



PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

AUGUST 2025, VOLUME 73—ISSUE 8

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

From Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

I AM hopeful this August. We've already had a good summer where there have been lots of good connections made at the church and beyond. We've had folks bring their kids to spend time at the splash pad and make new friends. We've taken hikes in a great county parks. We've played trivia (and finished second!). We've had people growing in faith through classes and book studies. We've been engaging deeply with your good — and hard — questions. We've even made it through the town getting turned on its head once again to celebrate the Coast Guard.

I am hopeful because last August, while on sabbatical, I got a call from Kristine letting me know that our Youth Director had resigned. I encouraged her to let us walk slowly and faithfully so that we might better understand how best to walk with our youth and their families and so that we might find the best youth director out there. I am hopeful because we had a search committee dedicated to that purpose, and that led us to hiring J DeJonge, who has been a strong addition to the staff team already. J is excellent, fun, and faithful!

I am hopeful because we are heading towards another program year with a staff team and leadership committed to being the best we can be for God's mission. There is renewed energy around the building. There is creativity. There is laughter. I am hopeful because I know that if you step forward in getting involved, you will be able to grow too and you will be able to help deepen faith in others.

I am hopeful because around 20 of you stepped forward to take our *One Anothering* course this summer. It's been a weekly highlight for me to lead this group through the hard work of finding a new and better way to engage in hard conversations and to understand ourselves and our world more deeply. I leave those classes energized because I can sense the Spirit doing something that goes beyond our understanding. I am hopeful that these folks can make a difference in their homes, families, church, and community.

Finally, I am hopeful because I believe that 2025-2026 has all the potential in the world to be the best year of ministry we have had together. Yes, it will take the Spirit putting wind in our ministry's sails, but it will also take you believing that can be the case. It will take you saying "yes" to finding a new way to serve or to grow yourself. I am hopeful because I know you have it in you.

Enjoy August, friends. Fall is coming, and it's going to be great.

In Christ,

Pastor Troy

Upcoming Events

- Aug. 2** Coast Guard Cooling Station
- Aug. 4, 11, & 18** Youth YogaFaith
- Aug. 8** Red Cross Blood Drive
- Aug 9** Youth Horseback Trail Rides at Stony Lake Stables
- Aug 10** Playdate & Lunch on the Playground for Families with Young Children
- Aug. 10** Youth Meet & Greet J DeJonge
- Aug 18** Playground Playdate at the Imagination Station
- Aug 23** Group Hike at Hoffmaster State Park
- Aug. 24** Blessing of the Backpacks
- Sept. 7** One Worship Service (10 AM) & Picnic at Pottawattomie Park
- Sept. 7** 5th Grade Welcome Party
- Sept. 14** Youth Kick-Off Beach Party
- Sept. 18** ACT Uganda Presentation
- Sept. 26** PW Mum Sale
- Sept. 28** Shimmie Pearl CAS Concert in the Parking Lot

FOR YOUR calendar:

one 10 AM
WORSHIP SERVICE
FOLLOWED BY OUR
ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC
SEPTEMBER 7!



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

FPGH Cares:

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

Prayer Concerns:

Mary & Ron Albrecht, Ron Hunter, Beth Maschewske

Our Sympathy:

to Bari Johnson on the passing of her sister, JoAnn Johnson, on July 21.

to Ken Clark on the passing of his sister, Dorothy Green, on July 22.

Congratulations!

to Sally and Mark Bryant on the birth of their granddaughter, Everette (Evie) Elaine Bryant, born to their son Carter and his wife Emalee, on July 27.

Tidings article deadline for September issue: August 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.

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!

Aug 5 Barbara Spring
1504 Pineridge Drive
Grand Haven, MI 49417

Sept. 19 Sandy Beute
1410 S. Ferry, #F-10
Grand Haven, MI 49417

Hot Off the Press!

Good News!

Our updated church directory is ready! Stop by the church office any-time to pick up your copy.

Note: the directory includes members, regular attenders, and clergy.



The Upper Room Devotionals

The Upper Room is a daily devotional read worldwide in over 30 languages. New issues are published every two months and are available for free in the church office, lounge, and Gathering Area. Feel free to take a copy!



Blood Drive August 8

The need is greater than ever.
The gratification is instant.

