



PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

DECEMBER 2025, VOLUME 73—ISSUE 12

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

From Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

Advent and Christmas are here! I really love so much about this season, which makes up for the shorter days and the colder temperatures. I'm writing this with my eye towards Thanksgiving Day. This year I'm in charge of pies to bring to the family feast in Indiana. I'm going for pumpkin, pecan, apple, and the not-at-all-appropriate key lime for a wild card. The day after, my family will get our house all set for the season. On Saturday, we'll head downtown to support small businesses. Then Advent begins on Sunday, with a gathering to trim the church later that afternoon. While it seems very busy, I have a big smile on my face as I think about the joy of this season.

I hope you've got lots of your own traditions that bring you joy, and I trust that some of those connect you well with your church. We've been working hard getting ready for the Sundays of Advent, including making video connections with folks who can't make it to the sanctuary easily. There will be many events at the church — concerts, meals, and other celebrations. The Faith Formation Committee has a devotional for those looking to dig a little deeper, and the Children's Ministries Committee has Advent materials ready as well.

As the season draws to its close, I invite you to our special services. On the evening of December 21, we hold a Service of Light and Hope, which is a chance to enter the quietness and sadness that are part of this time of year. This is for anyone carrying a burden, and it's particularly helpful for those who are grieving. It's simply beautiful, and I hope you'll come.

Last year we devoted a service to our youngest and their families called Christmas Carols and Cookies. That service returns on December 23 at 4:30, right as Joyful Noise wraps up for the holidays. It's a 20-minute service of song, story, and lots of jingle bells.

Christmas Eve brings us two services. At 4:00, we'll have our Gathering Christmas Eve service, led by the Gathering Band. At 9:00, we'll hold our Traditional Christmas Eve service, led by the organ and Geneva Choir. This is a great opportunity to invite others to worship, so I hope you will! Finally, note that the Sunday after Christmas, we will hold a single service at 10:00, a chance to be together as a church family in the afterglow of all that is good about Christmas.

Finally, in this *Tidings*, you'll read a note from our beloved organist, Rob Hlebinsky. He has asked for and the session has granted him a leave of absence. I'll leave you to read his words, but I want to express my gratitude to the session for its holistic care for the staff. I also want to express my gratitude to Rob, both for recognizing that he needs this and for being a truly fantastic organist and musician. My prayers join yours for him in this leave.

My friends, Christmas is almost here. I can't wait to walk this season with you.

In Christ,

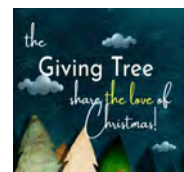
Pastor Troy

Upcoming Events

- Dec. 5** Red Cross Blood Drive
- Dec. 14** PW Bazaar & Bake Sale
- Dec. 14** Youth Christmas Party
- Dec. 14** Shoreline Community Orchestra
C.A.S. Christmas Concert
- Dec. 18** Heritage Program & Luncheon
- Dec. 21** Christmas Service of Light
and Hope, 5 p.m.
- Dec. 23** Christmas Carols & Cookies,
4:30 p.m. Family-Friendly
Christmas Eve Service
- Dec. 24** Christmas Eve Services:
4 p.m. The Gathering
Contemporary Service
9 p.m. Traditional Service of
Lessons & Carols
- Dec. 25-26**
Church Office Closed
for Christmas
- Dec. 28** One Worship Service, 10 a.m.
- Jan. 1** Happy New Year!
Church Office Closed

The Giving Tree Christmas Ministry

The Giving Tree Ministry will once again be collecting \$25 gift cards to help make Christmas brighter for those in need. Cards from Meijer and Walmart are especially helpful, allowing families to buy gifts or essentials. Look for the Giving Tree table in the Gathering Area thru December 14.



The donated gift cards will be distributed to the following local programs:
Step Up, Hope Project, Reach the Forgotten, and the Housing Ministries of Love in Action.

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

Prayer Concerns:

Mary & Ron Albrecht, Ken Ennenga,
Ron Hunter

Our Sympathy:

to the family and friends of Jerry
Erwin, who passed away on
November 23. A combined service
for Jerry and Lois will be held at a
later date, to be announced.

Thank you:

Dear Friends at FPGH,
Thanks to all of you who reached
out to me while I have been
recovering from this horrid knee
replacement. I'm trusting in the
Lord, your prayers, and my
prayers for all to be better soon.

