



# PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

DECEMBER 2023, VOLUME 71—ISSUE 12

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

From Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

**IT'S** the most wonderful time of the year! As I turn my attention to December, those words from the Andy Williams standard always start bouncing through my head. I love so much about this time of year. I love the decorations. I love the snow. (I really do!) I love the music. I love the holiday breaks. And I adore the worship services of the season.

We will walk the Advent journey with our morning services on December 3, 10, and 17. We will slow down and quiet our souls for our Service of Light and Hope on December 21 at 6:00 p.m., on what I always call “the darkest night of the year.” It’s a good chance to worship in stillness before the celebrations head our way.

Advent continues with its fourth Sunday falling on Christmas Eve. We want to honor both the fourth Sunday and Christmas Eve, so that morning our focus will be on Advent for a single 10:00 a.m. service. We will then hold two Christmas Eve services. At 4:00 p.m., we’ll have the Children’s Impromptu Christmas Pageant as part of a service led by the Gathering Band. At 8:00 p.m. we’ll hold our Lessons and Carols service led by the Geneva Choir and organ. Both services conclude with candlelight.

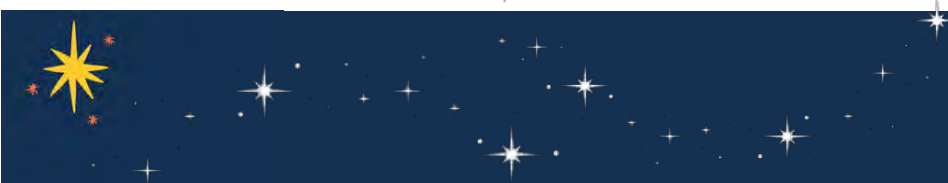
Last year the weather on Christmas Eve was truly frightful, so let’s pray the weather isn’t an impediment this year! Between the pandemic and weather, I don’t think I’ve had a “normal” Christmas Eve since 2019. Crazy. But this is a chance for us to worship God, to welcome Jesus, and to enjoy the warmth of community. It is also a great opportunity to invite friends, neighbors, and family to join you for worship. This will surely be a special way of rounding out 2023 together.

As I conclude my final column for 2023, I do have to say what a privilege it is to be your pastor. The road is not always smooth. There is always more we could do. There are disagreements along the way. But the maturity and commitment of this congregation is truly laudable. So, I love you. You’re wonderful. But that doesn’t mean we’ve got it all figured out! We have work to do, faith to grow, questions to ask, answers to seek, and change to make. It’s a journey we’re on — together.

May you know God’s blessings this Advent and Christmastide!

In Christ,

Pastor Troy



## Upcoming Events

- Dec. 1** Red Cross Blood Drive
- Dec. 3** PW Christmas Bazaar
- Dec. 10** The Orchestra & The Organ: Sounds of the Season Concert
- Dec. 14** Heritage Luncheon
- Dec. 21** Service of Light & Hope
- Dec. 24** One Morning Service, 10 a.m.  
Christmas Eve:  
4 p.m. Children’s Impromptu Christmas Pageant  
8 p.m. Lessons & Carols

## Service of Light & Hope

**Thursday, Dec. 21  
6 p.m.**

A quiet service to still  
ourselves and calm our souls



## Christmas Eve Worship Schedule

**Sunday, December 24:**

**10 a.m. Traditional-Style Sunday  
Morning Worship Service**



**4 p.m. Children’s Impromptu  
Christmas Pageant**

**8 p.m. Lessons & Carols**

## 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

### FPGH Cares:

Please let us know about births, baptisms, hospitalizations and prayer requests. Contact Karen Nienhouse: knienhouse@fpgh.org

### Prayer Concerns:

Mary & Ron Albrecht, Dick Christy, and Frank Miller

### Our Sympathy:

to Diane Meyers, whose husband Paul, passed away on November 3.

to Linda and Randy Needham on the passing of Linda's mother, Elsie, on November 3.

to Ken and Mary Ellen Jackson, on the death of their brother-in-law, Mark Kleist, on November 5.

to Jane and Tim Stoeper and family on the passing of Jane's mother, Dorothy Nelson, on November 6.

to Scott and Julie Reenders and family on the death of Scott's father, Howard, on November 7.

to Don and Trudy Timmer on the passing of Don's sister, Molly, on November 10.

to Jim and Donna Kober on the death of Jim's father, Albin, on November 10.

to Don and Denise Nelson on the death of Don's father, Donald, on November 15.