Give blood.



Our next blood drive:

Friday, August 8

11:00—4:15 p.m.

**First Presbyterian Church
Schedule your donation at:
redcrossblood.org**

All donors who give blood in August are eligible to receive a \$15 e- gift card & successful donations get A1C testing.

Food Pantry Collection

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

Some suggested items:

- Canned soups and stews
- Canned chicken and tuna
- Canned fruit & applesauce
- Boxed dinners, such as Hamburger Helper or other skillet meals
- Granola bars

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

Thank you!



From Pastor Kristine Aragon Bruce

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Dear Church Family,

I'm on a high from being with our youth at Montreat Conference Center in Montreat, NC! We were there for a youth conference, and if you, like me, have never been to the Blue Ridge Mountains of Western North Carolina, I highly recommend you go!

Whenever I'm with our youth on mission trips, retreats etc., it's always so fun to see them bond in ways that would not happen elsewhere. Youth from different schools and of all ages laughed and played together all week. While they lovingly heckled me for being "old" and "slow" (don't ever try to keep up with teens when hiking—or really during any activity), I miss seeing them every day now that we're back in the real world.

What I also loved about the conference were the speakers. The keynote speaker, Chris Lee, a PC(USA) pastor from Texas gave what honestly was the best youth

message I've ever heard. Youth ministry has vastly changed in the last five years and continues to evolve at lightning speed. The world our youth are growing up in is vastly different from the world we grew up in. This includes the kind of church or youth ministry we were a part of when we were youth.

Youth today have more of a global perspective and are experts at seeing through the inauthentic. Chris Lee's first message for the youth was that while it's true that God, through God's Word, will always "light our path" (Psalm 119:105) there isn't always just one path. Chris reminded our youth—and the adults among us—that life is seldom linear and faith isn't always black and white. We will find ourselves on the wrong paths at times or on unexpected detours in life. This doesn't necessarily mean that we did anything wrong, although that very well could be the case, but more often than not

it's because life throws unexpected curve balls at us.

It's during these times that we may find ourselves in the dark, unsure of where to turn next. But Chris reminded us that the darkness can be a holy place—where we witness how God is still with us, and even in the darkness Christ brings us light (Psalm 139:7-12).

Chris's opening message set the foundation for encouraging, yet convicting, topics that led our youth into more deep and fruitful conversations. We're so grateful to our church family for making this experience possible; your support allowed our youth to grow in faith and connection through the amazing experiences we shared at Montreat.

Grateful for you,

Pastor Kristine
KristineAB@fpgh.org

In Our Church

One Worship Service
at 10 AM

Sunday, September 7

Mark your calendar!

On Sunday, September 7, we'll have **one worship service at 10 a.m.** followed immediately by our **annual church picnic at Pottawattomie Park** (15600 Comstock, GH).

All are welcome for a great morning of worship, food and fellowship!

Please join us for our annual

ALL-CHURCH PICNIC!

SEPTEMBER 7, 2025

**15600 COMSTOCK STREET
GRAND HAVEN, MI**

RSVP in the church office



Win a Prize in the Eco-Summer Challenge!

The Earth Care Team is once again sponsoring the “Eco-Summer Challenge!”

Walk, bike, take Harbor Transit, or carpool to church for any activity during the challenge. Sign and date a participation note, drop it in the collection tin and you're registered for the monthly drawing to win \$25 in Dune Dollars!



We are celebrating Eco-Summer, but being eco-friendly is for all seasons! Let's develop new habits that are good for the earth.

Congratulations to our July winner, Sharon Tanis!

Group Hike at Hoffmaster!

Join us for a fun and refreshing group hike at Hoffmaster State Park! Whether you're a seasoned trailblazer or just enjoy a peaceful walk in nature, this outing is for you.

We'll meet in the ski lot and then head out together before splitting into two groups: one group will enjoy a 1-mile hike, while the other takes on a slightly more adventurous 2.5-mile route. Both trails wind through the beautiful forest and end at the stunning shores of Lake Michigan—perfect for a mid-hike breather and great views. Both hikes are a bit more rugged than our previous hikes this summer and include stairs.

It's a great way to connect with others, enjoy God's creation, and get a little movement in, too. Bring your walking shoes, water, and a spirit of adventure. All ages are welcome!

