



PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

DECEMBER 2021, VOLUME 69—ISSUE 12

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

From Reverend Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

I want to extend an invitation to worship to all of you this Advent and Christmas. By the time you are reading this, the first Sunday of Advent will have come and gone, but I want you to know that you are welcome to worship with us in this holy season of preparation. Being intentional about how you worship – whether with us in the sanctuary or using the livestream in your home – is part of how God speaks into your life at this time of year. I am concerned that the pandemic has disrupted life so much that the essential nature of worship has been consumed by busyness, disinterest, or fear. Let's combat that by being intentional about worship.

So, know that everyone is welcome to worship with us this Advent and Christmas, whether at home or in person. Now is the time to mark your calendars for the festive worship of this time of year. Of course, we'll have our normal **Sunday services** at 9:00 (Traditional) and 11:00 (Gathering) on December 5, 12, and 19. On Sunday evening on the 19th, at 5:00 p.m., we'll have our **Service of Light and Hope**. I've been in churches where this service is called "Blue Christmas," and it's a service that allows space for quiet, grief, and stillness, which are often things crowded out by the festivities of "the most wonderful time of the year." It's one of my favorite services, and I hope you'll join us.

We're changing things up a bit for **Christmas Eve** this year. Our Family Service featuring the Gathering Band and the Christmas Pageant will be at 4:00 p.m. Our hope is that this time allows for families to enjoy dinner and get their young ones to bed at a decent hour. Our Traditional Candlelight Service will be at 9:00 p.m. featuring the Geneva Choir and following a lessons and carols pattern. Finally, there will be a Holy Night Candlelight Service at 11:00 p.m. concluding with ringing in Christmas together.

On Sunday, December 26, we will have only one service at 10:00 a.m., where we can worship the newborn King Jesus together as one church family. So, please make your plans now. Also, invite others join in worship, whether that is online or in person. After missing each other's presence entirely last year, I know I am grateful that we will have at least some ability to share in this important time of year together.

Friends, it's been a challenging almost two years, but I have witnessed how strong our congregation is. God has blessed us beyond measure, and I am grateful to be shepherding you on this journey of faith. You remain in my prayers, and I hope to see you this season!

In Christ,

Pastor Troy

Upcoming Events

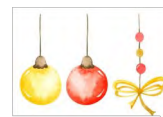
- Dec. 5** PW Christmas Bazaar and Bake Sale
- Dec. 5** Youth Group Georgia Mission Trip Informational Meeting
- Dec. 12** West Michigan Winds Small Ensemble C.A.S. Concert
- Dec. 16** Heritage Luncheon and Program
- Dec. 19** Service of Light and Hope
- Dec. 24** Christmas Eve Services:
 - 4 p.m. Children's Impromptu Christmas Pageant
 - 9 p.m. Traditional Lessons & Carols with the Choir
 - 11 p.m. Holy Night Candlelight Worship Service
- Dec. 26** One Worship Service at 10 a.m.

PW Christmas Bazaar Sunday, Dec. 5



Pick up your favorite holiday goodies at the annual PW candy and bake sale!

There will be delicious handmade cookies, muffins, pies, fudge, coffee cakes as well as Chex mix and trail mix. This is also your chance to purchase the PW jewel chip candy!



In addition, there will be gently used Christmas decorations for sale. It's always fun to find something new to spruce up your home for the holidays!

In Our Church

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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,
Larry Braak, Suzanne Cooper,
Carlyne Gebben, Carole Groening,
Jean Kocher, Muriel Mersereau,
Norm Spring, and Lisa Stoner

Our Sympathy:

to Jim Teunis and John and Brenda
Teunis and family on the death of
their wife and mother Sandy Teunis,
on November 3, 2021.

to Jeff and Kelli Jullie and family on
the death of Jeff's mother, Dorothy
Jullie, on November 9, 2021.

to Phyllis Jonker on the death
of her husband, Al Jonker, on
November 12, 2021. Al was also
the uncle of Lisa Stoner.

to Nancy Levenburg on the death
of her aunt, Betty Johnson, on
November 14, in Tennessee. Betty
was a long-time member of FPGH.

to the family and friends of
Alice Akin, who passed away on
November 15, 2021. A memorial
service for Alice will be held on
March 26, 2022.

to the family and friends of Sammi
George, who passed away on
November 27, 2021. A private family
service is being held for Sammi.

