



# PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

JANUARY 2026, VOLUME 74—ISSUE 1

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

## From Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

Happy New Year! I trust that you all have had a wonderful Christmas season. As our calendars turn to another year, my attention is turning to how I can better tell the story of what I believe our church is truly about. I want 2026 to be a year where our congregation leans into all that is good about being Presbyterian Christians and that we come to a deeper understanding of and appreciation for our particular way of practicing faith.

That will begin in January with the four Core Values our Session adopted in 2019. They are found in the mural in the Gathering Area that Jane Stoepker so lovingly painted. Each week the sermon will feature a different value:

- We are Christ-centered.
- We are better together.
- We are at the heart of the community.
- We are created to create.

Why lean into Presbyterianism? Because it is helpful to remember who we are, what we believe, and why we do what we do. This past year was challenging for many reasons, among them that some folks decided they no longer felt at home here. I grieve that, and it has caused me to get to the root of how and why we are the kind of church we are, trusting that will unify us in purpose. While we've said goodbye to some, we're also saying hello to many others, and I'd like them to know what we're really about.

Additionally, in a couple of weeks Dr. Matt Bruce's Sunday class will focus on how to use your Study Bibles well. Reading the Bible can be challenging. There are so many helpful tools out there, but we can be overwhelmed by them. Have you ever wondered what all of those footnotes are for? What about book outlines? Prefaces? I hope you'll join that class to be better equipped to read and study Scripture.

January is a transition time, where new officers get trained and ordained. This year I'm holding our first College of Elders, a gathering of folks who have previously served on the Session. Once an elder, always an elder, as we say. At the end of the month, we'll hold our annual meeting, sharing the story of ministry and our hopes going forward. I hope you can make it to that meeting because an engaged membership leads to a healthy church.

I pray that 2026 will be a year of strengthening your faith and our witness together.

In Christ,

Pastor Troy

## Upcoming Events

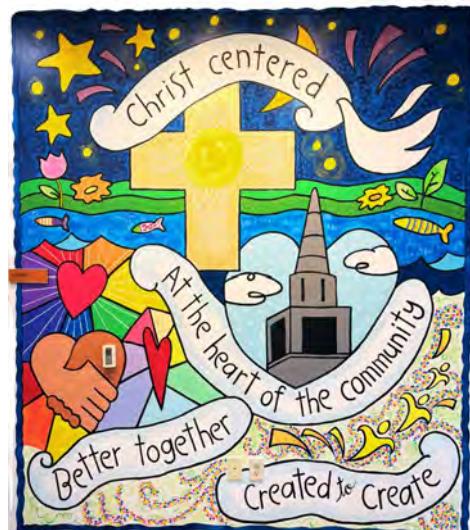
- Jan. 4** Christmas Clean Up
- Jan. 8** Thursday Night Discussion Group Resumes
- Jan. 11** Children & Worship and Youth Ministries Resume
- Jan. 11 & 18** “Exploring the Atonement” Sunday Morning Class Offering
- Jan. 18** Max & Ruth Bloomquist CAS Concert

## Congregational Conversation & Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 25,  
10:00 a.m. in the Lounge

Hear updates from various areas of ministries, ask questions, and receive the annual report.

The annual meeting is called to elect at-large members of the Nominations Committee and to approve the pastors' Terms of Call.



# 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](mailto:TroyHB@fpgh.org)

### Pastor Kristine Aragon Bruce:

616-604-2618,  
church: 616-842-6760 x1006,  
email: [KristineAB@fpgh.org](mailto:KristineAB@fpgh.org)

### Church Office:

616-842-6760, [staff@fpgh.org](mailto:staff@fpgh.org)

### Prayer Concerns:

Mary & Ron Albrecht, Ron Hunter

### Our Sympathy:

to Mary and Ron Albrecht on the death of Mary's brother, Stephen Baron, who passed away on December 3.

to the family and friends of Barbara DeWitt, who passed away on December 4.

to the family and friends of Jack Jansma, who passed away on December 21.

### Thank You:

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Giving Tree Ministry. Through your generosity, \$2,375 in gift cards were donated to support

[Step Up, Hope Project, Reach the Forgotten](#), and the [Housing Ministry Collaborative of Love in Action](#).

