



# PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

May 2026, VOLUME 74—ISSUE 5

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

## From Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

**YOU** all know that I like to keep moving on Sunday mornings. On a typical Sunday, I arrive to review the bulletin, rehearse with the choir, review my sermon, lead the Traditional Service, pop in to coffee hour, rehearse with the Gathering Band, lead the Gathering Service, and visit at the second coffee hour. I like being busy, and doing all of this brings me a lot of joy!

The Sunday after Easter was strange, however. There was no choir. Kristine was preaching. All the ways that I am typically in ministry weren't happening. So, I had a chance to observe what happens before church, and, folks, I was humbled and grateful.

Several elders came in and joyfully prepared communion together. Others came early to have a chance to talk to friends. I was having a longer conversation with one of our members, when I kept watching more and more folks show up with a purpose in mind. People who stepped forward to greet came in, found their name tags, and made their way to the doors with smiles on their faces. Ushers came in, grabbed the bin with the bulletins and got to work. Musicians were in the sanctuary rehearsing.

I was struck by how faithful so many are in caring for this church. We are who we are because of the people God has called to this congregation. Without you, communion, greeting, ushering, music, and so much more do not happen.

Of course, I know this is true, but on that Sunday, I was particularly struck by how grateful I am to serve a church where so many step forward because they care for the church. So, thank you to all of you who serve in so many ways. And, if you're looking for a way to get involved, don't hesitate to reach out to a pastor, staff, or even a neighbor in the pews. We'd love to connect you more deeply to the ministry!

This month marks a time of wrapping up much of what we've been doing since September. We'll celebrate communion together to start the month. On Mother's Day, we'll honor some of the women among us with Lifetime Membership to Presbyterian Women. (If you've never checked out the plaques with past honorees, you should. It's like a Hall of Fame for our church.) On the third Sunday of the month, we'll honor this year's graduates and welcome this year's Confirmation Class into membership. The fourth week is Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, and we plan to welcome new members that day.

Finally, the last Sunday of May will mark Pastor Kristine's last Sunday before she and her family go on sabbatical. She has ministered faithfully and well with us for the past seven years. (I hope you're aware that associate pastors rarely stay this long!) Having had a sabbatical two summers ago, I can attest how healthy it was for my soul, my ministry, my family, and the church. So many of you have told me that I've been different — in a good way — since then. I trust it will be the same for Pastor Kristine. Please hold her in your prayers, and let's keep the church humming in her absence. I hope she returns to a church that's even more vibrant and ready for what's next!

In Christ,  
Pastor Troy

## Upcoming Events

- May 3** New Member Class
- May 8** PW Hanging Basket Pick Up
- May 10** Mother's Day
- May 11** PW Honorary Lifetime Membership Awards  
  
"UNSEEN" Documentary Screening
- May 17** Confirmation & Graduation Sunday  
  
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Speaker
- May 25** Memorial Day (office closed)
- Jun 5** Feeding America Food Truck
- Jun 14** LEGO Faith Builders Begins
- Jun 17** Kick-Off to Summer Party
- June 24 - June 30** Youth Belize Mission Trip

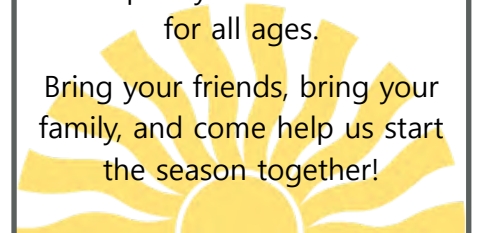
## SAVE THE DATE: Kick-Off to Summer Party!

School's out, the sun is shining, and it's time to celebrate!

Join us on **June 17 from 5–7 PM** for a free & fun-filled summer kick-off picnic at the church.

We'll have games, a bounce house, delicious food, laughter, and plenty of summer fun for all ages.

Bring your friends, bring your family, and come help us start the season together!



### 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, Don Anderson, & Ron Hunter

### Our Sympathy:

to Melinda and Chris Mendels and family on the death of Melinda's mother, Judy Fischer, on March 29.

to Frank and Karen Miller on the death of Frank's brother, Gary Miller, on March 30.

to Robby Cramer on the death of her brother, Jeff Cramer, on March 31.

Linda and Dave Gritter on the death of Linda's brother, Norm Lyzenga, on April 7.

to Jim and Elizabeth Lark, on the death of their son-in-law, David Knight, on April 13.

### Thank You:

"Dar was a special friend to many. Through your prayers, cards, and memorials, God put his arms around us and promised "Fear not, for I am with thee."

To Pastor Troy who spoke about Dar's life and to the relatives and friends that attended the service, thank you, and God bless you all."  
- Family of Dar Hollis



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.