### Thank You:

"A huge shout of gratitude to all who supported the CROP Walk for Hunger. The Tri-Cities community raised over \$35,000 to share with three local food pantries: Love in Action, The People Center, and the Salvation Army; and with Church World Service, which assists countries around the world with food and clean water. You, the members of FPGH, donated over \$2,000. Thank you for helping to care for so many!"

Carole DeYoung,  
FPGH CROP Walk Chairperson

After breaking a vertebra in a fall, Edie Swart is on the mend and is very thankful for the outreach of her church family through prayers, cards, and phone calls. Your kindness and care are appreciated.

## Food Pantry Collection

Each month the Mission Committee collects non-perishable food and household goods for the Salvation Army food pantry.

Some of the items that are requested this month, in order of greatest need, are:

- Boxed pasta & sauce
- Oatmeal
- Applesauce
- Spaghettios/Ravioli
- Chunky soups/stews
- Diced tomatoes/tomato sauce
- Baked beans/kidney beans
- Egg noodles
- Jelly/jam
- Ketchup
- Flour
- Juice (any variety)



Please bring your donations to the designated spot in the Gathering Area.

## SAVE THE DATE! A Sabbath Retreat Saturday Jan 20, 2024

A great way to recoup from the holidays and start off a New Year!

Stay tuned to Sunday bulletins, weekly e-mail updates, and announcements in worship for details and registration.



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

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

## Thursday Night Discussion Group

You are invited to join the Thursday Night Discussion Group as they read and discuss *Names for the Messiah: An Advent Study* by Walter Brueggemann. The group meets on Thursday nights in the Conference Room from 7-8:30 p.m.

## 2024 Per Capita

Per-capita is a charge we pay to the Presbytery each year for every member of our congregation. The amount for 2024 is \$40.05

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

**Tidings article deadline for  
January 2024 issue: December 22, 2023**

Submittals, suggestions or comments:  
sbryant@fpgh.org or staff@fpgh.org  
FPGH editorial staff reserves the right to accept  
or decline, edit for length and content all  
submitted material.

Dear Church Family,

The Cambridge Dictionary defines “Advent” as the “beginning of an event, the invention of something, or the arrival of a person.” Advent specifically for the church is the four weeks before Christmas when we prepare ourselves for the birth of Jesus Christ. You probably did a lot of preparing for the Thanksgiving holiday, whether you were the one hosting or a guest who brought a side dish. Either way, we were more intentional in preparing ourselves for quality time with family and friends.

One way we prepare ourselves for the birth of Jesus Christ is to be more intentional about spending time in God’s Word. We have a great Advent devotional available online and as a printed copy. You can pick one up in the office, or read it online on our website ([fpg.org](http://fpg.org)). Weekly segments will also be included as a link in our Friday e-mail.

This devotion is titled “Apocalyptic Advent,” which I realize doesn’t sound like a comforting read... at first. Keep reading :). It is written by Teri McDowell Ott, a Presbyterian Pastor and the editor of *Presbyterian Outlook*. This devotion highlights and allows for space to reflect upon apocalyptic passages (think Revelation) that refer to the second coming of Christ. Such passages have unfortunately been used by some Christians to justify fear and end-time judgment as tools to convert others to Jesus Christ. This devotion reclaims the meaning of these passages, explaining the context in which they were written, which helps us to better understand how people marginalized in Biblical times found comfort in hope of Christ’s return.



While we may not be marginalized in the same way as the early Christians, we can learn from how they found comfort in hope of Christ’s return during dark periods in their lives. I think we can all agree that the world is pretty dark at the moment. I pray that this devotion via God’s Word can help us to see the light of Christ in the darkness, and make us even more grateful for God’s decision to come be with us, as one of us.

