



PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

SEPTEMBER 2025, VOLUME 73—ISSUE 9

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

From Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

THIS is my favorite time of year. Hands down. The sun is still shining, but the air has a touch of cool to it. School is back. Fall sports are back. The Lions get to play again. (I'm not even a fan, but it's fun to watch you all get excited about the Lions.) I am a fall person, for sure.

Because the rhythm of our lives is very much oriented around school schedules, even the church has a program year that runs from September through May, leaving the summer months for an entirely different rhythm. Our church has a practice of starting the program year off with an all-church worship service followed by a picnic.

This year that Sunday is on September 7. We'll gather in the sanctuary at 10 to find out who sits where you sit in the other service. Actually, that's not why we gather, but it is fun to see worlds collide! No, we gather to see our siblings in Christ all in one space. For Gathering folks, you get to hear the glories of the organ and choir. For the Traditional folks, you get to experience the talented leadership of our Gathering Band. It's been a while since we packed this service out, so I really hope you make a point to be there this year.

Following that service we head to Pottawattomie Park in Grand Haven Township for a feast. Our Hospitality Team always does a great job preparing this picnic. This year we're planning Minute-to-Win-It games as part of our fun. We'll stick around longer to play all-ages kickball too. So, come! Expect to have a great time with your church family!

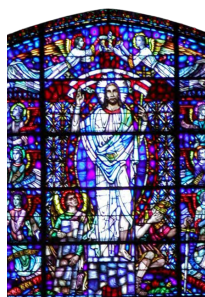
Our sermons this fall will focus on our meaningful and beautiful stained glass windows. As is my custom, I like to add something interesting to the mix. This year, I've invited the Rev. Michelle Olson, who is a gifted Spiritual Director, to lead us in *visio divina*, which is a practice in which we dwell on an image and ask the Spirit to speak to us through it. We'll do an abbreviated version of this in our all-church service to give you a taste. **Starting Wednesday, September 10, at noon in the chapel,** Michelle will hold group spiritual direction. We'll use that hour to dwell on the upcoming Sunday's window. We plan to hold these weekly until Thanksgiving week.

I've done this before with Michelle, and I expect that all who come will find their hearts and faith opened to wonder. It's well worth your time, so come.

Fall is a chance to try something new. I hope you'll find a way to deepen faith and connection with one another.

In Christ,

Pastor Troy



Upcoming Events

- Sept. 3** First Choir Rehearsal of the New Program Year 6-8:30 PM
- Sept. 5** Feeding America Food Truck
- Sept. 7** **One Worship Service (10 AM)** & Picnic at Pottawattomie Park
- Sept. 10** Visio Divina in the Sanctuary
- Sept. 14** Youth Kick-Off Beach Party
- Sept. 17** Visio Divina in the Sanctuary
- Sept. 18** ACT Uganda Presentation
- Sept. 24** Visio Divina in the Sanctuary
- Sept. 26** PW Mum Sale
- Sept. 28** Shimmie Pearl CAS Concert in the Parking Lot
- Oct. 1** Visio Divina in the Sanctuary
- Oct. 5** World Communion Sunday
- Oct. 5** CROP Walk
- Oct. 8** Visio Divina in the Sanctuary
- Oct. 11** Spiritual Retreat with Michelle Olson

VISIO DIVINA

Wednesdays
at noon
Sept. 10-Nov. 19
in the Sanctuary



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, Paul McNergney, and Ray Wiersema

Our Sympathy:

to Kris Kelley and family on the passing of her husband, Mark, on August 10.

to the friends and family of Sandra Beute, who passed away on August 20.

to Lee Brink and Bill and Nichole Brink on the passing of Lee's wife and Bill's mother, Suzie Brink, on August 24.

PW Gathering: Update on ACT Uganda

Presbyterian Women (PW) continue to support a young child's education in Uganda through ACT Uganda. Sue Waechter, one of ACT Uganda's directors, will share an update on the mission's work and bring beautiful crafts made by participants in the program.

We invite the entire congregation to join us on **Wednesday, September 18, at 3:00 PM in the Lounge**. Enjoy cookies, beverages, and a chance to learn more about this meaningful ministry.



Feeding America Food Truck Volunteers Needed

Twice a year, First Presbyterian Church sponsors a Feeding America food truck to help meet the growing need for healthy food for those experiencing food insecurity in our community.

Helping hands are always welcome as we distribute food to neighbors in need. Can you lend a hand?

Next Event: Friday, Sept. 5

Time: 9-11:30 a.m.

Location: St. Pat's parking lot
(park in the church lot on Fulton)

Rain or Shine!

