



PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

FEBRUARY 2026, VOLUME 74—ISSUE 2

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

From Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

As Presbyterians, we have a Constitution. It begins with the *Book of Confessions* and continues into its second part, the *Book of Order*. That part begins like this, “The good news of the gospel is that the triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — creates, redeems, sustains, rules, and transforms all things and all people....This one living God is incarnate in Jesus Christ, who came to live in the world, die for the world, and be raised again to new life. The gospel of Jesus Christ announces the nearness of God’s kingdom, bringing good news to all who are impoverished, sight to all who are blind, freedom to all who are oppressed, and proclaiming the Lord’s favor upon all creation.

“The mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the church. In Christ, the church participates in God’s mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God’s love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, and calling all people to discipleship in Christ. Human beings have no higher goal in life than to glorify and enjoy God now and forever, living in covenant fellowship with God and participating in God’s mission.”

Friends, that is a massive mission. It is our mission.

In January, I said this will be a year where we take a deeper look at what it means to Presbyterian. This is not a history lesson, folks. Our theology puts us right in the heart of what God has done, is doing, and will do to redeem the creation. We need to know this story. We need to see the world around us through the lens of our faith. We need to live it out in how we welcome others, in how we seek justice in our community and nation, and in how we treat one another.

A little later in the *Book of Order* we come across two principles of church order that complement each other and stand in tension with each other. The first? God alone is Lord of the conscience. What we believe about the world we hold before the Lord of the Universe. (Daunting, isn’t it?) But it goes further. Conscience is not a private matter. It, too, is subject to God’s rule.

But we also hold those in Christian community, which is where the second principle comes in — mutual forbearance. This does *not* mean that all convictions are right or equal, but it does mean that we hold them together in grace and community. Part of the massive work of the church is learning anew how to hold our convictions under the searing light of the gospel.

February bring us the season of Lent. It’s a time for us to confess our sins before God and each other, preparing our lives for Easter. It’s intended to be a time of spiritual refining. As people learning how to follow Jesus, I hope all of us will do the good, hard work required of us in this season.

In Christ,
Pastor Troy

Upcoming Events

- Feb. 6** Red Cross Blood Drive
- Feb. 7** Babies & Bagels
- Feb. 8** Scout Sunday
Youth Group
- Feb. 15** 5th-12th Grade Group Event
- Feb. 17** Shrove Tuesday Pancake
Dinner & Game Night
- Feb. 18** Ash Wednesday
Worship Service
- Feb. 24** Created to Create Group
- Feb. 25-March 25:**
Every Wednesday:
Taize Worship Service
& Soup Supper
- Mar. 1** Chanmi Kim, Young Organist
C.A.S. Concert

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

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, Ron Hunter

Our Sympathy:

to Mary Heyer and family on the death of her son, Brian Heyer, on January 4, 2026.

Vases Needed for Flower Ministry

Each Sunday, the beautiful flowers that grace our chancel continue their ministry beyond worship. Our Deacons deliver these arrangements to members who are homebound, ill, or recovering from a hospital stay, offering a visible reminder of the church's care and prayers.



The Deacons are in need of medium to large-sized* vases to deliver the flowers in. If you have gently used vases you no longer need, please drop them off in the church office. Your donation would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for helping us share the beauty, comfort, and connection that a simple bouquet of flowers can bring.

**Please note that bud vases are too small for this use.*

Taizé Soup Suppers

This Lent, we will again hold mid-week Taizé worship services followed by a soup supper.

Could you or your group provide soup for an evening? We anticipate needing five pots each week. If you can help, please sign up using the link below, on the board in the church lounge, or contact Maryanne Beery (mbeery@fpgh.org). Services begin February 25.

[Soup Sign Up](#)

**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY**

Each month we share birthdays for members and friends who aren't able to be with us in person. Sending a card or note is a simple way to remind them they're still very much part of our church family.

Feb. 8 Jerry Schoenmaker
17707 Cobblefield Lane
Spring Lake, MI 49456

Mar. 2 Annette Whitney
1450 S. Ferry, Apt. 204
Grand Haven, MI 49417

Mar. 3 Heidi Gassmann
17500 Whippoorwill Dr.
Grand Haven, MI 49417

Mar. 12 Barbara Race
321 Grand Avenue
Grand Haven, MI 49417

Mar. 23 Marge Rasmussen
17887 Hiawatha Drive
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 March issue: February 23, 2026

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,

On MLK Jr Day, Hope College, in partnership with area churches and nonprofit organizations, brought in New York Times best-selling Christian author and speaker Jemar Tisby. Dr. Tisby is someone I've followed since 2020. He has a powerful story of growing up in evangelical spaces, but left due to many evangelical pastors, professors, and authors unwilling to engage in conversations about racism or listen to Tisby's experience with racism in the church. You can still hear the lecture that he gave that day at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9_99C9POeM

His lecture encouraged us to lead like Martin Luther King, Jr. This, however, comes at a cost, as MLK Jr.'s ministry and activism made him deeply unpopular with the majority of America. It has only been in recent years that I learned MLK Jr.'s approval rating was only at 41% at

the time of his assassination. The political climate today makes me appreciate Dr. King's ministry all the more. Dr. King truly carried his cross in his fight for civil rights, as it ultimately cost him his life.