These gifts help participants in these programs purchase both holiday gifts and essential items, providing meaningful support during this season.

## Supporting Joyful Noise Daycare

Joyful Noise Daycare is a place full of curious minds and busy little hands and bodies. To help keep our classrooms clean and safe—especially this time of year when germs are more of a concern, we're looking for donations of **unscented wipes for use on children** and **disinfectant wipes for classroom surfaces**.

Donations can be dropped off at the church office. Thank you for your generosity and support of Joyful Noise Daycare!

## Usher Team Members Wanted

We're looking to add a few more friendly faces to our 11 AM Gathering Service usher team! Ushers play a simple but meaningful role—helping people feel welcomed and comfortable when they arrive for worship, and assisting with the offering.



With enough people on the team, the commitment is light: **serving about once every 6-8 weeks**.

Interested? Please email **Lindsay Williams** at [lwilliams@fpgh.org](mailto:lwilliams@fpgh.org) or stop by the church office to learn more.



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!

**Jan. 8**

Mary Fox  
18029 Wildwood Springs Pkwy  
Spring Lake, MI 49456

**Feb. 8**

Jerry Schoenmaker  
17707 Cobblefield Lane  
Spring Lake, MI 49456

## 2026 Per Capita

Per capita is a fee our church pays for each member to support the mission and ministries of our parent organizations in the PC (USA). For 2026, the per-capita amount is **\$42.42 per member**.

We invite you to prayerfully consider paying the per-capita amount for each member of your household. This is a significant expense for the church, and your support helps ensure that it does not take away from other ministry opportunities. Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity.

For more information about per capita, visit:

<https://pcusa.org/resources/financial-information/capita>

## Food Pantry Collection

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

Some suggested items:

- Boxed pasta & sauce
- Canned chicken/tuna
- Spaghettios/Ravioli
- Chunky soups/stews
- Peanut butter & jelly

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



**Tidings article deadline for February issue: January 23, 2026**

Submittals, suggestions or comments:  
[sbryant@fpgh.org](mailto:sbryant@fpgh.org) or [staff@fpgh.org](mailto:staff@fpgh.org)

*FPGH editorial staff reserves the right to accept or decline, edit for length and content all submitted material.*

Dear Church Family,

Over break I binge-watched a show on Apple TV called *Pluribus*. The premise is that an alien virus has taken over the world, turning all humans into part of a single hive mind. Only 12 humans worldwide are immune to the virus, including the main character, Carol, an author from Albuquerque who is determined to reverse it.

The other immune humans, however, do not share Carol's view. They believe the world is better off with the virus, as it has made humanity peaceful, trustworthy, and incapable of harming any other living thing, including plants and animals. The virus also makes all humans unable to lie, as well as kind and gentle in nature. Resources are shared universally, ensuring that no one is in need.

Carol, however, realizes that despite these positive aspects of the virus,

the loss of individual freedom comes at too great a cost. The risk that comes with individual freedom is what makes humanity uniquely human.

This show brings up interesting notions about human nature. While the alien virus eradicates problems such as violence and climate change (remember they can't hurt any living thing including plants!) Carol realizes that kindness and love are only genuine when they are freely chosen, not imposed. This got me thinking about how God relates to us.

While it would be a much better place if God just made each of us truly kind, selfless, and loving of one another, it would mean we would lose our individual freedom and uniqueness. The thing is that while God made each of us in his image, God also made us each individually unique. God also never forces any of us to follow him. God respects and honors our individual freedom. With that freedom, however, comes the

ability to choose not only what is of God, but also what is not—to choose the opposite of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—the fruits of the Holy Spirit (*Galatians 5:22-23*).

Yet when we choose to live by the Spirit rather than by what pulls us away from God, we discover a deeper kind of freedom—the freedom that only Jesus can offer. It is freedom from always centering on ourselves, and freedom to love others and see them clearly. My hope and prayer is that not just on January 1, 2026, but each and every day we would choose to live out of the love and freedom made available to us in Jesus Christ.

Grateful for you,

Pastor Kristine

## Summer Camp Grant Program

With the beginning of a new year, it's time to start thinking about summer camp! We are blessed with generous funding to help your children and grandchildren attend a Christian summer camp. This opportunity is not limited by camp or location (but it does need to be a Christian camp), so please share it with any youth who attends a church and is interested in being transformed by a summer camp experience.