Contact **Mike Weller** at:
mcweller1@hotmail.com,
or text/call 616-402-6109

Thursday Night Discussion Group

The Thursday Night Discussion Group will resume meeting weekly on September 18, 2025 at 7 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

The book selection for September and October is "Costly Grace: A Contemporary View of Bonhoeffer's The Cost of Discipleship" by Rick Warren. Please join us for a discussion of "the timeless message of Bonhoeffer against the background of today's political upheaval and societal change and what it means to those who claim to follow Christ's teachings."

Please contact Linda Gritter or Katie Norton for more information.

A Sabbath Retreat Saturday, October 11

**Are you feeling caught in the onslaught of life and need a moment to rest?
Join us as we intentionally stop to sit at the feet of Jesus.**

This time is an opportunity to slow down and be with God in a way that renews our heart and soul. We will be guided through the time with some brief teachings, optional creative exercises and a balance of alone and group time for reflection and sharing. Come and be refreshed.

When: Saturday, October 11, 9:30 AM—3:00 PM

Where: First Presbyterian Church

Cost: \$15 per person (lunch included)

Sign up on Sundays with Rev. Michelle Olson between services in the Gathering Area or contact the church office.

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!



Update from the Session

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

Report from Session

- Pastor Kristine began her doctor of ministry project, which includes elder/session participation in growing the spiritual lives of elders.
- We approved expenditures from the Omega (endowment) Fund to replace a boiler and to repair a sanctuary air conditioner, as well as funding for administrative staff to attend a conference on our database.
- We continued our conversation on vision and goals and had a presentation on Exvangelicals.
- We elected elder commissioners for the September presbytery meeting.

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

Peace and Global Witness Offering

"Pursue what makes for peace" - Romans 14:19

On World Communion Sunday, October 5, we celebrate our togetherness around the globe at the communion table in God's house. We worship together and are fed from Scripture and at Christ's table of peace. Peacemaking is central to the gospel and the mission of the Church. **The Peace and Global Justice Special Offering** helps to shine God's light from our hearts and hands to others.



- **25%** will stay here locally to be given to the Ed and Nancy Hanenburg Children's Advocacy Center in Holland MI. The CAC has served over 9,000 children in Ottawa County for over 25 years. It provides child-centered prevention advocacy, and team intervention in investigation, assessment, and treatment of child sexual abuse. An environment has been created where healing from trauma is accessible to all children and families.
- **25%** supports regional efforts for hope and healing in Lake Michigan Presbytery and the Synod of the Covenant.
- **50%** supports work for peace and reconciliation being done by Presbyterians across the globe as they work to confront systems of injustice and promote reconciliation.

Offering envelopes for this Special Offering will be in the pews and at the Clinton St. entrance in September.

Tri-Cities 51st Crop Walk to End Hunger

We need you!

Join us for the CROP Walk to stand in solidarity with millions who walk daily for food and water. Bring your kids, dogs, and friends for a **1-mile family walk** or a **5K**. A generous faithful donor in our community has agreed to **match donations dollar for dollar**.



When:

Sunday, October 5

Registration at 1:30 pm

Walk begins at 2:00pm

Where:

Ferrysburg Community Church

17785 Mohawk Drive

(Just off Dogwood by Leppinks)

What:

25% of the money raised is distributed to local food pantries, including The People Center, Love in Action, and the Salvation Army. The remainder is sent to Church World Service, an ecumenical international relief agency that provides food, medical care, and disaster relief to people in 35 countries.

How:

Contribute to the FPGH team on Sunday mornings beginning September 21. Checks should be made out to **CWS**. During the week, a donation envelope will be in the church office. You may also go to the Tri-Cities CROP Walk website: <https://tinyurl.com/ghcropwalk> and donate to the First Presbyterian team. Donation envelopes are also available to collect money from your friends, relatives, and neighbors and turned in on Sunday, October 5.

Winners!

The Earth Care Team's "Eco-Summer Challenge" is still underway! If you walk, bike, or carpool to church for any activity, you can enter the monthly drawing for a \$25 Dune Dollars certificate. Congratulations to our July winner, Sharon Tanis! The final drawing will be Sunday, Sept 28, but we encourage you to keep your eco-friendly travel habits all year long!



July also featured Plastic-Free July, with weekly challenges to "Refuse to Use Plastic." Small changes can lead to big shifts in reducing waste, and many participants discovered simple ways to live with less plastic. Congratulations to Leslie VerDuin, winner of the Plastic-Free

July drawing! Her prize basket was filled with everyday alternatives to plastic—items you can easily find at local grocery stores, Dollar Tree, and specialty shops.

A big thank-you to everyone who participated in our summer challenges and is helping support climate-friendly living!

Cooling Station Welcomes Hundreds

On Saturday, during the 2025 Coast Guard Parade, First Presbyterian Church opened its doors as a Cooling Station to provide a welcoming place for parade-goers to rest, refresh, and recharge.

