



# PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

DECEMBER 2024, VOLUME 72—ISSUE 12

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

## From Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

**H**ave you made your plans for Advent and Christmas yet? We have, and we're excited about them. My time away this summer helped give me more energy for creativity, and so we're going to try some new things, especially for Christmas Eve. I'll begin there.

We are so glad to have Joyful Noise as part of our ministry. Every day dozens of young children and their families spend time in our building. This year, we're going to offer a service that connects with those children and families. This service is also for any families in our church and community looking for a time focused on young children.

So, on December 23 at 4:30, we're holding our first Christmas Carols and Cookies service. We'll share the story of Christmas, sing some simple songs, and have fun together. Then we'll move to the Lounge for some cookies and hot cocoa. So, come one and all. All are invited who'd like a Christmas service focused on young children.

On Christmas Eve, we'll hold two services. The first will be at 4:00. It's our Gathering Candlelight service. I've written the Christmas stories in contemporary language in a new way to share this wonderful story. The format is lessons and carols, so there will be lots of singing and participation. We'll have art from some of our congregation's artists that will help tell the story. Of course, we'll end with singing "Silent Night" around the glow of candles.

At 9:00 that night, we'll hold our Traditional Candlelight service, featuring our organ and Geneva Choir. This will also follow a lessons and carols format, so we'll tell the story in word and song. In keeping with our tradition, we'll close with "Silent Night" and candles.

For the Sundays of Advent, we'll make our homes and lives ready for Jesus' arrival. It's a purposeful kind of waiting that gives us the opportunity to grow together in faith. Yes, that means we largely leave the familiar Christmas songs unsung until later in the month, but these expressions of longing and hope on our way to Jesus' coming are so vital.

We're in for a wonderful Advent and Christmas season this year. I hope you'll be there, and I really hope you'll invite others to join you at church. What better time of year is there to come together for worship?

In Christ,

Pastor Troy

## Upcoming Events

- Dec. 1** Hanging of the Greens, 4 p.m.
- Dec. 3** Presbytery Meeting at FPGH
- Dec. 6** Red Cross Blood Drive
- Dec. 8** PW Christmas Bazaar
- Dec. 15** Shoreline Community Orchestra C.A.S. Concert
- Dec. 19** Heritage Luncheon
- Dec. 22** Christmas Service of Light and Hope
- Dec. 23** **Christmas Carols & Cookies, 4:30 p.m.** Family-Friendly Christmas Eve Service
- Dec. 24** **Christmas Eve Services:**  
4 p.m. The Gathering Candlelight Service  
9 p.m. Traditional Candlelight
- Dec. 25-26** Church Office Closed for Christmas
- Dec. 29** One Worship Service, 10 a.m.
- Jan. 1** Happy New Year!

## Project Ripple Effect

Project Ripple Effect is seeking nominations for charitable organizations that could use a little extra financial support.

This year, we've increased our commitment to \$15,000 for deserving projects. Let us know about organizations that might benefit from this program! Applications are available at the church, or you may [download one here](#). The deadline to submit applications is December 29.

*"The ripple effect of a single deed can transform not just a moment, but the course of many lives."*



## 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



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 Lloyds Bayou Dr.  
Apt. 216  
Spring Lake, MI 49456

## Update from the Session

Here are the highlights of last month's session meeting:

### Report from Session

- We approved our four elder commissioners to the December presbytery meeting.
- We finalized plans for hosting the presbytery meeting in December.
- We approved our shared mission support for the presbytery.
- We welcomed three new members to the church.
- We received with gratitude and sadness the resignations of two elders, Don Timmer and Gail Miner.
- We approved Alpha Funds for the purposes of website enhancement and social media accessibility.

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

## Cookie Bakers for Children's Christmas Eve Service Wanted!

Do you love baking? We are looking for 8 people to make 2 dozen homemade



(nut-free) cookies

for our special Christmas

Carols & Cookies young

family service on December 23.