To access camp grant funds, please pick up an application at the Family Ministries Desk or email [campgrant@fpgh.org](mailto:campgrant@fpgh.org) to request one. Camps often fill up quickly, so we encourage you to check availability with your preferred camp soon and to submit your application as early as possible in the new year.

To receive the grant, you will need to return your completed application along with proof of camp registration.



## Thursday Night Discussion Group

The Thursday Night Discussion Group meets weekly from 7-8:30 PM in Room 16/17 (Please note our new meeting space).

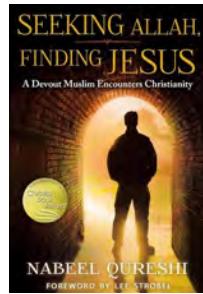
Our book selection from January 8, 2026, through March 5, 2026, is *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity* by Nabeel Qureshi.

Sharing his remarkable faith journey from Islam to Christianity—one that includes friendships, investigations, and even supernatural dreams—Quereshi has written an “engaging and thought-provoking” book, that “tells a powerful story of the clash between Islam and Christianity in one man’s heart—and of the peace he eventually found in Jesus.” (Amazon)

We invite you to join us as we listen, question, and share together in this author’s exceptional journey.

“Khuda Hafiz; May God Be Your Protector” (A traditional Pakistani valediction).

Please contact Katie Norton for additional information.



## Youth Group & Small Groups: Schedule Update

On the second Sunday of each month, students in grades 5-8 will meet for Youth Group, while students in grades 9-12 will gather for small groups, from 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Questions? Contact Eric Stromberg at [EricS@fpgh.org](mailto:EricS@fpgh.org)

Friends are always welcome. We look forward to growing together in faith and friendship.

## Update from the Session

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

### Report from Session

- We called a meeting of the congregation for January 25, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. for the purposes of approving the pastors’ terms of call and of electing at-large members to the 2025 Nominations Committee.
- We approved the pastors’ housing allowances.
- We approved an Anti-Harassment Policy, which was required by *The Book of Order*.
- We heard a report from the December presbytery meeting, where the presbytery unanimously approved joining in an Overture to General Assembly called “Repudiating Christian Nationalism and Affirming Our Faith Commitments.”

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

## Community Artist & Speaker Series

### Max and Ruth Bloomquist

January 18, 2026 4:00 p.m.

Ruth and Max Bloomquist have been making music together since 1975, when they first bonded over a shared love of acoustic styles—folk, bluegrass, country, and heartfelt singer-songwriter traditions. Over the decades, they’ve cultivated a signature sound often described as *rootsy acoustic Americana folk*. Ruth’s warm alto voice and poetic original lyrics form the heart of their music, while Max adds seamless harmonies and expert upright bass. Though rooted in folk and bluegrass, their songs carry a timeless, emotional resonance that speaks to listeners of all backgrounds. With almost 50 years of performing side by side, Ruth & Max bring a seasoned presence to the stage, blending rich musicianship with easygoing humor and a deep sense of connection—with each other and with their audience.

This concert is part of the Community Artist Series and is free and open to all.



## Sunday Morning Faith Formation Opportunities

### Exploring The Atonement

**When:** Sundays, January 11 & 18

**Time:** 10:00 am

**Where:** Recreation Room

Between worship services on January 11 and 18, grab a cup of coffee and join us in the Recreation Room as we explore the meaning and mystery of The Atonement together.

As Christians, we believe that Jesus died for our sins. But what does that actually mean? How does Jesus' life, death, and resurrection restore a right relationship with God—a process of reconciliation the Church calls **Atonement**?

Over the centuries, Christians have explored different ways of understanding how this reconciliation works, and the Church has never settled on just one explanation. Join Bob Day for an engaging conversation as we explore the meaning of "at-one-ment," deepen our understanding of who God is, unpack the complexities of the Trinity, and examine the classic ways Christians have understood reconciliation through the cross and resurrection.

