



# PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

JANUARY 2022, VOLUME 70—ISSUE 1

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

## From Reverend Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

**THE** new year brings hope for what is to come and reflection for what has been. This year is no exception. Let me begin with reflection and make my way toward hope. So much has happened over the past twelve months. Vaccinations have led to a return to some normalcy to the rhythms of the church's life, but the pandemic has continued to influence much of what we do. At the end of my *Tidings* article a year ago I wrote these words, "Finally, as we turn into 2021, know that my prayers join yours as we pray for health, stability, and a return to being together." We certainly have partial answers to those prayers, but I'm going to keep praying them in 2022. I love you all, and I miss the simplicity of being with you, my sisters and brothers in Christ. Here's to trusting that in January 2023, I'm not praying the same prayer!

Upon reflection, some things are finding their footing once again. We'll have our annual **Congregational Conversation** on Sunday, January 23, at 10:00 in the Lounge and over Zoom. This is an opportunity for the members of the church to hear from the Session about the highlights of ministry in the previous year and to hear some of Session's plans for the coming year. It is also an opportunity for members to ask questions of the church leadership. We will have both a narrative and financial annual report available in time for the meeting. Much good ministry has happened in the last year, and I know Session is eager to share that news with you.

As has become our custom, Session has called a **Congregational Meeting** for the Sunday after the Congregational Conversation. On January 30, at 10:00, we'll hold this meeting for the purposes of voting on the Terms of Call for your pastors and to elect the at-large members of the Nominations Committee. You may recall that a year ago, we held our Congregational Conversations over Zoom, and we had our Congregational Meeting in the parking lot. At least some things are moving in the right direction!

The new year is not just for reflection. We also use it to cast our gaze forward, seeing what lies ahead. As I look ahead, I want to begin with gratitude for you. It has been my privilege to pastor a church that has weathered this pandemic with as much grace and generosity as this one has. I am friends with several pastors in the community, and our story of togetherness and grace is not universal. So, thank you. It's been a hard road, but we've made it this far by God's grace together.

Still, I foresee challenges that lie ahead for us. I want to name some of those in this article, and I ask you to pray for those challenges, asking God how you might respond to be a part of what God is doing among us.

**Challenge #1**—Our church functions with the talents, time, and creativity of its members. Many who have served faithfully through this hard season are tired, ready for a break, and needing some wind in their sails. We need new people willing to step forward to serve in the church. What ministry might God be calling you to?

*Continued on page 3*

## Upcoming Events

- Jan. 9** Faith Formation Classes Resume  
Children's & Youth Ministries Programs Resume  
St. Simons Island Mission Trip Permission Slips & Payments Due  
Christmas Decoration Take Down Work Bee (at 3 p.m.)
- Jan. 14-16** Winter Blast High School Retreat
- Jan. 23** Belize Parent/Participant Meeting
- Jan. 23** Congregational Conversation
- Jan. 28-30** 5th-8th Grade Retreat
- Jan. 30** Annual Congregational Meeting

## Mark Your Calendars

**for a Congregational Conversation**  
*(a time to ask questions and hear updates from various ministries)*  
**Sunday, January 23**  
**at 10 a.m. in the Lounge**  
**&**  
**Annual Congregational Meeting**  
**Sunday, January 30**

## Thank You from The Giving Tree

Thank you for your generosity to The Giving Tree Christmas Mission.

We were able to donate 122 gift cards, for a total of \$3,050. Students in need at Central High School were given 100 of the cards, while 22 gift cards were given to the Hope Project in Muskegon.



# 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, Dick Christy, Carole  
Groening, Jean Kocher, Norm Spring,  
and Lisa Stoner

## Our Sympathy:

to the family of Mary Hendon, who  
passed away on November 23.

to Alexis Stark on the death of  
her grandmother, Ellen Stark,  
on November 27.

to the family of Muriel Mersereau  
who passed away on December 5.  
A memorial service for Muriel is  
being planned for June of 2022.

to Steve and Sharon VanderBroek  
and family on the passing of Steve's  
father, Rev. Kenneth VanderBroek,  
on December 6.

to Jeff and Amanda Miles and  
family on the death of their son,  
Jackson Miles, on December 11.

to the family of Donna VanderBroek,  
who passed away on December 18.  
A memorial service is being  
planned for the spring of 2022.

to Melissa, Josh, Felix, and Archer  
VerHage on the death of Melissa's  
mother, Cheryl Darlington, on  
December 23.

to Karen Fox and family on the  
death of Karen's husband, Dick Fox,  
on December 24.