If you can help, please use the following link to sign up. Thank you!!

Sign up here:

<https://tinyurl.com/y4jmpsbt>

### Tidings article deadline for January issue: December 23, 2024

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.

### 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

### Congratulations!

to Phyllis and Darell Moreland on celebrating 70 years of marriage on November 19! We wish them continued blessings and happiness in the years to come.

### Thank you!

"Thank you for your prayers, cards, and concerns during my recent surgery. I'm deeply thankful for your love and support."

- Carol Weller

"A heartfelt thank you to the FPGH community for the Sunday recognition and gifts, beautiful cards, kind words, and sage retirement advice. I especially appreciate those who shared personal stories where we have laughed and sometimes cried together throughout the years. First Pres is not just a place I worked for 22 years, it is also my heart family."

With Christ's love,  
Tina Ramones & family

## Hanging of the Greens December 1



Do you love decorating for Christmas? We do too, but we need lots of help!

The Worship Committee invites you to join us in getting the church ready for Advent. On **Sunday, December 1**, we'll gather at 4:00 to transform the church for the season. This is always a fun, all-ages welcome event that sets the tone for the season. We plan to have homemade soup on hand as we wrap up the decorating. Save the date, and join us!

## 2025 Per Capita

Per-capita is a charge we pay to the Presbytery each year for every member of our congregation. The amount for 2025 is \$42.00.

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:  
<http://bit.ly/3AOhSJO>

**As** 2024 comes to an end, I hope we can be intentional on ending well. For followers of Christ, this means looking for what God has in store for us. To be on the lookout for how God continually makes all things new around us and within us. One way we can be on the lookout and to be intentional about ending well is to engage with the meaning of Advent.

The early church began observing Advent in the 4th century. Advent comes from the Latin word "Adventus." I'm going to get nerdy on you here for a moment so please bear with me. What's cool about Latin is that each word can have several meanings. In addition to "coming," Adventus can also mean arrival, presence, epiphany, invasion, set in, ripening, just to name a few. Traditionally, churches who observe Advent recognize a theme for each week of Advent, which are: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. I do

think these words generally cover the many possible meanings of Advent. At FPGH this year we are putting a twist on the themes of Advent. While Pastor Troy and I will certainly preach about peace, hope, love and joy, we decided to go with the themes "Waiting, Accepting, Journeying and Birthing." These themes come from the Carmelite tradition. The Carmelites were a spiritual group that formed in the Holy Lands near Mt. Carmel in the 13th century. After participating in the Crusades, the Carmelites were horrified by the atrocities of war and were challenged to reconsider discriminatory views of the Muslim people. This inspired them to dig deeper into the Bible, and take the time to hear God as they dove into scripture and engaged in spiritual practices such as silence and prayer. The Carmelites produced great spiritual mentors such as Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross whose words and insights

still help people today to hear God more clearly.

What struck me about the Carmelite's history is that they allowed themselves to consider their preconceived notions about God and others. This of course meant allowing God to reveal God's own self to them on God's terms. This requires intentionality. Intentionality of prayer, reading scripture and listening. I struggle with the listening part. But my prayer for all of us is that we would be more intentional at listening to God this Advent Season. This may look like journaling prayers, going on prayer walks, or simply finding a cozy spot at home with a warm beverage asking God to help you listen. When we are intentional about this we will be better able to see how Jesus continues to make all things new in our midst.

Grateful for you,  
Pastor Kristine

## In Our Church

### Youth Director Search Update!

The Youth Renovation Team has completed its task of listening to youth parents, creating new goals, and forming a new mission statement for Youth Ministry at First Pres.

The new Mission statement is:

***With God's help, we seek to build a Christ-centered community of acceptance that seeks to serve others.***

The top goal is to provide more opportunities for service for our youth so that they can put their faith into action, while building relationships with one another.