Your friend,
Juanita Sheridan

Dear Church Family,

We want to thank you so very
much for all the thoughtful, caring
and funny cards. The delicious
meals made such a big difference
when we just weren't up to
cooking. Flowers are always so
cheering and put a smile on our
faces and in our hearts. We
especially appreciated the
prayers, they definitely made a
difference and helped us get
through from mid-July until now.
...It's been a long haul but it was
made so much better with your
support.

In His Love,
Beth and Bill Maschewski

Cookie Bakers for Children's Christmas Eve Service Wanted!

Christmas Carols and
Cookies is a joyful, family-
friendly Christmas service
created especially with
young children in mind—though
everyone is invited to join the fun!
The service is short and filled with
lively music, big smiles, and plenty
of holiday cheer!



Afterward, the celebration
continues in the lounge with
hot cocoa and cookies. To
make this event extra-
special, **we are looking for 8
volunteers to each make 2 dozen
homemade, nut-free cookies.**

If you can help, please email Laura
at lburns@fpgh.org, or sign up
using this link: <https://tinyurl.com/5e259hfk>

HAPPY Birthday

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
(this will be Ernie's 100th
birthday!)

Jan. 8

Mary Fox
18029 Wildwood Springs Pkwy
Spring Lake, MI 49456

PW Christmas Bazaar Sunday, Dec. 14

Indulge in the season's best treats
and treasures at the annual PW
Christmas Bazaar! Stop by the
lounge on Sunday, December 14,
after each worship service to
browse the wonderful selection of
baked goods and crafts.

You'll find a delicious
spread of homemade
cookies, muffins, pies,
fudge, coffee cakes, and
snack mixes—including
both Chex and trail mix
favorites. And don't miss
the beloved PW Jewel
Chip candy, a holiday classic!



Come discover festive goodies and
unique items that will add a little
sparkle to your holiday season.

Food Pantry Collection

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

Some suggested items:

- Canned fruit & vegetables
- Boxed dinners, such as
Hamburger Helper
- Microwave meals
(mac & cheese, rice, soup,
noodles, etc.)
- Peanut butter & jelly

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



Tidings article deadline for January issue: December 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.

Dear Church Family,

Our Faith Formation Team chose a great devotional for the Advent Season. Hopefully you've already picked yours up! If not, they'll be available in the office or in the Gathering area.

The title of this devotion is *What Do You Fear? Insisting on Hope this Advent*. Each week offers a variety of different styles—one day you might reflect on a hymn or song, another day on a poem about the coming of Christ. You'll also encounter meaningful artwork woven throughout. I appreciate how this devotional invites us in through different senses and perspectives.

The authors of this devotional also encourage us to use certain prompts for further reflection and prayer, such as: "Even in our fear, we are called forward," "Let fear fuel a fire for justice," and "Good news is louder than fear." These prompts ask

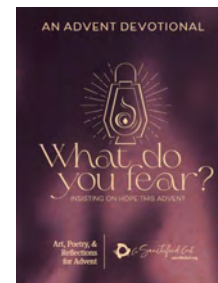
us to reflect on how we can share our fears with God to experience that Jesus is still with us. I find it significant that the authors point out that in Luke's Gospel, the story of Jesus' birth begins with "In the time of Herod." It's an easy phrase to gloss over, but when we do, we miss what was happening at that time. Herod was not a good dude and abused his power to oppress others, including the Jews. He was appointed king of Israel by Rome, but he was cruel. It was a fearful time to be born, as there was much instability and uncertainty about the future.

At the first Christmas, there were no decorations, cookies, or carols. It was a time of social and political upheaval. Anyone who wasn't a person of power—like Herod—lived with their well-being constantly under threat. It was into this uncertain and fraught moment that our Savior was born. Born to give us hope for now and the future. Born to

show us that God's love drives out our fear. Born to embody God's gracious and merciful love to all, especially the oppressed and suffering. Born to be the one true king who did not rule out of cruelty, but of love. I pray this Advent and Christmas season that we better understand how Jesus's birth brings us hope and stability in our fractured world.

Grateful for you,

Pastor Kristine



Click on the image above or use this link to access the online devotional: <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/361593675/>

**Christmas Carols
& Cookies**

for young families

December 23, 4:30 p.m.

