



# PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

FEBRUARY 2025, VOLUME 73—ISSUE 2

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

From Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

**LAST** year Lent came just about as early as it can in the year, but this year Lent has done the opposite. It's about the latest it can be in the year. (For those keeping score at home, you may want to know why Easter and Lent move around. It's what we call a "moveable feast," unlike Christmas, which has a fixed day. Easter happens on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. Clear as mud, right?)

Anyway, Easter is very late this year, which means Lent begins later. That means this month gives us space to carry on with other parts of our ministry. In worship, we'll continue in our Greatest Hits of the Bible series, tracing the stories of Rahab, Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and Ruth. We also have the wonderful opportunity to learn more about the thoughts and writings of C. S. Lewis on Wednesdays over lunch. He's one of the seminal Christian thinkers of the last century, so I hope you'll engage in this study.

It also gives us space to focus on something that is truly needed in our church. The Generosity Committee has developed a Talent and Interest Survey that will be available online and in written form. (Since it's online, that means even our wonderful snowbirds can fill it out!) If you were at our Congregational Conversation, then you heard how this is a year where we are focusing on upping member engagement with the ministry. In short, the church only works as well as its members are willing to step forward in ministry.



So, whether you get the survey in your inbox, through Facebook, or you take paper to pen at coffee hour, I urge you to find a new way or another way to be involved in your church. There are regular ways to serve on a Sunday morning — greeting, ushering, music, teaching, and welcoming. There are ways to help on a monthly basis like our committee work. There are ways that are sporadic.

God has a plan for you, and we have a place for you!

More often than not, it has been my experience that those who take a step forward in involvement usually find themselves happier with their experience in the church and more understanding of what it takes to be a church in this time. I hope you can take that step this winter and beyond.

In Christ,

Pastor Troy

## Upcoming Events

- Feb. 2** New Member Class
- Feb. 7** Red Cross Blood Drive
- Feb. 27** Alma College Choir Concert
- Mar. 2** Youth Sunday
- Mar. 4** Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner & Game Night
- Mar. 5** Lunch with C. S. Lewis Begins
- Mar. 5** Ash Wednesday Worship Service
- Mar. 9** C.A.S. Young Organist Concert with Dr. Sarah Simko
- Mar. 12** Lunch with C. S. Lewis
- Mar. 12** Taizé Worship Service & Soup Supper
- Mar. 19** Lunch with C. S. Lewis
- Mar. 19** Taizé Worship Service & Soup Supper
- Mar. 26** Lunch with C. S. Lewis
- Mar. 26** Taizé Worship Service & Soup Supper

## Scholarship Applications

Applications for scholarships to be awarded this spring are now available in the church office, on the youth page of our website ([fpg.org](http://fpg.org)), or downloaded below.



- *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 by **April 1, 2025**.

## 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, Barb & George Bryant

### Our Sympathy:

to Leon and Zinnie Stille on the death of their son, Jeffrey, on January 1.

to Carmen and Fred Jeisy on the death of Carmen's sister, Susan, on January 4.

to Maryanne Beery and Eric, Meggie, and Clara Snyder on the death of Maryanne's mother, Margaret Beery on January 9.

to Rick and Sue Lemmen on the death of Rick's sister, Judith Vandermate, on January 10.

to Jeff and Janis DeVree on the passing of Jeff's mother, Marilyn DeVree, on January 13, 2025.

to Jack Steinmetz on the death of his wife, Margie Steinmetz, on January 25.

### Thank you!

"Our family would like to extend our deepest thanks for the outpouring of love we have received in the last month after the loss of our mom/grandma. We are so grateful for our church community. Your care through cards, texts and phone calls has been overwhelming. Mom loved our church, watched faithfully on Sunday these last few years, and felt your prayers this last year. Thank you.

- Maryanne, Eric, Meggie, Clara, and the Beery family

## February YogaFaith Date Changes

For the month of February, Chair Yoga and YogaFaith will meet on the 2nd & 3rd Wednesday of the month, **February 12 & 19.**

**Chair Yoga is 5:30—6:15 p.m.**  
**YogaFaith is 7:00—7:45 p.m.**

Both classes meet in the chapel, are open to the public, and are donation based.

## 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>

### Tidings article deadline for March issue: February 23, 2025

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.

## 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 contact Karen at knienhouse@fpgh.org or 616-402-0188.

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.