Congratulations!

to Keith and Patti Konarska on the
birth of their granddaughter,
Madison Patricia, on November 10.
Parents are Jason and Kaitlyn
(Konarska) Ozzello.



Dec. 28 Ernie Schroeder
17046 Lloyd's Bayou Dr.
Apt. 216
Spring Lake, MI 49456

Food Pantry Collection

If you would like to
make a food donation
this month, the Mission
Committee asks that
you bring donations
directly to the food
pantry of your choice.



The pantries we support through-
out the year are:

- The People Center
307 E. Exchange Street
Spring Lake, MI 49456
- The Salvation Army
310 N. Despelder
Grand Haven, MI 49417
- Love in Action
326 N. Ferry Street
Grand Haven, MI 49417

Christmas Joy Offering

"A gift opens doors..." Proverbs 18:16

Jesus came to earth to lead God's
people, pointing to God through love
and justice, peace and compassion,
forgiveness and humility. A perfect
gift from a gracious God. Presbyterians
join together to celebrate this
wondrous gift by giving to the
Christmas Joy offering during the
Advent season. The gifts we share
connect us. They also change lives.

God calls new leaders through the
ministry of Presbyterian-related
schools. This offering gives
scholarships to assist and encourage
students of color who will become
our future leaders.

This offering also supports church
workers and their families through
the Assistance Program of the Board
of Pensions. For retired church
workers in need of financial help due
to declining health or catastrophic
events, these gifts provide a way to
offer a return gift to those who over
the years led us in the way of Christ.

Special envelopes will be in the pews
and the Clinton Street entrance in
December, or you may text
CHRISTMASJOY to 91999.

Service of Light and Hope

Sunday, December 19

5:00 p.m.

Experience a time of peace and healing with us during Advent, when
loud celebrations and merry Christmas music can be overwhelming.

Christmas Eve Services

Friday, December 24

4:00 p.m. Children's Impromptu Christmas Pageant with
music from the Gathering Band

9:00 p.m. Lessons and Carols with the Geneva Choir

11:00 p.m. Holy Night Candlelight Service with a variety
of special music



As we begin another season of Advent when we look forward to the birth of Jesus Christ, I can't help but think about Mary. Luke 1:26-36 describes the moment when Mary is told by the Angel Gabriel that she is pregnant with Jesus.

Let me first just say that I'm a skeptic at heart. An ironic confession coming from a pastor, but there you have it. So whenever I read about someone in the Bible who immediately starts praising God after experiencing a traumatic and life altering event that is usually a result of something God has called them to do (I know all things are possible with Jesus, blah, blah, blah) I have to wonder: Did they really immediately start jumping for joy while singing God's praises? Or were they only able to do so after some intense sessions with their therapist?

I wonder the same things about Mary when she finds out she's been chosen to birth the Son of God into the world. She's probably only fourteen years old, engaged to be married and seemingly has a long and fruitful life ahead of her. But she's about to lose everything as the logical thing for her fiancé to do is leave her, since she's now carrying someone else's child and no longer a virgin. In Luke 1, however, Mary sings a song of praise and humbly accepts her role as the mother of the Messiah. She doesn't at all seem

worried about the consequences she will surely face having "conceived" out of wedlock.

She did, however, have Elizabeth to lean on. Elizabeth, who could also serve as Mary's confidant as she knew what it was like to have God do something impossible in your life. I like to think this is why Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months so they could support one another in their moments of freaking out over the fact that God had just upended both of their lives. They would also have each other when they were in awe of the fact that God had chosen *them* to play monumental roles in God's grand plan for all of humanity. This comes back to a reoccurring theme for me in ministry and what God seems to be doing in my own life lately and that is this: When God calls us do something we are never asked to do it alone.

I pray more when I have a prayer partner. I read the Bible more when I have someone to study the Bible with. It's true for everything in my life. I run more when I have a running partner. I eat better if I have someone who promises to eat healthy with me. More than one person is needed if there is going to be any sort of encouragement, support, and accountability. I know that's all obvious, but so much harder to execute when push comes to shove.