A colorful illustration of a nativity scene. Mary is seated on the left, holding the infant Jesus. Joseph is seated on the right. A donkey and an ox are standing behind them. A bright yellow star is visible in the sky above the manger. The background is dark blue with white stars and green pine branches at the top.

Christmas Eve Services

December 24



4 p.m.

Gathering Candlelight

9 p.m.

Traditional Candlelight

All are welcome!

A Note From Rob Hlebinsky

It feels cliché to say “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven,” but it does seem fitting in this case. Many of you have already heard this news, but for those who haven’t, I have requested and been granted a leave of absence in the new year. I just wanted to take a few minutes to share with you some of the reasons for this decision.

My daughter will graduate from high school next spring and my role in her life will be changing as she starts college and moves toward independence. So, I need to start figuring out what’s next for me. I appreciate all the opportunities that First Pres has afforded me, especially the freedom to explore new avenues as a musician. Over the last decade I have also discovered a passion for teaching, branched out into piano tuning, and realized just how much I enjoy working as a music arranger.

Right now, I’m not sure what I want from the next phase of my career. Back in college, I would have said I wanted to be a full-time director of music and/or organist for a church as well as having a performing career. With all the facets I’ve been able to explore both in and out of this church, I’m only certain that a “full-time” position isn’t what I want. My hope is to take the first few months of 2026 to figure a lot of that out, as well as what my role with First Pres will continue to be into the future.

What will this look like? I will be away from my regular duties on an unpaid leave from January 12 through May 31. This doesn’t mean I won’t be around, though. I will still be practicing the organ and teaching lessons at the church, and I’ll attend events when I can. With my time off, I hope to continue expanding my piano tuning business, figure out what avenues are open to me as a performer, and hopefully travel to meet with other organists with similar goals for the future of organ music.

I am so grateful to this church for the continued support and for allowing me the space to figure things out. I ask for prayers for guidance during my time away. I also want to reassure you that this is not “goodbye,” it’s just “see you soon.”

Blessings,

Rob Hlebinsky



Community Artist & Speaker Series

“Songs of the Season”

Shoreline Community Orchestra
December 14, 2025, 4:00 p.m.

Join us for the Shoreline Community Orchestra’s festive program, *Songs of the Season*! Under the direction of music director Nick Mosely, this talented ensemble of volunteer musicians—playing everything from strings and woodwinds to brass and percussion—comes together to share their love of symphonic music and spread holiday cheer.



This year’s concert features soprano **Rebecca Kaufmann**, whose beautiful voice adds depth and joy to the performance. You will enjoy familiar carols, seasonal favorites, and music to warm your heart this Advent season.

This concert is part of the Community Artist Series and is free and open to all. We hope you’ll join us and help welcome the beauty of the season through music.



Update from the Session

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

Report from Session

- We continued to share in our part of Pastor Kristine’s Doctor of Ministry project.
- Approved receiving ten new members.
- Approved Rob Hlebinsky’s request for a leave of absence.
- Approved Rev. Kristine Aragon Bruce’s sabbatical request for summer 2026.
- Approved four elder commissioners to attend the December presbytery meeting.

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

Thursday Night Discussion Group

The Thursday Night Discussion Group will celebrate the holidays on December 4, and then take a break for the remainder of December. Please mark your calendars because we will be back and ready to dive into a new book and stimulating discussion on Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 7 p.m. in Fellowship Hall!

Our next book choice is a work in progress; but we're working to find a fantastic new read to kick off the New Year. Keep an eye on the church website and the January newsletter for additional information!

If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to Katie Norton or Linda Gritter.

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 anyone who likes to cook or sew:

- 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

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. Your gift can make a life-changing difference for families in need.

Christmas Joy Offering

Every year the Christmas Joy offering prepares the way forward for the leaders of our Church past, present, and future.

With this offering we step forward to assist three historic Presbyterian-related schools that equip communities of color:

- Menaul School in Albuquerque, NM;
- Presbyterian Pan American School in Kingsville, Texas;
- Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Each of these schools helps prepare the way for students' service in their community and around the world. Many are first in their families to enroll in higher education, and scholarships help emerging ethnic leaders to pursue an education.

We also prepare a way forward for church workers and their families with the Assistance Program of the PCUSA Board of Pensions. These are the devoted and caring leaders who have led many of us in the way of Christ. Both current and retired church workers who experience need because of health concerns, tragedy, or financial hardship receive financial assistance through this offering from the church they served so well.