Between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., over 400 people came through our doors to enjoy a quiet, air-

conditioned space, get a glass of ice-cold water, and use the restrooms. The hospitality of our church was warmly received and greatly appreciated by our guests.

A heartfelt thank you to the 16 volunteers who helped make this ministry possible—welcoming visitors and keeping things running smoothly. They made the hosting of this event swift and simple.

Once again, FPC showed the love of Christ through simple, meaningful acts of hospitality—serving our community with open doors and open hearts.

-Co-chairs Sally Dunn & Gail Winters

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

Sally Segers, Joyful Noise Director

Lindsay Williams, Office Assistant

Andrew Wolfert, Bookkeeper/Admin. Assistant

Dear Church Family,

The following is a question that Pastor Troy and I weren't able to include in our "Ask Us Anything" summer sermon series.

As Matthew 22:39 says we are "to love our neighbors as ourselves," however Christians often don't. Many view Christians as intolerant, hateful, and judgmental. Two questions: Why is hatred spoken from the pulpit? Second: How do we change as a whole moving forward?

I will attempt to answer these questions in this article. To answer the first question, the pulpits from which hatred is spoken are in general driven by fear instead of by the freeing love of Jesus Christ. For example, during the time of slavery, many (not all) predominately white churches supported slavery from the pulpit. This was a result of their fear of what they perceived to be the breakdown of the way God ordered society, where Africans were seen as subhuman. They also supported slavery due to their fear of losing power. Without slavery the business of white plantation owners would suffer. This same fear is seen in the

churches who supported segregation during the Civil Rights movement. The end of segregation would afford African Americans opportunities to prosper economically in the same way as Caucasian Americans. Such churches justified their fears by wrongly interpreting certain passages to support racist institutions such as slavery and segregation. Such misinterpretations of Scripture also protected their power and standing in society. These churches failed to see the encompassing love of Jesus Christ for all people—regardless of gender, race or standing of society (Galatians 3:28).

Such churches are driven by a theology that sees God and the Christian faith as under attack and needing protection. As a result they see their calling as defending Christianity. They then take it upon themselves to counteract what they (falsely) perceive to be persecution and/or the breakdown of society due to changes such as the legalization of same sex marriages. Such theology places one's own self, instead of Jesus Christ, as the authority over the Church.

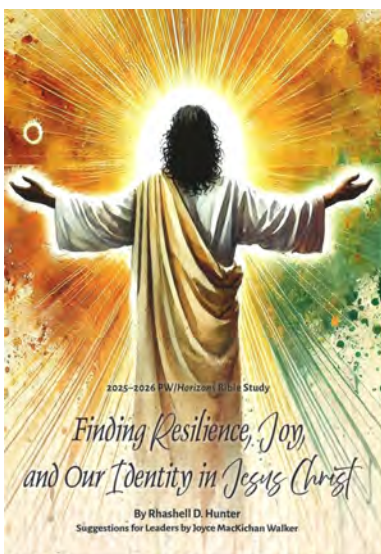
As for the second question, the way

forward is found in Matthew 22:37-38. A teacher of the Law asks Jesus "What is the greatest commandment in the law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Matthew 22:38) When we strive to love God with our entire selves, the love of Christ will override our fear. (1 John 4:16-18). This includes the fear that we will somehow lose our well-being when others are given the same opportunities or the support that many of us take for granted (e.g., a stable income and familial support system etc). When we strive to love God with our entire selves, we will be more careful not to interpret scripture as what we want it to say, but rather understand it as what *God* desires for us to hear.

I pray that we each rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, whose very purpose is to empower us to love God first so that we can better love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

In Christ,

Pastor Kristine



Join a PW Circle!

Jane Bottje	1st Monday, 9:30 AM
Ferry White	1st Thursday, 9:30 AM
Eight Founders	1st Thursday, 1:00 PM
Albee Duvernay	1st Thursday, 7:00 PM

for questions,
contact Sue Ochs, Melissa VerHage,
or the church office: staff@fpg.org



It's time for the annual PW
Fall Mum Sale!
only \$8/plant!
Friday, September 26
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
in the church parking lot
8" pots of beautiful mum plants
in a variety of colors!

An Update from Director of Music and Arts, Maryanne Beery

Greetings All:

I'm pleased to let you all know that I'm taking a short study leave this fall (September 14-October 17) and will be spending time on the Scottish island of Iona and exploring other areas of Scotland. In part, this is preparation to lead a pilgrimage to Iona next fall, in conjunction with folks from the Presbyterian Church in Denver, CO, where our former Associate Minister Jill Vanderwal is currently serving. I'll share more details about this trip in the future and hope to entice those of you interested to join this adventure.