Perhaps Elizabeth did serve as Mary's therapist so she could then launch into her song of praise. Luke doesn't give us any details. But what does matter is that Mary wasn't alone when she received this life altering call from God. She had a friend in Elizabeth who affirmed what a privilege it was to bear God's son into the world. It wasn't until after Elizabeth's affirmation of Mary that Mary broke out into that song of praise. Praising God not just for choosing her, but that God has proven yet again he has not forgotten his people, the poor, the lowly—those that the rest of the world intentionally ignores.

None of us were ever meant to follow God alone. Mary had Elizabeth. Jesus had his disciples. Paul had Timothy. And through unlikely servants like Mary, we all have Jesus Christ who remains with us even during the times when we freak out over whatever he is calling us to do next. I think that's something worth singing about this Advent Season.

Questions to Ponder:

1. Who is your "Elizabeth?"
What qualities would you need in a confidant who could help you to see all of God's blessings in your life?
2. If you had to write a "Song of Praise" to God what would you write about?

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 began a discussion about adaptive leadership, particularly focusing on what we need to *unlearn* from the pandemic.
- We held a detailed first read of the 2022 proposed budget.
- We approved a new member for the Children's Ministries Committee.
- We approved Alpha Funds for a project that will enhance our outside signage.
- We approved using the Children/Youth Fund to underwrite students going on retreats.
- We elected elder commissioners for the December Presbytery meeting.

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

Christmas Traditions and Cultures in our World

As we prepare for Christmas celebrations in our church, homes, and with families with traditions that make our Christmases meaningful and personal, let's take a few moments to learn about our how our neighbors around the world celebrate the Christmas season with traditions they hold dear.

Mexico: Many Mexican families participate in their local church's annual *Posadas* ("the inn") processions from December 16 to Christmas Eve. There can be up to 9 processions during the season that commemorate Joseph and Mary's search for lodging. Houses along the procession route are decorated with evergreens, moss, and paper lanterns. Children carry candles and painted clay figures of Mary and Joseph. This celebration symbolizes the welcoming of Christ in the home and heart. Celebrations also include a Christmas play known as *Pastorelas* ("the shepherds"). Nativity scenes, known as the *Nacimiento* are very popular in Mexico. The figures of the *Nacimiento* are often passed from generation to generation and become well-loved family treasures.

Honduras: The Hondurans also host *Posadas* and *Pastorelas* thru the season, but the focus of Christmas centers around the *Noche Buena* ("the good night"), which is Christmas Eve. A large meal of roast pork, turkey, or chicken is served, along with apples and red grapes, *Rosquillas en Miel* (donuts soaked in honey) and a popular drink, *Rompopo* (similar to eggnog). Hondurans attend church services on Christmas Eve, wearing new clothes and shoes in celebration of the birth of Jesus. At midnight there are many firework displays which can last the entire night.

Philippines: With 80% of Philippine people being Catholic, Christmas is a very important holiday in the country. Church celebrations begin on December 16, when the first of nine early morning masses (*Misa de Gallo*) honoring Jesus' birth is held. One traditional Philippine custom is making a *parol*, a large bamboo pole topped with a lighted star lantern. Colored paper or cellophane paper in star patterns are placed on the top of the pole, representing the star that guided the Wise Men. Many citizens stay awake thru the night of Christmas Eve, attend the last of the nine Christmas masses, and follow this with a midnight feast also called *Noche Buena*. In the Philippines, the *Noche Buena* is a large open-house celebration with family, friends, and neighbors, feasting on roasted pig, ham, fruit salads, rice cakes (*bibingka* and *puto bumbong*), steamed rice and a variety of drinks.

Netherlands: Christmas traditions in the Netherlands include *Sinterklaas Avond* (St. Nicholas Eve), and celebrations on Christmas Day and on Second Christmas Day. *Sinterklaas Avond* is celebrated on December 5 and is considered to be the eve of Sinterklaas' birthday. It is said that Sinterklaas journeys to the home of every child and leaves small gifts and treats to enjoy. Before they go to bed, children leave their shoes filled with hay, carrots, and sugar for Sinterklaas' horse. In the morning the horse treats have been replaced with gifts for the children. Christmas Day is known as *Eerste Kerstdag* in the Netherlands. This day is a time for quiet church services and traditional family meals. Santa Claus (*Kerstman*) may deliver small gifts, but most of the gift giving is done on St. Nicholas Eve. Second Christmas Day (December 26th) known as *Tweede Kerstdag*, is a day when people visit relatives or go shopping. Beautiful rustic decorations of pine and holly boughs, simple lights and candles adorn homes during the Christmas season. Christmas trees with lights and ornaments are also popular, much like in the U.S.