Christmas Joy offering envelopes to support those in need of help and hope will be in the pews and at the Clinton St. entrance during Advent. You can also donate by credit card online at pcusa.org/christmasjoy or text Christmasjoy to 91999.



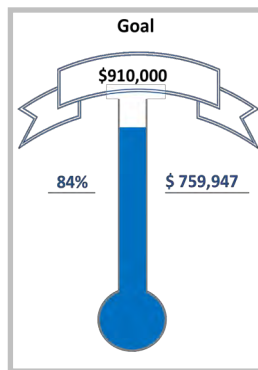
Your Support Shapes Our Future: 2026 Pledge Status

The Generosity Committee is grateful for the strong response so far to our 2026 Pledge Campaign. Thanks to the faithful giving of our church family, we have received **\$759,947** in pledges toward our goal of **\$910,000**—that's **84%** of our financial target for the coming year. We are also thankful for the **183 households** who have turned in their estimates of giving. Our goal is **280 households**, and we're confident we can reach it with your help.

Your pledge—no matter the size—plays an essential role in shaping our ministry plans for 2026. From worship and music to mission partnerships, children's and youth programs, and pastoral care, your commitment allows us to budget responsibly and faithfully for the year ahead.

If you haven't yet submitted your estimate of giving, we encourage you to do so soon. Every response helps us plan our ministries with confidence and continue the work God has called us to do.

Pledge cards are available in the church office, or may be completed online at fpg.org. Thank you for your generosity, your faithfulness, and your partnership in ministry.



From Faith Formation We'd Love to Hear From You!

Widely attributed to Martin Luther King Jr., "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."

Our Faith Formation Committee would like you to take that first faith-filled step and answer a quick-and-easy survey card, found in the bulletin or on a table in the Lounge, and then place your completed card in the offering plate or in the designated collection box in the Lounge.

Rumor has it that prayer (and luscious, dark chocolate) may help you to navigate that first faith-filled step, beginning on November 30th through December 28th.

You may also take the survey online here: <https://forms.gle/3eEFvNV6RTGfbVkl7>

From the Earth Care Team "Second Mile Journey"

On a recent trip to Meijer it occurred to me that there is a correlation between Matthew 5:41 "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles" and our response to the environmental crisis we are in currently. This thought was triggered as I was leaving the store. A couple was coming in and I overheard the man say "oh, I forgot the bags," and his wife agreed saying "you always do." That was the last of my eavesdropping, but it sparked a reflection: we are called to be stewards or "housekeepers" of God's creation.

So if you leave your reusable bags in your vehicle, take the extra steps to go back and get them. By doing so, you avoid using plastic bags and practice being a good "housekeeper," literally "going the second mile." If we all lived our lives practicing this "call" that Jesus spoke of, it would make a global difference.

The Earth Care Team has, over the years, shared multiple ways to practice this stewardship, with numerous articles available to guide you. The holiday season offers another opportunity to go the second mile. Use the links below to aid you on your "Second Mile Journey."



Submitted by Sara Shambarger

<https://www.earthday.org/8-tips-to-green-your-holiday/>

<https://www.un.org/en/actnow/ten-actions>

<https://www.greenmountainenergy.com/en/why-renewable-energy/protect-the-environment>

December Youth Ministry

Sunday, December 7, 12:30-1:30

- 5th-8th-Grade Fellowship in Fellowship Hall
- High School Small Groups:
 - ➔ Boy's Small Group led by Jared Bollaert
 - ➔ HS Girl's Small Group led by Tammy Kuhlman and Jessica Hauser-Brydon



Wear an ugly sweater and bring a white elephant gift for a gift exchange!



Come hungry and bring a friend!



**Questions?
Contact Pastor Kristine:
KristineAB@fpgh.org**

Join Us! 12/23 @ 4:30 p.m.
For an Evening of Family Worship!

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23RD AT 4:30 P.M.

***4:30- Mini Christmas Service in the Sanctuary (perfect for young families!), a reading of *Where Jesus Slept*, by Norma Lewis and Christmas Carols! Take home a set of jingle bells and a copy of the book!**

***5:00- Cookies and Cocoa in the Lounge**

WHERE JESUS SLEPT
Written by NORMA LEWIS • Illustrated by KATY HEDGON

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH GRAND HAVEN, MI

All Are Welcome!



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

December 2025

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 14, 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"