The hope is that the new mission statement and goals will help the

new Director of Youth Directions focus their time and efforts in leading our youth volunteers and the youth themselves to a deeper understanding of Jesus' love for them and others.

Big thanks go to the Youth Renovation Team: Tammy Kuhlman, Jared Bollaert, Courtney Ransford, Melissa Kutsche, Christine Rademacher, and Karen Losee.

We have almost finalized the search team to begin looking in January. Stay tuned for more details in the coming months! In the meantime please keep praying for the search process and for the person God is calling to be our next Director of Youth Ministries.

:)Pastor Kristine

### Hurricane Relief Giving Results

Thank you to the congregation of First Presbyterian Church!

Together with matching funds from session we were able to send a check for **\$27,165** to the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Program for hurricane relief efforts in the southeastern United States. Your financial support will help PDA to bring hope to communities recovering from disaster situations.





## PW Christmas Bazaar Sunday, Dec. 8

Indulge in the season's best treats and treasures at the annual PW baked goods and craft sale! Be sure to stop in the lounge on Sunday, December 8, after each worship service to check out the selection!



As always, the sale will feature a delicious spread of homemade cookies, muffins, pies, fudge, coffee cakes, and snack mixes—including both Chex and trail mix varieties. Don't miss the beloved PW Jewel Chip candy, a true holiday classic!

In addition to our delightful treats, we're excited to offer a selection of home-crafted gifts, including crocheted animals and gnomes, handmade bracelets, beautifully quilted items, and colorful dish towels. Find something special to bring home or give as a thoughtful gift for the holidays.



## Thursday Morning Breakfast Group

Are you an early riser who enjoys meaningful conversation and digging deeper into scripture? If so, we invite you to join the Thursday morning discussion group!

The group meets every Thursday at 7 a.m. at Russ' Restaurant. Together, we'll reflect on the scripture passages that will be the focus of the upcoming Sunday's sermon. Whether you're a seasoned Bible scholar or just starting to explore your faith, you'll find a supportive community eager to learn and grow alongside you.

## Generosity Update

It's Generosity Season at First Presbyterian. It's the time where we, the members and friends of this church, take stock of God's blessings in our lives and pledge our commitment to bring a portion of those back to the church to share in ministry together. As our trustees and session use the dollars committed to finalize our yearly budget for the church, we are asking that you prayerfully consider your financial commitment to the church. Thus far 74% of our membership has committed \$757,000 toward our goal of \$990,000.

We invite you to prayerfully consider your financial commitment to the church and return your pledge card. You can do this online (<https://fpg.org/estimate-of-giving-for-2025/>), by placing it in the offering plate, or by bringing it to the office. Your timely pledge helps the session as it plans for the ministry of the church in 2025.

## 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 that will be given to three local charities.

These gift cards are most useful from Meijer and Walmart, allowing families/individuals to purchase items of greatest need. Whether that is a gift for a loved one or food to make it through a week of need, your generosity will be greatly appreciated by the recipient. The ministries who will benefit from the gift cards this year are [Love in Action](#), [LIA Housing Ministry Collaborative](#), and [Step Up](#), a program that helps young people get on their feet after aging out of foster care.

To increase your donation without spending any more money, you can purchase the gift cards from the Joyful Noise "RaiseRight" program. Forms are available in the Clinton Street entrance or look for the Giving Tree table in the Gathering Area through December 15. Joyful Noise receives a rebate on each card purchased.

## Thursday Night Discussion Group

The Thursday Night Discussion Group provides an opportunity for each of us to learn from noted authors, as well as from each other within an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding. The holiday and early winter schedule is as follows:

- Dec. 5—Finish current book (*Walking Backwards to Christmas*)
- Dec. 12—Pizza party—please RSVP to Sally Dunn: [sally2genesis@gmail.com](mailto:sally2genesis@gmail.com)
- Dec. 19 thru Jan. 9—On break, Happy Holidays!
- Jan. 16 thru Feb. 20—Read *What's the Least I Can Believe and Still Be a Christian*, by Martin Thielen.