Pastor Kristine

## In Our Church

### 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:

- We approved receiving eleven new members.
- We approved a new member for the Youth Committee and funding for the Confirmation and Winter Retreats.
- We devoted the majority of the meeting to reviewing correspondence and the Town Hall Meeting about Session’s decision to sign the Unifying Christians of Ottawa County statement. Outcomes of that review include recognizing the need to offer classes about our polity (how the church is governed), about the theological issues surrounding Christian Nationalism, and about ecclesiology (what the church is).

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

### PW Christmas Bazaar Sunday, Dec. 3

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



There will be delicious handmade cookies, muffins, pies, coffee cakes, and fudge, as well as the PW jewel chip candy!

In addition, there will be home-crafted items and gently used Christmas decorations for sale. It’s always fun to find an unexpected stocking stuffer or something new to spruce up your home for the holidays!

## Ideas for a Sustainable Holiday

As we enter the holiday season, you may be wondering how to reduce your impact and still enjoy all of your favorite traditions. Have no fear! You can make plenty of wonderful sustainable Christmas memories and have a lower environmental impact by following some of these tips:

### Use Sustainable Holiday Gift Wrap

Most wrapping paper and gift bags are printed using unsustainable inks and coated with shiny foils — which are not recyclable. Get creative and wrap gifts with materials that you have around the house, like old maps, comics, or paper shopping bags. You can also use any pretty, clean fabric like scarves, bandannas, or dish towels for reusable wrapping. Create your own bows from strips of colorful paper and accessorize with twine, pressed leaves, and pinecones.



### Get a Real Tree

Real Christmas trees are more environmentally friendly than fake ones, which are made from plastic that will take hundreds of years to break down. After Christmas, look into local Christmas tree recycling programs in your area.

### Switch to LED Holiday Lights

Switching to LED lights can save you around \$50 on your holiday season energy bills because they use 90% less energy. They also last about 50,000 hours, so you won't have to replace them for a long time.

### Gift an Experience

Gift something that can be enjoyed in the future, like tickets to a game, comedy show, play, or concert, a fun day trip, a museum membership, guitar lessons, or even a gift card to a favorite local restaurant or business. You'll be supporting a local business and giving your recipient something to look forward to!

### Handcraft Some Awesome DIY Gifts

Try creating a gift basket filled with homemade body care products like soaps, lotions, bath bombs, and lip glosses — or one filled with holiday cookies, infused liquors or extracts, fudge, spiced nuts, and more. Add some special touches like homemade ornaments, a favorite bottle of wine, or a book you loved this year, and it's bound to please!

### Ditch the Cheap Stocking Stuffers

Fill the stockings with delicious homemade treats and a few small, thoughtfully chosen gifts to round it out. Stockings are a fun part of the Christmas tradition, so keep them low impact and sustainable!

## Generosity Update

### Pledge Goal:

**\$973,000**

### Pledged to Date:

**\$744,735**



**56% of households have made a pledge for 2024**

### Thank you for your generosity!

If you still need to make a pledge, forms are available in the church office, or you may fill one out online: <https://fpg.org/estimate-of-giving-for-2024/>

## Year-End Giving Reminders

Reminder: for a charitable contribution to be considered a 2023 donation, all gifts need to be received in person or postmarked by the USPS by December 31. Online contributions can be received by 11:59 p.m. ET December 31 at <https://fpg.org/give/>. This year, December 31 is a Sunday, giving you an easy opportunity to turn in year-end gifts on the last day of the year at either of our 9:00 or 11:00 worship services.

If you are considering a year end stock donation or a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA, please contact your broker by December 15th to allow time for processing the donation.

## Advent Centering Prayer Group

Noon via Zoom for about 25 minutes on Dec 7, 14, & 21

Led by Rev. Michelle Olson

Cost: \$15 for three weeks

Centering Prayer is a form of meditative prayer in which we simply turn our focus upon God and sit in God's presence in silence. It is a prayer of rest, and receptivity – simply having a heart open and awake to God. This is a great opportunity to reflect upon the birth of Jesus Christ.