Scotland: You may be surprised to learn that there was a time in Scotland when Christmas didn't happen at all. During the Reformation in the 16th century, a ban on all Christmas celebrations was mandated. It wasn't until 1958 when Christmas Day again became a national holiday. Before 1560, Christmas in Scotland was called Yule, which was celebrated with many gifts, gatherings and feasts. Now many of the old traditions of the holiday have resurfaced and the traditional Christmas feast of turkey, Angus beef and Scottish lamb are served, along with Scotch broth, Cock-a-leekie soup, salmon, Scottish cheeses, Cloutie dumpling, and Topsy Laird (trifle with whiskey). Greens decorate homes to symbolize life during the dark winter nights, Yule logs are burned on the shortest day of the year to bring good luck and prosperity, while burning a Rowan tree branch was a way to clear bad feelings between family and friends. Celts brought the tradition of burning the Cailleach or "Old Woman Winter," a log carved with the face of an old woman to ward off bad luck. What can you do to put a little Scottish Presbyterian tradition into your Christmas this year?

I hope you have enjoyed a bit of history today! May you have a wonderful Christmas season, filled with blessings from God. Submitted by Joan Klaasen – Member – Racial Justice Committee

2021/22 Season

Community Artist & Speaker Series

"Christmas Cards"

**West Michigan Winds Small Ensembles
and the Shoreline Community Orchestra
Sunday, December 12, 4:00 p.m.**



Enjoy the sounds of the season with the West Michigan Concert Winds Brass and Woodwinds Small Ensembles along with the Shoreline Community Orchestra. You will hear your favorite carols, uplifting fanfares, and other festive classics guaranteed to bring warmth and celebration to your heart.

After the concert, join us in the lounge for a merry reception with the musicians.

All of the Community Artist events are free and open to the public. All are welcome.

Meijer Simply Give Campaign

The Meijer *Simply Give* campaign runs through January 2, 2022. When you purchase a \$10 *Simply Give* card at the Grand Haven Meijer store, your donation benefits the Love in Action food pantry. If you purchase your card on Saturday, December 11, Meijer will double match every \$10 donation. This means for every \$10 donated with a Meijer *Simply Give* card, Meijer will donate \$20. And that means a total of \$30 will be given to the Love in Action food pantry.



Thank you for your generous support of those in need in our community.

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 Services
Offered in Person and on
Facebook Live (@FirstPresGH):
9 a.m. (Traditional)
11 a.m. (Contemporary)

Staff and Leadership:

Rev. Dr. 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
Marc Felt, Gathering Band Leader
Rob Hlebinsky, Organist
Kelli Jullie, Church Administrator
Maddie Lambert, Youth & Young Adult Ministries Director
Tommy Langejans, 5th & 6th Grade Ministries Coordinator
Karen Nienhouse, Congregational Care Ministries
Tina Ramones, Administrative Assistant
Kerri Roberts, Office Assistant
Sally Segers, Joyful Noise Director
Melissa VerHage, Worship Coordinator & Event Host

Tidings article deadline for January 2022 issue: December 23, 2021

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.

Carbon Neutrality

Did you know that the PC(USA) General assembly of 2006 urged congregations and members to become carbon neutral? We've heard a lot about that topic this past month due to the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow.

What did the General assembly say?

- It strongly urges all Presbyterians immediately to make a bold witness by aspiring to live carbon neutral lives.
- It directs the General Assembly Council ...to inform all Presbyterians, governing bodies, and churches of the urgent need for them to reduce their energy consumption and of the injustice of our current energy practices.
- It calls upon all Presbyterians to take this seriously, to pray asking for God's forgiveness and guidance, to study this issue, to calculate their carbon emissions, to educate others, and to use less energy, striving to make their lives carbon neutral.

More information may be found at: www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/carbon-neutral-guide.pdf

Briefly, what can we do as members of the PCUSA?