## Our Sympathy:

to Kelly Schoonveld and family on  
the death of her mother, Verna  
Schoonveld, on December 29.

to Nick, Sarah, Harper and Finnleigh  
Bronsema on the death of Nick's  
grandfather, John Bronsema, on  
December 30.

to Kathryn and Keith Marks and  
family on the death of Kathryn's  
father, Jeff Ricks, on December 31.  
Jeff is also the brother of Michal  
Wheeler and the uncle of Sarah  
Bronsema and Kim Doane.

## Congratulations!

to Jean Mesler on the birth of her  
grandson, Garrison Robert Schultz,  
on November 30. Proud parents are  
John and Inger Schultz.



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!

**Jan. 12** Norma Vyn  
1410 S. Ferry. F-5  
Grand Haven, MI 49417

## Scholarship Applications

Applications for scholarships to  
be awarded this spring are now  
available in the church office or on  
the high school page of our website  
(www.fpgh.org).

- James and Lois Hillis Fund  
awards scholarships to students  
going on to any type of post high  
school education or training.

Applications are due  
in the church office  
**no later than**  
**April 1, 2022.**



## 2022 Per Capita

Per-capita is a charge we pay to  
the Presbytery each year for every  
member of our congregation. The  
amount for this year is \$36.73.

Please prayerfully consider paying  
the per-capita amount for each  
person in your family who is a  
church member. *Thank you!*

For more info on Per Capita, visit:  
<https://tinyurl.com/ycks3wz4>

## PDA Response to Recent Tornadoes

As night fell on December 10,  
powerful tornadoes ripped across  
several states, ending the lives of  
more than 100 people and wreaking  
devastation across many communi-  
ties by morning. In the wake of  
these catastrophic storms, it is the  
role of people of faith to shine as  
light in this bleakest of winters. We  
are called to be the hands and feet  
of God to help rebuild the lives of  
those who have experienced  
significant loss. We are invited to  
stand with them—and to stand  
together—bearing witness by our  
gifts and prayers that God is indeed  
incarnate among us.

How you can help:

**Pray:** *As we learn of another natural  
disaster, we pray. For those experi-  
encing loss, may they feel comfort  
only your Holy Spirit can bring. We  
pray for wisdom and strength as they  
work to restore and repair their  
communities. May we heed your call,  
O God, to be co-creators with you in  
the caring of creation. May the hope,  
peace, and love of the Christ child  
comfort and keep us all. (Rev. Dr.  
Diane Moffett, Executive Director,  
Presbyterian Mission Agency)*

**Give:** Gifts can be made online at  
[pcusa.org/DT21](http://pcusa.org/DT21), or by phone at  
800-872-3283.

# From Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

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(Continued from page 1)

**Challenge #2**—Almost two years of not participating at church in-person has left some of us wondering if coming to worship, a small group, or activity is worth it. The answer is, of course, “Yes!” The challenge is that resuming activities is always hard. I hope you’ll find a way to make your way back to church in-person as soon as you feel ready to do so.

**Challenge #3**—Every year the church adds and subtracts people from their number. The past two years have made adding new people to the church a challenge. (Thank God that we have received around two dozen during this time, but that’s around half of normal.) This impacts attendance, giving, growth, and almost every aspect of the church. Thanks to you, the church is in good shape, but I believe it’s going to take us a couple of years to get fully back where we’d like to be. That begins with each of us taking one step deeper in.

Friends, we have so much to be thankful for, even in this time. My gratitude to God begins with the work of Jesus in this church and then immediately moves to how the Spirit is at work among us. We are a strong church, and you are all part of making that happens. May you see God’s blessings in your lives this year.