The discussion group is open to all and meets on Thursday evenings in Fellowship Hall at 7 p.m. For questions, contact Katie Norton: [rich.kate@coomcast.net](mailto:rich.kate@coomcast.net)



**Christmas Carols  
& Cookies**

for young families

**December 23, 4:30 p.m.**

**Christmas Eve  
Services**

**December 24**



**4 p.m.**  
**Gathering Candlelight**

**9 p.m.**  
**Traditional Candlelight**

**All are welcome!**

## An Advent Devotional Smorgasbord!!

The Faith Formation Committee is excited to offer two devotionals to share with our congregation this Advent season, along with a selection of additional resources. These will be available in the church office at the beginning of Advent.

- The first is titled *Patterns of Divine Possibility: An Advent Search for God's Diverse Ordering*, published by the *Presbyterian Outlook*. If you are subscribed to the weekly emails and/or Tidings, you will receive an email with a week's worth of devotions the prior Friday (starting November 29). We will also print a limited number of the full devotional. If you are interested, you can view a sample of the devotional [here](#).
- The second is titled *The Word Made Flesh*. This is a traditional devotional with a short scripture passage and reflection on one page for each day of Advent. You can view a sample [here](#).
- We also have copies of various devotionals from previous years. These will be available in the church office on a first-come, first-served basis alongside the two that we chose for this year.

Finally, I want to recommend a book for those who might want to continue with the Gospels after we finish reading all four Gospels(!) – though it might serve better as a Lenten rather than an Advent devotional as it consists of 40 short (4-6 page) chapters and ends with several chapters on the Passion Week. Written by David P. Gushee, *The Moral Teachings of Jesus: Radical Instruction in the Will of God*, goes through each of the four Gospels and reflects on passages that illustrate Jesus' moral teachings and the Christian life (in other words ethics! Themes include: The Kingdom of God, telling the truth, loving your enemies, money, not judging others, etc.). It is available from [Amazon](#) or directly from the [publisher](#) (the MSRP is \$27.00). I have been reading it this fall and cannot recommend it highly enough!

May you have a blessed Advent season!

Matt Bruce, Theologian in Residence

*Note: A **Creation Care Advent Devotional** is also available. It is an online daily devotional that can be sent to your email. Go to [presbyearthcare.org](http://presbyearthcare.org) and find "Advent Devotional" to sign up.*

## From the Earth Care Team Sustainable Holiday Giving

It's not too hard to care for the earth and each other and have a festive fun Christmas, too! Here are some simple ideas:

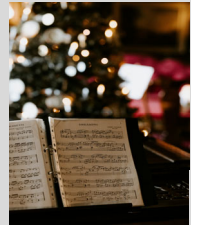
- 1) Shop local, not Amazon! We have a big variety of shops and stores close by. You'll greatly reduce your shopping carbon footprint, support local workers and business and get a bit of exercise walking in town.
- 2) Give Dune Dollars instead of plastic gift cards. You can order online and print from home at [https://grandhavenchamber.org/dune dollars](https://grandhavenchamber.org/dune-dollars). They are accepted all over town for shopping and even utility payments! You will save plastic and stay warm inside!
- 3) [The Presbyterian Giving Catalog](#) offers a meaningful solution for those "hard-to-buy-for" individuals or anyone who already "has everything." By purchasing a gift in their honor, you can support someone in need around the world. Once you've selected a gift, you can print a card to share with your recipient, letting them know about the thoughtful impact made on their behalf. BONUS: you'll support PC(USA) ministries around the globe and care for your neighbor! (Catalogs are available at the Clinton Street entrance.)
- 4) Buy cards and decor without gilt or sparkles (which can't be recycled). Save gift bags and boxes for use next year. My grandkids know which gifts are theirs because I reuse the bags and boxes. If you have children let them color and decorate rolled brown paper to be used for gift wrap.
- 5) Look for clothing made from natural fibers: cotton, linen, wool, merino, rabbit hair. Choose things made from natural materials: puzzles, games, books, wooden toys and gadgets, or candles.
- 6) The BEST earth friendly gift is a houseplant! There's something for anyone. Any area florist will be delighted to help you find the perfect green thing to give smiles and joy.