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

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

- Feb. 8** Jerry Schoenmaker  
17707 Cobblefield Lane  
Spring Lake, MI 49456
- Mar. 2** Annette Whitney  
1450 S. Ferry, Apt. 204  
Grand Haven, MI 49417
- Mar. 3** Heidi Gassman  
17500 Whippoorwill Dr.  
Grand Haven, MI 49417
- Mar. 12** Barbara Race  
321 Grand Avenue  
Grand Haven, MI 49417
- Mar. 18** Gary VandenBrand  
16118 Fillmore St.  
West Olive, MI 49460

## From Pastor Kristine Aragon

Dear Church Family,

For a myriad of reasons, we are living in anxious times. Our children and youth are also extremely anxious. It seemed fitting to explore a curriculum titled "Faith in an Anxious World" with our youth this winter. In this curriculum youth are encouraged to find a trusted family member or a trusted adult to talk about ways to manage their anxiety. It also gives youth leaders tips on when and how to connect youth who are struggling with counselors and therapists.

I thought I'd share the main themes we've been discussing as you may find it helpful. One of the main themes is to: "Look up. Look inside. Look around." Look up as in share with God in prayer what is causing you anxiety. To look inside means to reflect upon what our anxiety is telling us about ourselves and/or how Jesus is speaking to us amid our anxiety. To look around is to see which relationships Jesus has given us that can help us navigate our anxiety and invest in them.

This past Sunday we discussed Luke 5:1-11. We talked about how Jesus gets in the boat with Simon Peter and stays in the boat when it becomes unsteady. When Simon in his anxiety starts to push Jesus away, Jesus reassures Simon and reconnects Simon to himself and to others. When Simon Peter and the other fisherman become overwhelmed with the amount of fish Jesus causes them to catch, he provides others to work alongside them to bring in their nets. The fact that Jesus finds others to work with Simon Peter, who is later commissioned by Jesus to be the rock of the church, shows that Jesus did not mean for us to go it alone. Especially when it comes to what God calls us to do. I hope and pray as a church we continue to find ways to serve others together and that we would help one another look up to the one who meets us in our anxiety.

Grateful for you,

Pastor Kristine  
KristineAB@fpgh.org

## In Our Church

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### Talent and Interest Survey

In our annual meeting on January 26th, Pastor Troy urged us to consider how we might be able to use our unique skills and talents to support the work of the church in the coming year. He reminded us that Presbyterian churches are "churches of the people" and thrive only through the shared dedication and active participation of everyone. Did you know that an average Sunday takes upwards of 75-100 volunteers? From choir members and band musicians to ushers, greeters, cookie bakers, Children & Worship leaders, Welcome Desk hosts, and communion servers, every role is vital.

The year 2025 is a time for new energy and fresh involvement. It's a time when we need new people saying yes to new things. It's a time for those who have served before to re-engage and get involved once again.

In February, we'll be sending out a Talent and Interest Survey to the whole congregation that has been prepared by the Generosity Committee. This survey will help identify the skills you have that might help the church and allow you to share specific areas you are interested in serving. Please be on the lookout for the survey and take a few moments to fill it out and return it.

## In Our Church

### Update from the Session

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

#### Report from Session

- We discussed our plan for holding the Annual Meeting and Congregational Conversation.
- We approved spending to repair the kitchen hood fire suppression system.
- We reallocated funds to finalize decorations for the Lounge refreshing project.
- The pastors held training for incoming elders and deacons as well as a joint lunch meeting between the session and board of deacons on January 18.

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



## Food Pantry Collection

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

Currently requested items:

- Canned beef stew & ravioli
- Canned kidney beans
- Peanut butter
- Pasta sauces
- Tomato sauce & diced tomatoes
- Chili seasoning packets
- Applesauce & canned fruit
- Laundry detergent & dish soap
- Toilet paper & paper towel



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

## Blood Drive Feb. 7

There continues to be a critical need for blood products to ensure patient care.



Our next blood drive:

**Friday, Feb. 7,  
11:00—4:30 p.m.**

**First Presbyterian Church  
Schedule your donation at:  
[redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org)**

**Donate.**  
**We know you  
have it in you!**

## Shrove Tuesday Pancakes & Games March 4

Come out for a night of delicious (and free!) food and fun games for all ages on Shrove Tuesday!

Why do we eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday? Historically, it was the last chance for a bit of indulgence before 40 days of fasting, and also an opportunity to use up food that couldn't be eaten during Lent. This included eggs, fat and milk, which were made into pancakes and eaten on that day.

Let's all celebrate and indulge together before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. Dinner starts at 6 in Fellowship Hall. All are welcome!