Michelle Olson is an ordained Presbyterian pastor and a Spiritual Director at Abiding Journey ([abidingjourney.org](http://abidingjourney.org)). You can see her at the Gathering Service most Sundays with her husband, Todd and kids, Timothy and Katie. To register for the prayer group, contact Michelle at [abidingjourney15@gmail.com](mailto:abidingjourney15@gmail.com).

## The Giving Tree Christmas Ministry

To help make Christmas brighter for those in need, the Giving Tree Ministry is again asking for donations of gift cards in \$25 denominations until Sunday, December 17.



These gift cards are most useful from Meijer and Walmart, allowing families/individuals to purchase items of greatest need. The organizations benefitting from our gifts this year are:

- [Step Up Program](#)
- [The Hope Project](#)
- [Reach the Forgotten](#)

Please help us make the 2023 Giving Tree a beautiful example of God's most precious gift, his son, Jesus Christ.

## Christmas Joy Offering

Through the **Christmas Joy Offering** we reflect God's perfect gift to us with our generous support of church leaders—past, present, and future—those who have pointed us to God. We also honor and celebrate emerging ethnic leaders who pursue their education.

- 50% supports opportunities for students at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. Many are the first in their families to enroll in higher education.
  - ◆ Scholarships are given for students at Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, AL; the Presbyterian Pan American School in Kingsville, TX; and the Menaul School in Albuquerque, NM.
- 50% provides financial assistance to current and retired church workers and their families in need. Church workers can receive critical financial assistance to support them through challenging circumstances.
  - ◆ Income supplements, housing supplements, and emergency assistance grants restore hope and stability to Presbyterian church leaders who have suffered catastrophic events such as hurricanes or tornadoes ... or declining health.

The Christmas Joy Offering celebrates the coming of Jesus Christ, the “wondrous gift” of God with us. In our living, in our giving, we are there. Special offering envelopes will be in the pews during Advent and at the Clinton St. Entrance. You can donate by credit card online at [pcusa.org/christmasjoy](http://pcusa.org/christmasjoy) or text christmasjoy to 91999.



## 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  
9 a.m. (Traditional)  
11 a.m. (Contemporary)

Offered in person and online:  
Facebook Live (@FirstPresGH)  
YouTube (First Presbyterian Church, Grand Haven)

### Staff and Leadership:

Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon, Senior Pastor  
Rev. Kristine Aragon Bruce, Associate Pastor  
Maryanne Beery, Director of Music & Fine Arts  
Dr. Matt Bruce, Theologian-in-Residence  
Joleigh Braman, Church Custodian  
Sally Bryant, Communications Coordinator  
Laura Burns, Children's Ministries Director  
Todd Olson, Church Administrator  
Marc Felt, Gathering Band Leader  
Rob Hlebinsky, Organist  
Amanda Miles, 5th & 6th Grade Ministries Coordinator  
Karen Nienhouse, Congregational Care Ministries  
Hannah Post, Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries  
Tina Ramones, Administrative Assistant  
Kerri Roberts, Office Assistant  
Sally Segers, Joyful Noise Director

## The Perfect Christmas Gift

Are you looking for that perfect Christmas gift? Why not shop the **Presbyterian Giving Catalog** this year and give a gift that keeps on giving!

Small gifts can make a big impact for those in other countries—a \$50 refugee food basket, \$10 farming tool set, \$30 sapling tree set, or a \$25 family of chickens. These gifts provide help, hope, and relief to families and communities in need. The Holiday Giving Guide (with QR codes) is available at the Clinton St. entrance or online at [presbyteriangifts.org](http://presbyteriangifts.org).



## Mission Outreach Organization: Reach the Forgotten Jail Ministry



**REACH THE  
FORGOTTEN**  
JAIL MINISTRY

This past year, the Mission Committee voted to include Reach The Forgotten as one of our mission outreach programs. RTF is the largest county jail-focused ministry in the U.S. that believes in the redemption and restoration of inmates (in Ottawa they are respectfully called “citizens”) through Jesus Christ. Chaplains and volunteers are empowered to share hope and salvation with “forgotten” women and men incarcerated in 35 Michigan county jails.

