COVID-19 we can "love mercy" and "walk humbly with God" by sacrificing our own comfort by wearing a mask in crowded areas, especially indoors, for the health of others and by continuing to practice proper social distancing. It's an inconvenience, but when we're talking about protecting the health of others it's a small price to pay.

To summarize, it is perfectly fine to take a mental break or do whatever you need to do to be rejuvenated. We're all going to need it and we're only going to get it from Jesus Christ himself. The Christian life is not easy and many of us are finding this out more than ever during our present trying times. If we look at the Bible, however, all those who took their faith seriously had lives that were far from easy, and instead endured imprisonment, persecution and even death. But even in the midst of it all their faith was strengthened as they relied on Jesus Christ to keep moving forward. Let's be sure to do the same.

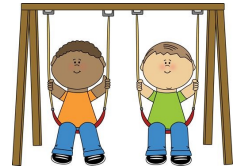
Grateful to be on this journey of faith with you,

Pastor Kristine

Playground Fundraiser

This past winter the Session approved a plan to redo our two playground areas. We were set to begin fundraising for those playgrounds when COVID-19 hit the area. Now that we have had a couple of months to evaluate how things are going, we are ready to raise funds for this playground.

Our hope is to raise \$20,000 from the members of First Presbyterian Church. Are you able to give a gift of \$500 or \$200 or \$50 or \$2 towards this project? If so, please send a check to the church specifying "playground." The Session has approved matching your giving from the proceeds of the Alpha Fund. For every dollar you give, the Alpha fund will contribute two! Fundraising will also be happening among Joyful Noise families and alumni.



Let's do this! Won't it be wonderful to have improved play spaces for our children?

Update from the Session

Session met twice in June. Highlights from these meetings include:

- The adoption of a phased return to worship plan, with the initial Sunday for that return slated for July 19th at 10:00 a.m.
- The renaming of the Adult Education Committee to the Faith Formation Committee, which is a more accurate title for the breadth of ministry performed by this committee.
- The redesignation of the youth mission deposit to mission support for Wayfinder Missions, the organization that plans and hosts international mission trips.
- Continued discussion on how to best support Joyful Noise and its staff this summer as they return to work with lower enrollment.
- The decision to proceed with fundraising for the planned play yard improvements, which was slated to begin the week Covid-19 stopped everything around us.

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

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
Rob Andersen, Worship Assistant
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, Membership Services
Christina Ramones, Assistant to the Administrator
Mark Sanchez, Church Host
Sally Segers, Joyful Noise Director

Tidings article deadline for August 2020 issue: July 20, 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.

Once a Month Gatherings for Youth Grades 5-12

Weather permitting, we will be meeting once a month in person outside FPGH for small groups. These will be times to check in with peers and youth leaders. Students are asked to bring their own chair and snack for our time together. We will provide popsicles! Bathrooms in the church building are open for emergencies only, so please plan accordingly. 🤔

Dates:

- 5/6th: Wednesday, July 8 from 6:30-7:15
- 7/8th: Wednesday, July 15 from 6:30-7:15
- High School: Wednesday, July 22 from 6:30-7:15

Continuing to Grow Together

by Laura Burns, Director of Children's Ministries

Nine years ago I read *It Starts At Home: A Practical Guide to Nurturing Lifelong Faith* by Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope. They offered the powerful image of a hand holding budding flowers with the bare roots dangling free. They said, if they, as parents, (the hand lovingly and tenderly holding the flowers) brought their children (the beautiful and delicate flowers) to church to have them 'watered' in faith can you imagine how that would go? Picture for a minute: the watering can pouring water over the flowers, the water running down the stems and off the roots. Without a pot or soil the flowers cannot drink any of the water. The pot (home) and soil (adults in the children's life) are essential components to helping the flowers (children) grow and thrive in their faith. This image has always stuck with me.

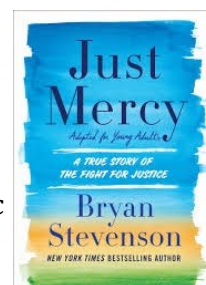
Here at First Presbyterian we are so fortunate to have kids who come from an enriched environment. During this time of COVID, families have grown deeper in their faith together. Young families have embraced weekly Bible story times and activities, and the Youth families have engaged in spiritual practices, in ways that weren't possible with pre-COVID hectic schedules. This time of COVID has not been lost-time for the faith of our families, but rather a time of growth and expansion. The increased time and engagement together offers a new image: a larger pot (more time at home) and enriched-soil (families centered in faith). The flowers are flourishing.

I have been so encouraged by the stories families have shared about the new ways and spaces they are engaging with God. A Christ-centered family always has been, and always will be, the most important component to children's faith development. As we come back together I hope we can continue to share our faith stories. Together building a strong Christ-centered community, where we are an active part of enriching and encouraging one another-- to continue to grow and flourish in our faith.



Summer Reading for High School Students

We believe it is important for our young people to contribute to ongoing conversations about systemic racism and injustice in our world.



To better equip students for these conversations, FPGH Youth Ministry will be providing space to read and discuss the Young Adult version of *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson for our incoming 9th through 12th grade students. Bryan Stevenson is the founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, which strives to end mass incarceration, wrongful and cruel punishment and protect human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society. **The book discussion will take place on Wednesday, August 12 at 6:30 pm in the memorial garden.** Bring your own chair.

Email Maddie Lambert (mlambert@fpg.org) to sign up and she will drop off a copy of the book at no cost to you!



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: fpgh.org

July 2020

deliver to: (or current resident)

Gratitude Jars

For the month of July we encourage you to come to God in gratitude each day!

We have put together conversation jars that are available for pick up at the church all month long. Each jar contains slips of paper with questions and Bible verses all about gratitude. Simply place this jar on your desk or at the center of your dinner table and select one slip from the jar each night to discuss with your family or journal about during your personal quiet time!



Resurrecting Flat Jesus

Flat Jesus returns! Now more than ever we know that Jesus is with us wherever we are!

Pick up your copy of Flat Jesus in the Clinton Street entrance or download the file to print at home from our website. Color your Flat Jesus then snap a picture with him as he shares activities with you throughout your summer, post your photos to your Facebook page and include #fpghflatjesus, or email them to Laura Burns (lburns@fpgh.org).



ALL members are encouraged to take photos with Flat Jesus (not just families with children).