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

## Project Ripple Effect Results

In December 2024-January 2025, the Mission Committee held our third annual “Project Ripple Effect” to nominate non-profit organizations for funding. This year, we were allocated \$15,000 for funding purposes by the session and awarded amounts of \$200-\$1500 per organization. After much deliberation, the Project Ripple Effect Committee chose the following beneficiaries to receive varying monies in support of their worthy organizations (in alphabetical order):

Abiding Journey	Miguel Auguste
Community Co-Op	Mobility Worldwide-W. Michigan
Days for Girls	Momentum Center
Fresh Coast Alliance	Plant with Purpose
GHAPS Special Ed Fishing Event	Project Linus
Hands to Haiti	Reach the Forgotten
Hospital of Hope	Romany Tzul
Humanity for Prisoners	Sacred Suds
Kenzie’s Be Café	Shoes for Jesus
Lakeshore Middle School- Calling All Colors	The People Center
Lucas Project	Wycliffe Bible Translators

Thank you to everyone who filled out an application and congratulations to all of the organizations that received this exceptional funding. Thank you also to session, the Mission Committee and Project Ripple Effect Committee, for all of the time and careful consideration it took to make this happen. Extra special thanks to Sally Bryant, for her hard work and patience with this project. We are all hopeful that the Project Ripple Effect will continue in 2026!

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## From the Earth Care Team Who is to Care for the Earth?

Perhaps **how** to care for God’s creation is debatable, but **who** is to care for God’s creation isn’t. As Christians, we aspire to righteousness, (“living in right relationship with God, other people, and all creation”), but how much attention do we pay to the right relationship with creation?

In Genesis we learn that God has given us “everything that has the breath of life” and “every green plant for food.” The Lord then gave us the responsibility to “work and keep it.” The word for keep in Hebrew, *shamar*, has been interpreted as “guard,” “preserve,” “to be faithful to,” “maintain,” and “exercise great care over.”

The first step toward caring for creation might simply come from being AWE-STRUCK as we marvel at the beauty of the landscape through which we hike or drive, amazed at the fruitfulness of the soil, inquisitive about the magic of the human body (strongly recommend you read *Fearfully and Wonderfully: The Marvel of Bearing God’s Image* by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancy), and thankful for photosynthesis that generates the air we breathe from the plants that surround us.

Yes, we need to pass some responsibility for care of creation to others. But several decades ago Lord Moulton, talking about morals and ethics, introduced the notion of “Obedience to the Unenforceable.” Government through the mechanism of law creates the enforceable, but what about those things that are simply the right thing to do; those things that we find in both the old and new testaments of our Bible. Scripture asks us all to be part of the Earth Care Team.

## Pennies for a Purpose

Do you have extra pennies around your house that you would be willing to donate? A family in our church is planning a home project that requires 78,000 pennies, and they have asked for your help. The dollar amount of pennies donated will be doubled by the family, with the funds supporting the Joyful Noise Scholarship Fund. For instance, if all 78,000 pennies are donated (\$780 worth), the family will donate \$1,560 to the Joyful Noise Scholarship Fund. Not only can you clear out your stash of pennies, but you’ll also support families needing a little extra help with childcare tuition.



A large container will be available in the Gathering Area to collect your pennies starting the week of February 3rd. There will also be a poster board to track the progress of the total raised for the Scholarship Fund.



## Explore the Writings of C.S. Lewis: A Lunchtime Discussion Series

The Faith Formation Committee invites you to embark on a fascinating exploration of the life and works of C.S. Lewis, one of the most influential Christian thinkers and authors of the 20th century. The five-week series will take place on Wednesdays at noon, from February 5th through March 5th, and will be led by Dr. Dale Sullivan, Emeritus Professor of English, North Dakota State University.

C.S. Lewis is best known for his significant contributions to Christian theology through works such as *Mere Christianity* and *The Screwtape Letters*. He also captured the imaginations of millions with his celebrated fantasy and science fiction, including the beloved *Chronicles of Narnia*. This discussion series will focus on Lewis's fantasy and science fiction writings, offering insights into their themes, significance, and enduring legacy.

### Class Schedule:

- **Week 1 (February 5):** Introduction to the class, sharing past experiences with C.S. Lewis, a brief review of his life and writings, and an introduction to *Mere Christianity*. Discussion will follow.
- **Week 2 (February 12):** Introduction to *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Discussion.
- **Week 3 (February 19):** Introduction to C.S. Lewis's science fiction trilogy (*Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, That Hideous Strength*). Discussion.
- **Week 4 (February 26):** Introduction to *Till We Have Faces*. Discussion.
- **Week 5 (March 5):** Introduction to *The Great Divorce*. Class review.

Whether you are new to C.S. Lewis or a longtime admirer of his work, this series promises engaging conversations and fresh perspectives. Questions? Contact Dale Sullivan, [dale@sullivanfiles.net](mailto:dale@sullivanfiles.net).

Make this winter a time for inspiration and intellectual enrichment. Mark your calendars and join us for this exciting journey through the works of C.S. Lewis!

## The Bible's Greatest Hits: Old Testament Edition

This spring, our Sunday morning Faith Formation class series will align with the sermon series running through March 2, exploring *The Bible's Greatest Hits: Old Testament Edition*.