In Christ,  
Pastor Troy

# From Rev. Kristine Aragon Bruce

Dear Church Family,

Happy New Year! I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and experienced once again the miracle of God coming to us as Jesus Christ. As we start a New Year I recognize that some of us may not be feeling as hopeful as we did in years past. A year ago we were feeling optimistic about the pandemic having less of a grip on our lives. We were looking forward to a new beginning and life returning to normal. I get the sense that most of us are starting 2022 exhausted and a lot less hopeful. To be perfectly honest this is how I feel. So where is Jesus in all of this?

It can be tempting to fall into the thinking of: “Will 2022 be a continuation of variants, potential shut downs and hundreds of thousands more falling ill or losing their lives?” I tend to think long term, which is both good and bad. In this case I find myself unhelpfully envisioning the worst for months to come. I’ve had to remind myself to take things day by day and sometimes moment by moment. Two types of prayers came to mind that would be helpful in doing just that.

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus teaches us

to ask for “this day our daily bread.” Bread just for today - not for tomorrow, next week or next month. It’s helpful to know that Jesus wants us to focus just on today. Just for today we focus on how God will give us what we need to get through the day. Just for today let’s be on the lookout on how the Holy Spirit will show up. Just for today let’s ask Jesus to give us the strength to put one foot in front of the other. Tomorrow has enough worries of itself and tomorrow we can ask God for more “daily bread” again. Until then let’s just focus on who Jesus is *today*.

The Examen is an ancient prayer to be done at the end of the day. It consists of prompts to help us explore where we saw Christ at work that day. Prompts such as “When did I *today* feel closest to God?” and “When did I *today* feel the farthest away from God?” There are many variations of The Examen, but here is a general guide of how to pray this prayer:

[www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/how-can-i-pray/](http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/how-can-i-pray/).

1. *Become aware of God’s presence.*  
Do this in a quiet space. Reading

a Psalm or a favorite scripture passage can be helpful in making us more aware of God’s presence. Psalm 18:1-2 is a great one.

2. *Review your day with gratitude.*  
There’s always something to be grateful for!
3. *Pray about one aspect from the day.* Reflect when you felt close to God and when you felt far away.
4. *Notice and acknowledge your emotions.* Share those emotions with God.
5. *Look forward to tomorrow.* But try not to dwell on what tomorrow may or may not bring!

While I’m not a fan of New Year’s resolutions I think it would be a great idea (just for this week to begin with) to start our day prayerfully asking God for daily bread and to end our day with the Examen. As I write this I am convicted of needing to be more aware of how Christ is at work within and around me. How about we do this together? And of course, take it day by day.

Grateful to be on this journey with you,

Pastor Kristine

# From the Faith Formation Committee

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## Faith Formation Offerings

The Faith Formation Committee has planned a number of great offerings for the beginning of the New Year. Read below to find a class that interests you!

**Sundays beginning January 9th, 10am between services**

- ***The Wired Word, Rooms 16 & 17, led by Karen Abraham.*** Each week features a lively discussion of current events and how to respond to them in light of scripture. Can't be there in person? Contact the office at [staff@fpg.org](mailto:staff@fpg.org) for a Zoom link.
- ***The Heavens are Telling: Created to Create, Recreation Room lower level***  
**Led by Rev. Dale Swihart, Jr. and Maryanne Beery**  
For almost two years Dale has been writing blank verse meditations and pairing them with his photography. He has now published two volumes of the works and a third is in the works. He will share some of his experiences with the class. Maryanne will share creative insights into the world of musical composition. The class will feature a workshop format, allowing the participants to explore their own creativity using a full range of expression to interpret the coming Lenten season.
- ***How to Read the Bible, Led by Matt Aragon Bruce,*** resumes February 7th. Anyone who has been to his classes has appreciated his scholarship and is inspired to dig deeper into scripture.

# From the Racial Justice Committee

## The Line

Most of us do not stop to think about historical events that have affected and shaped our present systems and culture. We just accept them because they have always been a constant in our lives. It's our way of life.

In 1619, twenty black slaves arrived to the English colony of Virginia, which planted the seed of racial injustice in this country. We've passed amendments to the U.S. Constitution to correct many of the injustices and have changed laws, but as one form of injustice is eliminated, other forms appear. The line of injustice moves, but there is always a line. Actions by state and federal governments locked most freed blacks into a lower tier of society. The promise of 40 acres and mule disappeared and sharecroppers replaced slaves. Blacks were placed in a subservient position and blocked from advancing in a

free society. Poll taxes plus literacy tests blocked their participation in government. New lines were drawn.