Sunday morning classes are also available to watch on our [YouTube channel](#) and on our website, [fpgh.org](#)



### How to Read the Bible: Back to the Basics

**When:** Sundays, Beginning January 25

**Time:** 10:00 am

**Where:** Recreation Room

The Bible is where Christians expect to hear God speaking—but reading it isn't always easy. Open the Bible at random and you may land on a psalm, which is a human song addressed to God, rather than God speaking to us. Or you may open to a bit of history, or a proverb, or a parable, or one of those famously long lists of names. Or you may hit upon one of the comforting words of Jesus, or the lofty theology of the Apostle Paul. But you might just wonder what the heck God might be saying to when you read, "You shall not round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard" (Leviticus 19:27). Sometimes reading the Bible can feel like reading someone else's mail!

This winter, come join the "How to Read the Bible" group as we go back to the basics and learn how to read Scripture in ways that help us hear what God is saying to us today. Together, we'll explore the different genres of the Bible—history, poetry, theology, wisdom sayings, and more—and learn how historical, cultural, and context of the ancient world shape what we read.

Along the way we will answer questions like: Did this really happen (did God really command Israel to kill all the Canaanites)? Why did God tell Israel not to eat shellfish, but Christians still do? What is Jesus' Parable of the Unjust Ruler all about?

We will also give special attention to using a study Bible, so bring one if you have one! And if you don't we are more than happy to make recommendations, or see below.

Please contact Dr. Matt Aragon Bruce if you have any questions.

### Recommended Study Bibles

A study Bible can be a valuable companion for anyone who wants to engage Scripture more deeply. It can help readers understand the biblical text more clearly by providing notes, background, and context alongside it. It acts as a helpful guide, making the Bible more accessible and helping readers see how individual passages fit into the bigger story.

Here are a few we recommend:

- *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (edited by [Walter J. Harrelson](#))
- *Life with God Bible NRSV*, edited by Richard Foster, Walter Brueggemann, and Dallas Willard
- *CEB Study Bible*, edited by Joel B Green, et al.

## 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 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!

Questions? Contact Michelle Potter: [potterm0519@gmail.com](mailto:potterm0519@gmail.com)



## 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)

## Blood Drive Feb. 6

Did you know one blood donation has the possibility of saving up to three lives?  
**Be a hero—give blood!**



Our next blood drive:

**Friday, Feb. 6**  
**11:00—5:00 p.m.**

**First Presbyterian Church**

**Walk-ins are always welcome,  
or schedule your donation at:**  
[redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org)

## New Member Class Sunday, February 1

Would you like to become a member of FPGH or are you interested in finding out more about what it means to be a Presbyterian?

You are invited to attend our upcoming New Member class on Sunday, February 1, from 12:30-2:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

To reserve your spot, contact Lindsay Williams at 616-842-6760 or [lwilliams@fpgh.org](mailto:lwilliams@fpgh.org)



*Attending the class does not commit you to membership.*

### Staff and Leadership:

**Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon, Senior Pastor**

**Rev. Kristine Aragon Bruce, Associate Pastor**

**Maryanne Beery, Director of Music & Fine Arts**

**Eric Stromberg, Director of Youth Ministries**

**Dr. Matt Bruce, Theologian-in-Residence**

**Sally Bryant, Communications Coordinator**

**Laura Burns, Director of Children's 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**

# Earth Care

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## From the Earth Care Team Happy New Year

It is a new year. Some folks make specific resolutions for the coming year. Some do a bit of self-analysis and promise to be better. Some pray for help to be better. Members of the Earth Care team individually are no different, but collectively we agree that we all must do a better job of caring for the magnificent creation which we have been given by God and entrusted to care for.

[Psalm 104](#) reminds us of the wonders of God's creation:

**Verse 5** He set the earth on its foundations;  
it can never be moved....

**Verse 10** He makes springs pour water into the ravines;  
it flows between the mountains....

**Verse 14** He makes grass grow for the cattle,  
and plants for people to cultivate  
bringing forth food from the earth:

**Verse 16** The trees of the Lord are well watered,...

**Verse 17** here the birds make their nests;...

**Verse 24** How many are your works, Lord!  
In wisdom you made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.



How can we feel anything but AWE for this creation. Richard Rohr describes awe this way: *Awe is more than an emotion, it is a way of understanding, insight into meaning greater than ourselves. The beginning of awe is wonder, and the beginning of wisdom is awe.*

So in 2026 let us all give thanks for the wonderful earth we have been given, and then promise to **keep** (guard, preserve, to be faithful to, maintain, exercise great care over) **it**.