Besides his deep faith in Jesus Christ, Dr. King had friends and co-laborers who joined him in the struggle. While Dr. King was the face of the Civil Rights movement, he was not alone in the struggle. He needed others for encouragement and support when all hope seemed lost. As Dr. Tisby says: "Hope is a group project." My question for you is, who is it in your life who keeps you grounded in the hope of Jesus Christ? It's easy to keep doomscrolling while becoming more and more depressed about the state of our nation and world. My heart is heavy knowing that I need to now carry my passport at all times. We're in the process of obtaining passports for our children. Not just because we hope

to travel abroad this summer, but so they can have documentation proving their citizenship. ICE did just remove a five-year-old from his preschool (who was here legally, by the way) in Minneapolis and this child is now at a detention center somewhere in Texas. By the time you read this, I hope he has been reunited with his family, but I have my doubts.* Church, we need each other to keep having hope in Jesus Christ. As theologian Hanna Reichl wrote, "It's not the first time it feels as if the world is ending." And it won't be the last. I realize not everyone reading this will agree with me. But if you do, I pray we find a way as a church to make hope in Jesus Christ a group project.

Grateful for you,

Pastor Kristine

**Editors Note: At the time of publication of this newsletter, it was reported the boy and his father were released from a family detention facility in Dilley, Texas.*

Summer Camp Grant Program

Even though it's just February, it's time to start registering for 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, [download one here](#), or email campgrant@fpg.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.

To receive the grant, you will need to return your completed application along with proof of camp registration to the church office or emailed to campgrant@fpg.org.



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 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—Qureshi 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.

From the Earth Care Team FPGH is Hosting the Annual Earth Day Lakeshore Celebration

We are pleased to share that our church will be hosting the 19th annual Earth Day Lakeshore Celebration on Saturday, April 25! As an Earth Care Congregation, caring for God’s creation is part of who we are, and we’re grateful to bring this community event back to Grand Haven.

First Pres participated in the event for several years at the Community Center, and then last year it was held at a smaller venue in Spring Lake. This year the Earth Care Team has offered our church to hold the event, bringing it back to Grand Haven and providing more space for exhibitors.

The committee of the non-profit that plans the event each year is looking for more volunteers in the community to help with planning. If you are interested in helping plan this year’s celebration, please contact Ginger Aubrey at (810) 513-8887 or gaubrey@sbcglobal.net, and she will put you in contact with the committee. They plan to meet the 2nd Thursday of the month. The next meeting will be in the conference room of our church on February 12 at 4 PM.

Be sure to mark your calendar for Saturday, April 25, and plan to stop by the celebration between 1 and 4 PM. We hope you’ll join us as we celebrate God’s creation together!



Community Artist & Speaker Series

Young Organist, Chanmi Kim
March 1, 2026, 4 PM

Award-winning organist Chanmi Kim presents an exciting organ recital showcasing the expressive power and beauty of the pipe organ.



A rising artist, Kim recently completed her Master of Music in Church Music at Baylor University, where she earned top honors and performed in renowned venues, including St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City. This fall, she begins doctoral studies at the University of Michigan.

Join us for an evening of inspiring music led by one of today’s emerging voices in sacred and concert organ performance.

This event is part of the Community Artist Series events of FPGH, and is free and open to the public. All are welcome.

Youth Mission Trip to Orange Walk, Belize

We are currently planning a youth mission trip to Koinonia Ministries in Orange Walk, Belize, and would like to get an idea of how many students and parents are interested. Please read the information [in this link](#), and respond to Pastor Troy or Eric Stromberg as soon as possible.

Trip dates are June 24-30, 2026

How to Read the Bible: Back to the Basics Sundays, 10:00 AM in the 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. 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.

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

From the Mission Committee The People Center: Neighbor Helping Neighbor

The People Center is a place for anyone in the community to come, be heard, and receive assistance in an atmosphere of dignity and trust.

The small white house at 307 E. Exchange Street in Spring Lake opened its doors and heart in 1996. An average of 300 people are now served each month with the help of over 60 volunteers. The food pantry provides a 3-day supply of food and toiletries up to four times per year. Families "shop in the store" for items given by donors and/or

bought at local grocers' sales. The clothing hutch provides free gently used clothing, outerwear, and shoes received through community donations. The People Center also has six furnished transitional apartments for those who face a housing crisis. With the help of its executive director, Karen Reenders, the goal is to help families become self-sufficient in order to obtain and maintain affordable housing.

First Presbyterian Church is a mission partner of The People Center, providing an annual financial contribution. Upcoming restaurant fundraising events can be found on Facebook. Learn more at www.thepeoplecenter.org.

Welcome, Eric Stromberg!

We are delighted to welcome Eric Stromberg to the FPGH staff as our new Coordinator for 5th-12th Grade Ministries.