God has had an amazing plan for the partnership between First Presbyterian and RTF because in less than a year we have supported RTF through donations, filmed an informational video in our chapel featuring two of our members and have two (soon to be three) of our members volunteering and visiting citizens weekly at the Ottawa County jail. It is an amazing experience to share forgiveness, love and hope with people who are in the most broken time in their lives and to see the power of Jesus Christ saving lives.

There are ways to volunteer with RTF outside of visiting citizens, and each year there is a banquet to promote RTF. This year eight of our church members attended the banquet, and one of the attendees said “RTF makes it very clear—the one enduring element communicated is that their Lord cares and they can have a different life.” Another comment was “I was deeply moved by the testimonies of those (citizens) ministered to by chaplains and volunteers.”

If you are interested in learning more about RTF, please contact Moni Franks, 616-285-2889

## Community Artist & Speaker Series

**The Orchestra and the Organ:  
Sounds of the Season  
Sunday, December 10, 4 p.m.**

Celebrate the sounds of the season with the Shoreline Community Orchestra and Rob Hlebinsky!

SCO brings together professional and amateur musicians who play alongside students and faculty from several area colleges and universities. The non-profit organization includes woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings, and is conducted by Nick Mosely.

Rob Hlebinsky currently serves as organist and handbell director here at FPGH and is also the accompanist for the Spring Lake choral department and music director for the school’s theater program.

The orchestra and organist are delighted to team up and spread some holiday musical joy with many of your favorite Christmas classics!



The next C.A.S. concert is Beery and Beery, the brother & sister musical duo Michael and Maryanne Beery. Maryanne is the Music Director here at FPGH.

All of the C.A.S. events are free and open to the public.

[2023/24 CAS Schedule](#)

## Christmas Eve Schedule Sunday, December 24



### Christmas Eve Morning

We will have Children and Worship and Nursery at the 10 a.m. service on December 24. We'll be telling the Christmas story.

### Christmas Eve Services



- At our 4 p.m. worship service, all children will stay with their families for our Impromptu Pageant. We'll have props for your child(ren) to be a star, barn animal, shepherd, angel or magi. Kids are also welcome to wear their own costumes to help retell the Christmas story!
- Our 8:00 p.m. service is a traditional Lessons and Carols Christmas service with the Geneva Choir. At both evening services, we will have real candles for adults and battery-operated candles for children to hold during the singing of "Silent Night."

*Note: So that the nursery staff can spend Christmas Eve with their families, the nursery will not be open for the evening services. The children's play space in the Lounge is always open to families.*

## Youth Group Dinner & Clean-Up

Every Sunday evening, the youth of FPGH share a dinner together during their Youth Group activities.

One of the students' favorite part of the evening is eating dinner provided by members of our congregation. If you would like to provide a meal or help with clean up, we are currently looking for people to sign up to bring dinner for the spring semester:



**Sign Up Genius** or  
<https://bit.ly/46PIPYf>.

You may also contact Hannah Post to sign up: [HPost@fpg.org](mailto:HPost@fpg.org) or 616-842-6760.



**High School Retreat:**  
Jan. 12-14, Camp Geneva,  
\$75

Sign up here: [HSretreat](#)

**5th-8th Grade Retreat:**  
Jan. 26-28, Camp Geneva,  
\$50

Sign up here: [56retreat](#)

## YOUTH GROUP EVENTS

All students (and their friends!) in 5th-12th grade are invited to join us for Youth Group events.

A typical schedule looks like this:

- 5:30—game
- 5:50—dinner
- 6:20—worship
- 6:30—Bible-based discussion (5th & 6th grades with Amanda, all others with Hannah)
- 6:45-7:15—small group discussions

For questions feel free to reach out to Hannah Post at [HPost@fpg.org](mailto:HPost@fpg.org)

## DECEMBER

3: Youth Group

10: Youth Group

17: Christmas Party

**Christmas Break**



*We Are*  
**HIRING**

**Position:**  
5th/6th Grade  
Ministries Coordinator

For job description and how to apply, go to  
<https://www.indeed.com/job/56th-grade-ministry-coordinator-9a0321e62153f7f6>



**FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH**

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: fpggh.org

**December 2023**

*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 Friday, 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: \$15/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"