The GI Bill appeared in 1944 following WWII. This bill played a major part in reshaping the American scene. It gave veterans a major boost, building a sound financial future for themselves and future generations. It provided vets with low interest loans for homes, money for educational expenses, employment training, and other opportunities. Black vets were not specifically excluded from this program on paper, but in practice they were. The G.I. Bill provided very little or no help to the 1.2 million vets who were black. Individual states oversaw the distribution of funds, and in Mississippi, only 2 Blacks out of 3,200 received a VA guaranteed loan. The northern states were not much better. Redlining became another roadblock to financial success. Covenants were also used

against blacks. My parents purchased cemetery plots in the late 40's in the Grand Rapids area. In the purchasing agreement, it stated that no Blacks would be resting next to them.

I urge you to educate yourselves to get the true picture of what's happening in our present culture and time. For further reading, please read *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson. Matthew 25 is also a great passage for Biblical support in serving and reaching out to the marginalized and oppressed. God created us in his image. Jesus accepts us no matter our color, race, economic status, educational level, etc. Let's not move the line. Let's erase it!

Michael Weller, Member of the Racial Justice Committee

## 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:

February 6, 20 and 27

March 20 and 27

April 10 and 24

May 1 and 15

Please contact Maddie Lambert ([mlambert@fpgh.org](mailto:mlambert@fpgh.org)) to sign up to provide a meal. Thank you!



## January Events:

**Jan. 9:**

Back to Youth Group!  
5:15-7:30

St. Simons mission trip  
payments and permission slips due

**Jan. 14-16:**

9th-12th grade Winter Blast retreat

No Youth Group on the 16th

**Jan. 23:**

Youth Group meets 5:15-7:30

**Jan. 28-30:**

5th-8th Grade Retreat

No Youth Group on the 30th

## First Presbyterian Church of Grand Haven



508 Franklin Avenue  
Grand Haven, MI 49417  
Phone: 616.842.6760

[www.fpgh.org](http://www.fpgh.org) • [staff@fpgh.org](mailto: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 February 2022 issue: January 23, 2022**

Submittals, suggestions or comments: [sbryant@fpgh.org](mailto:sbryant@fpgh.org) or [staff@fpgh.org](mailto:staff@fpgh.org)

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



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

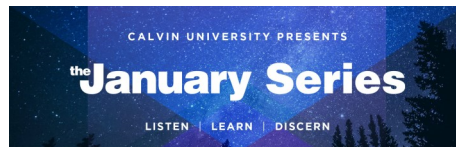
or YouTube: First Presbyterian Church, Grand Haven

or watch the recorded service on our

website: [fpgh.org](http://fpgh.org)

## January 2022

deliver to: (or current resident)



### Calvin University January Series

January 12, 13, 17, and 23

11:30-12:30 @ Second Christian Reformed Church

The January Series features 15 days of respected speakers and scholars about important issues of the day in order to inspire cultural renewal and make us better global citizens in God's world. Join the group of folks from First Presbyterian who will be attending the following simulcasts at Second Christian Reformed Church on Sheldon Road, followed by a time of discussion. For more information and to RSVP, contact Pastor Kristine ([KristineAB@fpgh.org](mailto:KristineAB@fpgh.org)).

- 1/12: Sara Stewart Holland and Beth Silvers, *"Keeping it Nuanced: How to Have Grace-filled Political Conversations."*
- 1/13: Reuben Miller, *"Halfway Home: Race, Punishment, and the Afterlife of Mass Incarceration"*  
\*Discussion afterward to be led by a member of the Racial Justice Committee. Place TBD.
- 1/17: Latasha Morrison, *"Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation"*  
\*Discussion afterward to be led by a member of the Racial Justice Committee. Place TBD.
- 1/23: NT Wright, *"Galatians in Three Dimensions."*

The full January Series schedule may be found by following this link:

<https://calvin.edu/january-series/speakers/>