Date & Time: Saturday, August 3

Meeting Spot: Hoffmaster State Park – Ski Lot
6585 Lake Harbor Rd, Norton Shores, MI

RSVP: Todd Olson, Tolson@fpgh.org or <https://tinyurl.com/37sw8sf2>
(helpful to keep participants updated with any changes or rain plans)

Cost: Free if you have a State Park Recreation Pass. Day passes may be purchased for \$11.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN



508 Franklin Avenue
Grand Haven, MI 49417
Phone: 616.842.6760
www.fpgh.org • staff@fpgh.org

Sunday Morning Worship Services
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
J DeJonge, Director of Youth Ministries
Todd Olson, Church Administrator
Marc Felt, Gathering Band Leader
Rob Hlebinsky, Organist
Karen Nienhouse, Congregational Care Ministries
Kerri Roberts, Office Assistant
Clara Saunders, Youth & Family Ministries Intern
Sally Segers, Joyful Noise Director
Andrew Wolfert, Administrative Assistant

Ask Us Anything - *Tidings* Edition



We have received many good questions for our *Ask Us Anything* series. There are more than we can handle in sermons, so Pastor Troy give some brief answers to some questions in *Tidings* this summer. So, here we go!

What is the difference between faith and belief, and how do each help when you are wrestling with doubt?

Interestingly, both words have the same Greek root word, so I don't think there's a huge difference. Faith is a noun; that is, you can have faith, but you can't faith something. Belief easily moves into a verb form, so you can have belief and you can believe. There are some really interesting debates around how to translate faith as it relates to Jesus. Do we have faith *in* Christ, or is it the faithfulness *of* Christ that makes salvation possible? I lean towards both/and here, but if pressed, I'd rely on Jesus and not me when it comes to belief! I've always loved the story in Mark 9, where a father brings his sick child to Jesus for healing. Jesus' disciples were unable to help, and the desperate father pleads with Jesus, "I believe! Help my unbelief!" I think this is a great prayer for any time we wrestle with doubt. We all do, but offering an expression of trust gives space for God to work in us.

What do we do with how children's Bibles make heroes out of people who I no longer see as a hero?

We read children's Bibles to our kids a lot growing up, and I think there's space for simply learning

the stories when you're young. For example, we highlight the rainbow and the animals in the Noah story, but we gloss over God destroying the vast majority of humanity in a flood. My attitude has always been that it's easier to do some faithful deconstruction of what you learned as a child when you grow older than it is not to know the stories at all. I'd rather take the solid foundation of knowing these things and do some repair than skip them entirely because they're hard. This past winter I preached many of these stories, partly to show how our interpretation deepens and changes with time and experience.

There is so much violence in the Biblical stories and in our world. As Christians, what do we do with this?

I think this relates well to the last question. The Bible takes sin seriously, and violence is one of the clearest expressions of sin. So, we read these stories and interpret them in light of the God we know in Jesus Christ, who blessed the peacemakers and the meek. We do live in a broken and fearful world. Violence is part of life because there is sin, but I believe that Christians should be at the hard work of peacemaking wherever we are. We should be about bringing life and hope. We should do things that counter the violence of the world because it has no place in the Kingdom of God. Violence is the easy path; love is God's path.

Does God have a gender?

No. Obviously, the incarnate Jesus was a man, but the Trinity is genderless. God created humanity in God's image, and that includes all of us.

Why does evil seem to overcome the good in the world?

2 Peter 3:9 gives a good answer to this, "The Lord is not slow in

keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." The passage comes from a church facing persecution. They're trying to follow Jesus, and it seems like evil is winning. This is Peter's answer, and it basically is saying that God's plan goes way beyond our perspective. In other words, God's patience made space for even you to encounter Jesus, and so we do our best to share that light in the midst of the crookedness of the world. Or to put it most clearly: God hasn't eradicated evil in the world because God is patient enough to wait even for you to turn to Jesus. I find that humbling.

How can we believe God is a loving God when the Bible says that God punishes the children for the sins of the parents?