- We can calculate and reduce our carbon footprint. PC(USA) urges a goal of 4 tons per person, per year, close to the global average, but less than half of what a typical American family of four emits per person per year.
- Individual households can reduce their footprint by using LED lighting, opening windows instead of using air conditioning, better insulation in our homes combined with intelligent management of our home temperature, so that we use energy in late afternoon and evening after peak electrical loads are done for the day.
- We can consolidate longer automobile trips, and substitute biking or walking for short trips. This is particularly true in a compact community like Grand Haven where one can walk almost everywhere. Consider an electric bike, or even something as simple as wire-frame grocery carts so you can walk to the grocery store for your weekly shopping.
- We can purchase carbon offsets to compensate for the carbon we do use. In particular consider offsets that benefit indigenous people. For more information on carbon offsets, visit terrapass.com
- Recognizing that carbon footprint reduction on the larger national scale is primarily a political issue, consider supporting organizations that lobby for responsible energy use. Note that even the PC(USA) has a full time Office of Public witness for this task: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/washington/>

What are the ultimate issues?

The EPA provides a good summary of greenhouse gas issues at <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

Gift Ideas for the Person Who Has Everything

Instead of purchasing another gift for the person who "has everything," prayerfully consider one of the options available through the Presbyterian Giving Catalog:

Honor your grandfather who taught you how to garden:

- A bag of Moringa tree seeds \$40
- A sapling set \$30

For your mother:

- Sewing machine \$50
- Kitchen kit \$25

For your children, young or all-grown up, giving thanks that they have (or had) a safe place to live and go to school and/or daily nourishment:

- Water filter \$50
- Share of a cow (or the cow itself) \$50 (\$450)

Thank your children's teacher:

- Jerry cans to carry water \$25
- Fishing net \$15

To honor a minister or youth pastor:

- Famine relief food voucher \$50
- Experiential Faith Formation \$100

For the co-worker you drew in the office gift pool:

- Family of chickens \$25
- Farming tools \$10

For anyone - remembering Jesus and his family who were once refugees:

- Refugee food basket \$50

God is at work in the world and this is one way for us to join in! The Presbyterian Giving Catalogs are available in the Gathering Area or online at Presbyteriangifts.org. There are 22 pages of gifts from you to choose from. Your gift can make a life-changing difference.

Youth & Children's Ministries

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Snapshot of Youth Events for December

- Dec. 5:** Georgia Informational Meeting 12:15 p.m. and rescheduled Christmas decorating **during Youth Group**
- Dec. 12:** Youth Group Christmas Party
- Dec. 19:** Belize applications and deposits due
- Dec. 19-Jan. 2:** Youth Group Winter Break

Please Join Us on Christmas Eve!

You and your family are invited to join us on Christmas Eve for one of our favorite Christmas traditions—the Children's Impromptu Christmas Pageant!

Children may come dressed in their favorite costumes (unicorns and baby sharks welcomed), or wear one of our angel, sheep or Wise Men costumes.

This is a family-friendly worship service, with music from the Gathering Band. This year's pageant service begins at 4:00 p.m.



St. Simons Island, Georgia, Mission Trip Informational Meeting

Sunday, December 5, 12:15 p.m. in Fellowship Hall

All current 6th through 12th grade students and a parent/guardian are invited to come learn about this summer's mission trip to St. Simon's Island in Georgia (June 18-25, 2022). This will be a time to hear what to expect, learn about payment expectations, and ask questions. There is NO commitment required at this meeting.



Youth Group Christmas Party

Sunday, December 12

For our final Youth Group meeting of 2021 we will be celebrating Christmas together! Dress in comfy clothes and join us for some Christmas cheer. Christmas pajamas are encouraged. Bring a white elephant gift of less or equal value to \$5 to participate in a fun game.



Food Volunteers Needed

We love and are so thankful for everyone who provided meals in the Fall of 2021 for Youth Group! If you are looking for a way to serve our students, please consider signing up to provide dinner. One volunteer said, "this was such a fun and easy way to serve our kids!" We encourage meal providers to prepare dinner for 35 students and to sign up with a partner. We will provide beverages, cups, plates and silverware. We eat from 6:20-7:00 pm in Fellowship Hall.

In 2022 we need meal providers for the following dates:

- January 9 and 23
- February 6, 13, 20 and 27
- March 20 and 27
- April 10 and 24
- May 1, 8 and 15



Please contact Maddie Lambert (mlambert@fpgb.org) to sign up to provide a meal. Thank you!



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

Sunday Worship:

9 & 11 a.m. in person or live
on our Facebook page: @FirstPresGH
or watch the recorded service on our
website: fpgh.org

December 2021

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 15, 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"