## Community Artist & Speaker Series

**"A Symphony of Carols"**  
Shoreline Community Orchestra  
December 15, 2024, 4:00 p.m.

Join us for a festive evening filled with the enchanting sounds of Christmas! Under the direction of Nick Mosely, the talented musicians of the Shoreline Community Orchestra—hailing from all walks of life—will bring your holiday favorites to life with a captivating blend of woodwinds, brass, strings, and percussion.



Don't miss this chance to celebrate the season with a live musical experience that's sure to warm your heart—bring the whole family and make it a Christmas to remember!

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

## Church Directory Update

We're excited to announce that an updated church directory will be available in early 2025! If you'd like to update your photo or make changes to your address, phone number, or other contact information, please email Karen at [knienhouse@fpgh.org](mailto:knienhouse@fpgh.org).

You're welcome to provide a photo you already have, or we'd be happy to take a new one for you in the church's A/V studio.



### 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)

### 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  
Sally Bryant, Communications Coordinator  
Laura Burns, Children's Ministries Director  
Todd Olson, Church Administrator  
Marc Felt, Gathering Band Leader  
Rob Hlebnsky, Organist  
Karen Nienhouse, Congregational Care Ministries  
Andrew Wolfert, Administrative Assistant  
Kerri Roberts, Office Assistant  
Sally Segers, Joyful Noise Director



## The Perfect Christmas Gift

Instead of buying yet another gift for someone who “has everything” or “needs nothing,” why not honor them with a meaningful donation to a family in need? Through the [Presbyterian Giving Catalog](#), you can give a gift in their name that truly makes a lasting impact—a gift that keeps on giving! Here are some ideas you will find in the catalog:

Honor your grandfather who taught you how to garden:

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

For your mother or sister or daughter:

- Sewing machine \$50
- Cook stove \$75

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:

- Educate a child \$25
- Supplies for displaced students \$30

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
- Jerry cans to carry water \$25
- Farming tools \$10

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

- Refugee food basket \$50



These gifts provide help, hope, and relief to families and communities in need. God is at work in the world and this is one way for us to join in!

The Presbyterian Giving Catalogs are available at the Clinton Street entrance or online at [Presbyteriangifts.org](#).

There are 22 pages of gifts from you to choose from. Your gift can make a life-changing difference for families in need.



These gifts provide help, hope, and relief to families and communities in need. God is at work in the world and this is one way for us to join in!

## Christmas Joy Offering

Advent is a time of anticipation and promise, of thanksgiving and celebration. Each year since 1930, Presbyterians pour out their gratitude by giving to the Christmas Joy Offering. We celebrate leadership; past, present, and future through this special offering.

- 50% of the offering gifts are distributed to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions to provide critical financial support to church workers, past and present, and their families due to health concerns, tragedy, or financial hardship. It provides a way to offer a return gift to the devoted and caring leaders who over the years led us in the way of Christ.
- 50% provides education and leadership development to students at three Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools: Menaul School in Albuquerque, NM, the Presbyterian Pan American School in Kingsville, TX, and Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, AL. Our generosity means enhanced opportunities for these students to use their skills and talents to serve God, the Church, and the world for years to come.

In gratitude to God for the wondrous gift of Jesus, we join together to support those in need of hope and help. Envelopes for the Joy Offering will be in the pews and at the Clinton Street entrance in December.

You can also donate by credit card online at [pcusa.org/christmasjoy](#) or text Christmasjoy to 91999.





**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: [fjgh.org](http://fjgh.org)

## December 2024

*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 Sunday, December 15, to the church office or by dropping it in the Sunday offering plate.

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"