Eric's path to this role began as a volunteer, where he discovered a deep joy and calling in walking alongside young people as they grow in faith. With more than 30 years of experience as a teacher and administrator working with students in grades 7-12, he brings a wealth of wisdom, compassion, and steady leadership to this new chapter of ministry.

Eric is excited to share God's Word in ways that connect meaningfully with students at each stage of life. He looks forward to getting to know our congregation and to partnering with families, volunteers, and staff as we support and nurture the next generation together. When you see Eric, please take a moment to say hello—he would love to meet you.

Update from the Session

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

- We approved the 2026 Operating Budget and Joyful Noise Budget.
- We approved the hiring of Eric Stromberg as Youth Coordinator.
- We approved an amendment to the Anti-Harassment Policy.
- We approved our 2026 Per Capita and Shared Mission Intents.
- We received four new members (by reactivation and letters of transfer).

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

Shrove Tuesday Pancakes & Games Feb. 17

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

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

Let's all celebrate and indulge together before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. Supper starts at 5 p.m. in Fellowship Hall, with game night in the church lounge starting at 5:30 in the church Lounge. The Children's Ministries team has fun games for all ages planned - including Bible Bingo - with prizes! All are welcome!

Ash Wednesday Worship Service Feb. 18, 7 PM

Join us as we begin the season of Lent, a time for Christians to reflect on their mortality, their sinfulness, and the dying of self that comes with new life in Christ.

During the Ash Wednesday worship service, there will be a time for the imposition of ashes on the forehead or wrist for those who wish to receive them. Ashes are a biblical reminder of our mortality: "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). The ashes also represent sorrow and repentance for sin.

Please join us in worship on Wednesday, February 18, at 7 PM as we begin our journey to Holy Week and the hope of Easter.

Taizé Worship & Soup Supper

Each Wednesday during Lent, beginning February 25, the church offers Taizé-style worship services in the chapel.

Taizé worship centers on simple, repetitive songs, periods of silence, and scripture, creating space for contemplation and prayer. Rooted in ancient Christian traditions, this style of worship invites participants into a sense of stillness and spiritual communion, helping us become more attentive to the presence of God. Each service lasts approximately 30 minutes.

Following the service, everyone is invited to the lounge for a soup supper.

Following the service, everyone is warmly invited to gather in the church lounge for a soup supper.

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
Eric Stromberg, Coordinator 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
Andrew Wolfert, Bookkeeper/Admin. Assistant

Babies & Bagels

A New Gathering for Young Families

We're excited to introduce Babies & Bagels, a new gathering designed especially for young families. Join us for a relaxed Saturday morning playdate on February 7 at 9 AM in the church lounge.



This group is for babies, their siblings, and their caregivers. It's a chance for little ones to play while parents and caregivers connect with one another in an easy, low-key setting. Bagels, fruit, and coffee will be provided—just bring your family and come as you are.

Whether you're looking to meet other parents, enjoy a fun morning with your kids, or simply get out of the house, Babies & Bagels is great way to start your Saturday. We hope you'll join us!

Calling All Cooks!

Our 5th–8th graders gather each week for connection, learning, and fun—and a shared meal is part of what makes that time special. You can help by providing a homecooked meal for about 15 students, on your own or with a friend. You don't need to have children in Youth Group to participate!



We ask that meals be brought to Fellowship Hall by 12:15 p.m. (no pizza, please). You don't need to worry about drinks or tableware. Questions about what to make or need reimbursement info? Contact Eric at erics@fpg.org.

[Sign Up Here](#)

Family Swim Party

Sunday, March 8
1-3 PM

Make a splash with us at our Family Swim Party on Sunday, March 8, from 1:00–3:00 p.m.! This afternoon of swimming and play is open to children from infants through 4th grade, along with their parents and caregivers.

This is a family event—children must be accompanied by an adult—and it's a great chance to enjoy time together in a fun, active setting. Whether your kids love the water or are just getting comfortable splashing around, there's something for everyone.

Space is limited to 90 total participants (swimmers and non-swimmers), so please be sure to RSVP early with total number of people attending in your family. A completed waiver is required for each family; printed copies are available at the children's check-in desk.

We hope you'll join us for a fun afternoon in the pool!

[RSVP Here](#)
[Aquatic Center Waiver](#)

FEBRUARY/MARCH YOUTH SCHEDULE

	5TH-8TH GRADE	HIGH SCHOOL
FEB 1	Youth Group	Small Groups
FEB. 8	Youth Group	
FEB. 15	5-12 Group Event	
MAR. 1	Youth Group	
MAR. 8	Youth Group	Small Groups
MAR. 22	5-12 Group Event	

5-8th grade Youth Group meets 12:30-1:30 in Fellowship Hall
High School Small Groups meet 12:30-1:30 in the lounge
Group event locations TBD

Scholarship Applications

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

The James and Lois Hillis Fund awards scholarships to students going on to any type of post-high school education or training.

[Applications](#) are due in the church office by April 1, 2026



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

February 2026

deliver to: (or current resident)

SHROVE TUESDAY
Pancake Dinner & Game Night!

February 17
5 pm
in Fellowship Hall

it's free!

Bible Bingo

with prizes!