I'll also be participating in worship services at the Iona Abby and look forward to bringing fresh ideas and materials to our own services. I particularly appreciate Rob Hlebinsky's willingness to take over leadership of the Geneva Choir while I am away. I also appreciate you, our ministers, and the church Session for continuing to be so supportive. I can't wait to share what I learn and experience with all of you!



Pilgrimage to Iona

You are invited to spend a week on the Isle of Iona, Scotland.

Why: "a pilgrimage to Iona not as an escape, but as a way for people to be renewed with open eyes, so they can return to their lives with refreshed sight and a deeper connection to the Divine and the Earth." - John Philip Newell

When: September 10-19, 2026

How: By plane, train, two ferries, and a bus

What: We will follow the rhythms that are set for those joining the Iona Community life

We will meet to share details and answer questions on October 19, 12:15 pm, in Fellowship Hall. If you are interested, please be in touch with Maryanne Beery
mbeery@fpg.org



EVENT DETAILS

Date: Sunday, Sept. 28

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: In the parking lot of FPGH!

From '70s classics to today's hits, Shimmie Pearl brings the groove with rock, blues, jazz, and soul! Funky bass lines, bluesy horns, powerhouse vocals—you'll feel the music from the inside out!

Join a Choir!

Choir season is almost here, and we're saving a spot for you!

**Carillon Ringers
Handbell Choir**

Contact Rob:
rhlebins@gmail.com

Geneva Choir

Starts Wednesday, Sept. 3
6-8:30 PM

with refreshments

Future practices are every
Wednesday 7:30-8:30 PM
in the sanctuary chancel

Contact Maryanne:
mbeery@fpg.org



**New ringers and voices are
always welcome—try it out!**

Youth Ministries

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A New Season of Fun, Faith, and Friendship!

Fall is here, and that means it's time to kick off another great year of youth ministry at **First Presbyterian Church of Grand Haven!** We have some exciting events planned this month, and we hope all of our **5th–12th grade students** will join us as we grow together in faith, fun, and friendship.

- **Saturday, September 14, 6-8 PM – Youth Ministry Kickoff at the Beach**
We're starting the year with a celebration at the beach! Join us for games, food, and fellowship as we reconnect after summer break. 
- **Saturday, September 21, 6:30-8 PM – First Regular Youth Group** Our weekly gatherings begin! We'll come together for meaningful discussions, activities, and plenty of fun as we launch into a new season.
- **Saturday, September 28, 12:30-3:30 PM – Orchard Trip, Corn Maze, and Hayride**
We'll enjoy an evening of fall fun together with a hayride, a trip through the corn maze, and time at the orchard. 

We're looking forward to a wonderful season of ministry with our youth. Be sure to mark your calendars and invite a friend—it's going to be a fantastic start to the year!

For further details, contact Youth Ministries Director, J DeJonge: jdejonge@fpgh.org

Children's Ministries

September Events in Children's Ministries

[Back-to-school coffee](#)

September 3, 9-10 a.m.

Grand Finale Spring Lake

Join Laura and J for our back-to-school coffee and prayer at Grand Finale Cafe in Spring Lake on Wednesday, September 3, from 9-10 am. All parents, caregivers, and younger siblings welcome. Come share your hopes, fears, (a few tears) and prayers for the new year.

[Preschool Prayer Walk](#)

September 8, 9:15 a.m.

YMCA Parking Lot

Preschool parents and caregivers are invited into community and for a prayer walk on the first day of preschool. This is a significant milestone for the whole family. Meet Laura in the YMCA parking lot after drop off. We'll walk the pier and share our first day jitters, excitement, worries and prayers.

[Shine34 Horseback Riding Trip](#)

September 21, 3 p.m.

Stony Lake Stables

Shine34 is a fellowship group designed especially for our 3rd and 4th grade students. And it's time for our annual horseback riding trip to Stony Lake Stables! This beautiful ride through field and forest is a delight. Stony Lake Stables does a great job with first-time riders--no experience necessary. If you have a 3rd or 4th-grade student, contact Laura (lburns@fpgh.org) for more details about this trip. It's a memorable and meaningful experience. Hope you will join us!

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

September 2025

deliver to: (or current resident)

Please join us for our annual

ALL-CHURCH PICNIC!

SEPTEMBER 7, 2025

immediately following the worship service

**POTTAWATTOMIE PARK
15600 COMSTOCK STREET
GRAND HAVEN, MI**

RSVP in the church office

**ONE WORSHIP SERVICE
AT
>> 10 AM! <<**

it's free!

- delicious food! 
- fun games for all ages!
- great company! 

**YOU ARE ENCOURAGED
TO BRING YOUR OWN REUSABLE
PLACE SETTING**