Join us as we dive deeper into some of the most captivating and beloved stories from Scripture, including the call of Moses, the crossing of the Red Sea, the giving of the Ten Commandments, Balaam's Donkey, Joshua and the spies, and the inspiring tales of Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and Ruth.

Don't miss this opportunity to connect with these timeless stories in a fresh and meaningful way! Class is led by Dr. Matt Bruce and meets in the Recreation Room between worship services (10-11 a.m.).

## 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. You'll find a supportive community eager to learn and grow alongside you. Join us!

## Thursday Night Discussion Group

From January 16 through March 6, the Thursday Night Discussion Group will be reading *The After Party: Toward Better Christian Politics* by Curtis Chang and Nancy French.

As described by Google Books, this book "helps reframe our political identity away from the 'what' of political positions and toward the 'how' of being centered on Jesus." Please join us downstairs in Fellowship Hall on Thursday evenings from 7-8:30 p.m. for a stimulating, faith-filled discussion. Sometimes, there are cookies--the edible kind! Please contact Sally Dunn with any questions.



## Taizé Soup Suppers

This Lent, we will again hold mid-week Taizé worship services followed by a soup supper. Could you or your group provide soup for an evening? We anticipate needing five pots each week. If you can help, please contact Maryanne Beery ([mbeery@fpgh.org](mailto:mbeery@fpgh.org)). Services begin March 12.

## Alma College Choir to Perform at First Presbyterian Church

We are thrilled to announce that the Alma College Choir, the premier touring choir from Alma College, will be performing at First Presbyterian Church on **Thursday, February 27, at 7 p.m.** This promises to be an evening of extraordinary music, showcasing the talent and dedication of some of Michigan's finest collegiate vocalists.



The Alma Choir is the most advanced singing group on campus, with 20% of its members preparing for careers as professional musicians or music educators. Known for their artistry and dynamic performances, the choir has earned a reputation as one of the leading collegiate choirs in the region. Their Winter Tour will take them to

various locations throughout Michigan, and we are honored to be part of their journey.

Adding to the excitement, the Alma Choir will collaborate with the Grand Haven High School Choir and the FPGH Geneva Choir for this special performance.

The concert is free and open to the public, so bring your family and friends for a special evening of music.

## Community Artist & Speaker Series

**Young Organist, Dr. Sarah Simko  
March 9, 2025, 4:00 p.m.**

Dr. Sarah Simko is the associate organist and communications coordinator at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Detroit and an adjunct organ instructor at Madonna University. She earned her doctorate from the University of Michigan and a bachelor's from the Eastman School of Music.



Dr. Simko has performed at notable venues including Methuen Memorial Music Hall (MA), St. Paul's Cathedral (Ontario), Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church (Detroit), and Hill Auditorium (Ann Arbor).

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

# Youth Ministries

## Director of Youth Ministry Search Update



The search team has hit the ground running! The search team is comprised of Youth Elders Tim Tiefenbach and Karen Losee; church members Melissa Kutsche, Christine Rademacher, Aaron Portenga, and Alexis Stark; student representative Naomi Force; personnel representative Ryan Goldman; and Pastor Kristine Aragon Bruce. So far

we've received a handful of resumes and have begun interviews.

Our process is as follows:

- Review resumes.
- Grant promising candidates a short screening call with 1-2 members of the search team to ensure they fit with First Pres theologically.
- Grant another interview with the entire search team if the screening call goes well.
- Bring the candidate in person to our church to meet with students and if possible attend worship.

Please help the search by sharing the job description with as many family, friends, and acquaintances as possible! Questions? Please contact Tim Tiefenbach via the church office or Realm.

## FEBRUARY

- 9:** 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Worship Gathering
- 9:** Youth Group—**12:15-1:30 p.m.** Due to the Super Bowl, we're meeting early! Bring your questions about anything related to faith as Pastor Troy and our Theologian-in-Residence, Matt Bruce, will join Pastor Kristine to answer your questions on the spot!
- 23:** Youth Group—6-7:30 p.m. Snacks, games, and continued discussion about *Faith in an Anxious World*.

**Friends are always welcome at YG!**  
**Questions? Contact Pastor Kristine:**  
**KristineAB@fpg.org**



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

**February 2025**

*deliver to: (or current resident)*

# SUMMER CAMP

**It's time to start registering for summer camp!**

**Did you know that FPGH provides generous financial assistance to children who wish to attend a Christian summer camp?**

**(...and this is not limited to members of FPGH!)**



For details and an application, go to [fpgh.org](http://fpgh.org) or stop in the church office.  
If you are reading this online, you may download the forms from the following links:

[Informational Letter](#)

[Camp Project Application](#)