This comes straight from the second commandment, and on its surface, it sure seems unfair, but let's think of it this way. If you grew up in a household where a parent had anger issues, there's a pretty decent chance that you will grow up to resemble your parent. The sin of the father gets passed down through modeling, so it takes will-power to break the pattern to keep it from going to the next generation. But, let's also keep in mind that there is a positive side that continues on in this verse. God shows "steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:6). So, I see this less as God being unloving and more as God describing what actually happens when we do or do not live faithfully.

Thursday Night Discussion Group

FEAST and (non)FICTION: The Thursday night group is taking a break from our usual theological books and reading some lighter fare this summer. Please join us on August 21 at 6 pm in the Lounge for a potluck supper followed by a book discussion.

Our selection for August is *Going Postal* by Terry Pratchett. Per Kirkus (kirkusreviews.com), "Pratchett satirizes the modern telecom business in a deeply satisfying comedy about a man (Moist Von Lipwig) sent to a fate worse than death: the post office....Pratchett slides the satire in around the edges of the primary action: watching a career criminal transitioning rather quickly to earnest civic flunky, all under the watchful (glowing red) eyes of a monstrously powerful and patient government-employed golem. Although Moist seems a little too eager to leave his bad ways behind, it's almost shamefully enjoyable to watch him restore the mail routes, invent the idea of stamps, and go toe-to-toe with everything from rapacious businessmen to bloodthirsty banshees as he shows how to deliver letters over 40 years late. Sharp-edged humor—and wonderfully executed."

Please contact Linda Gritter at lindagritter@gmail.com for more details.



FREE CONCERT

featuring

SHIMMIE PEARL

SHIMMIEPEARL.COM

EVENT DETAILS

Date: Sunday, September 28
Time: 4:00 PM
Location: in the Parking Lot of
First Presbyterian Church
Admission: FREE!

From '70s classics to today's hits, Shimmie Pearl brings the groove with rock, blues, jazz, and soul!



HELP KIDS IN FOSTER CARE START THE SCHOOL YEAR STRONG!

We're collecting new school supplies for local children in foster care.
Your donations will help ensure every student
has the tools they need to learn and thrive this year.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- Quality Backpacks
- Composition Notebooks
- 3-Ring Binders & Dividers
- Sticky Notes
- Expo Markers
- Glue Sticks
- Pencil Boxes
- Highlighters
- Lined Paper
- Crayola Markers
- Crayola Colored Pencils

**DROP OFF DONATIONS IN THE COLLECTION BIN
IN THE GATHERING AREA THROUGH AUGUST 10.**

kidsbelong.org



Youth Ministries

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August Youth Events

Youth YogaFaith

August 4, 11, & 18
11 AM in the Chapel

All Youth Activity Night

August 7 & 14
6:30 PM in Fellowship Hall

Horseback Trail Rides at Stony Lake Stables

August 9
Meet at the Stables at 1 PM
RSVP by August 4:
<https://tinyurl.com/ycnewz6c>
or email Clara: csaunders@fpgh.org



Hi, First Pres family!

My name is Jill DeJonge—but please call me J—and I'm so excited to be here as your new Youth Director. It's been a joy getting to know the amazing young people in this community, and I'm looking forward to all that's ahead. I believe deeply in creating spaces where youth can be real, ask big questions, and experience God's love in meaningful ways.

As we head into the fall, I'll be launching small groups for high schoolers, planning fun gatherings for middle schoolers, and getting to know families and volunteers along the way. Thank you for the warm welcome—I'm grateful to be part of this church and can't wait to see what God is up to here!

With gratitude,

J DeJonge

Moments from Montreat



Children's Ministries

Summer Events for Children

Littles Linger Longer Lunch

Sunday, August 10, noon



Families with young children are invited to another playdate and lunch on the playground! We'll be serving submarine sandwiches and fruit, with gluten-free options available as well.

Playdate on the Playground

Monday, August 18, 10:30 a.m.

Imagination Station, Grand Haven



Kids and caregivers - come and join Miss Laura for fun, friends and fellowship at the Imagination Station! Pack your own juice or water and Miss Laura will bring popsicles to share.



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

August 2025

deliver to: (or current resident)

Blessing of the Backpacks

Sunday, August 24

at both 9 & 11 a.m.
worship services

Students, teachers, & staff are invited
to bring their backpacks & bags for a
special blessing to start the school year!



Everyone will get a "This is a Blessed Backpack" tag!