### Psalm 104 God the Creator and Provider

<sup>1</sup> Bless the Lord, O my soul.  
O Lord my God, you are very great.  
You are clothed with honor and majesty,  
<sup>2</sup> wrapped in light as with a garment.  
You stretch out the heavens like a tent;  
<sup>3</sup> you set the beams of your chambers  
on the waters; you make the clouds  
your chariot; you ride on the wings of the  
wind; <sup>4</sup> you make the winds your messengers,  
fire and flame your ministers.  
<sup>5</sup> You set the earth on its foundations,  
so that it shall never be shaken.  
<sup>6</sup> You cover it with the deep as with a gar-  
ment; the waters stood above the mountains.  
<sup>7</sup> At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of  
your thunder they take to flight.  
<sup>8</sup> They rose up to the mountains, ran down to  
the valleys, to the place that you appointed  
for them.  
<sup>9</sup> You set a boundary that they may not pass,  
so that they might not again cover the earth.  
<sup>10</sup> You make springs gush forth in the valleys;  
they flow between the hills,  
<sup>11</sup> giving drink to every wild animal;  
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.  
<sup>12</sup> By the streams the birds of the air have  
their habitation; they sing among the branches.

<sup>13</sup> From your lofty abode you water the  
mountains; the earth is satisfied with the  
fruit of your work.

<sup>14</sup> You cause the grass to grow for the cattle  
and plants for people to cultivate,  
to bring forth food from the earth  
<sup>15</sup> and wine to gladden the human heart,  
oil to make the face shine  
and bread to strengthen the human heart.

<sup>16</sup> The trees of the field are watered abun-  
dantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

<sup>17</sup> In them the birds build their nests;  
the stork has its home in the fir trees.

<sup>18</sup> The high mountains are for the wild goats;  
the rocks are a refuge for the coney.

<sup>19</sup> You have made the moon to mark the sea-  
sons; the sun knows its time for setting.

<sup>20</sup> You make darkness, and it is night, when  
all the animals of the forest come creeping  
out.

<sup>21</sup> The young lions roar for their prey,  
seeking their food from God.

<sup>22</sup> When the sun rises, they withdraw  
and lie down in their dens.

<sup>23</sup> People go out to their work  
and to their labor until the evening.

<sup>24</sup> O Lord, how manifold are your works!  
In wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.

<sup>25</sup> There is the sea, great and wide;

creeping things innumerable are there,  
living things both small and great.

<sup>26</sup> There go the ships and Leviathan that you  
formed to sport in it.

<sup>27</sup> These all look to you to give them their  
food in due season;

<sup>28</sup> when you give to them, they gather it up;  
when you open your hand, they are filled  
with good things.

<sup>29</sup> When you hide your face, they are dismayed;  
when you take away their breath, they die  
and return to their dust.

<sup>30</sup> When you send forth your spirit, they are  
created, and you renew the face of the ground.

<sup>31</sup> May the glory of the Lord endure forever;  
may the Lord rejoice in his works—

<sup>32</sup> who looks on the earth and it trembles,  
who touches the mountains and they  
smoke.

<sup>33</sup> I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;  
I will sing praise to my God while I have  
being.

<sup>34</sup> May my meditation be pleasing to him,  
for I rejoice in the Lord.

<sup>35</sup> Let sinners be consumed from the earth,  
and let the wicked be no more.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.  
Praise the Lord!



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

**January 2026**

*deliver to: (or current resident)*



A vibrant, cartoon-style illustration of a summer camp scene at night. A large, glowing full moon hangs in the dark blue sky. In the foreground, a campfire with bright orange flames sits on a blue ground. To the right, a yellow tent is partially visible. A wooden sign with the words "SUMMER CAMP" in white, blocky letters hangs from a chain above the campfire. The background is filled with silhouettes of evergreen trees.

**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 an application, stop in the church office or send an email to [campgrant@fpgh.org](mailto:campgrant@fpgh.org).  
We know this may sound too good to be true, but it really is!! Tell your friends!