- May 18** Pat Austin  
17041 Lloyd's Bayou Dr.  
Apt. S  
Spring Lake, MI 49456
- May 28** Bill Bedford  
15409 Winchester Circle  
Grand Haven, MI 49417
- May 28** Sue McClellan  
27785 Dequindre, #323  
Madison Heights, MI 48071
- June 24** Stan Johnson  
17046 Lloyds Bayou Dr.  
Apt. 215  
Spring Lake, MI 49456

## PW Hanging Flower Basket Sale

For those who ordered a hanging basket from the Presbyterian Women, pick up is on Friday, May 8, from 11-3 in the church parking lot.



If you're unable to come at this time, your baskets will be placed in the Gathering Area for pickup on Sunday, May 11. If you know in advance that you won't be able to pick up your flowers on Friday, please send an email to [s2123@aol.com](mailto:s2123@aol.com).

## 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.

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

**Next Event:** Friday, June 5

**Time:** 9-11:00 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](mailto:mcweller1@hotmail.com),  
or text/call 616-402-6109

**SUMMER HOURS**

**BEGIN MAY 24**

Through Labor Day,  
the church office will close  
at noon on Fridays.



Dear Church Family,

During the summer of 2024, Pastor Troy took a well-deserved sabbatical for the summer. I am about to do the same! I'd like to thank the session, our staff, and you for making this happen.

My sabbatical begins on June 1st, and I return to the church on August 23rd. This will be a time of rejuvenation and renewal for me. I look forward to spending more quality time with my family without the pressure of the next church event. After navigating the transitions in our youth ministry while also completing a doctorate alongside the daily work of ministry, I admit my energy, excitement, and imagination for ministry are not what they once were. It's time to recharge!

At the end of June, my family and I will travel abroad to Berlin, Rome, and Edinburgh. Matt and I are excited to show Phoebe and Jenson where we lived for a year in Dunbar, a short train ride away from Edinburgh. We all love history, so we will relish visiting historic

monuments, cathedrals, churches, and museums. We will also have extended time with my family in Seattle in August. For most of the summer, we will be in Grand Haven. If we run into each other around town, please don't be afraid to say "hello," but please refrain from talking about the happenings at First Pres. If you feel we have a friendship beyond me being one of your pastors, please allow me to reach out to you first. I need to take this time to simply be "Kristine" instead of "Pastor Kristine." Throughout my sabbatical, I will spend more intentional time in prayer and Bible study. I have found myself reading God's word only when preparing for a sermon or Bible study. This hasn't been the best for my personal journey of faith, as the end goal was to produce something rather than simply to get to know God better. We never stop learning anew about Jesus' love for us and the world.

In my absence, we are blessed to have so many gifted retired and active pastors willing to preach and assist in worship. Our Deacons will

continue to minister to and care for our homebound members, as well as continue to help with pastoral care. A few will be on call if additional help for pastoral care is needed. We are also blessed to have an amazing and team-oriented staff, who will continue to do amazing work for our church. Matt will continue to lead How to Read the Bible, and my kids will still participate in youth events when able.

I plan to return from sabbatical rested and rejuvenated! With the help of the Holy Spirit, I plan to continue to give my best to you as one of your pastors. In that sense, this sabbatical isn't just about me, but it's about our church as a whole, as we are all in ministry together. Thank you again for supporting my family and me. We are so blessed to be a part of the First Pres community, and we are deeply grateful for you all!

With much gratitude.

Pastor Kristine

## In Our Church

### Update from the Session

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

- Following up on one of our outreach goals, we are supporting with seed money an effort to care for those who have survived spiritual abuse at the hands of pastors and churches. In the fall, the Session will consider ways we can implement this (e.g., support groups, educational opportunities) in the wider community.
- We approved funding from endowment distributions, memorial gifts, and the maintenance reserve to tackle several significant projects — renovating and making ADA accessible our main bathrooms, renovating the portico bathroom, fixing up the bathrooms outside of Fellowship Hall, repadding the sanctuary pews, building a new welcome desk, and resealing and restriping the parking lots.
- We approved final funding for Pastor Kristine's sabbatical.

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

## Thursday Night Discussion Group

Our book selection from May 7 through May 28, 2026, is "Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale – A Fresh Look at the Many Dimensions of God and Humanity" by Frederick Buechner. A very long title for a short book that "With its unique insights into God, people, and the Good News, it will surprise those who have read the Bible 1,000 times, and those who have never opened it" ([frederickbuechner.com](http://frederickbuechner.com)). Whichever of those categories you belong in, the Thursday Night Discussion Group invites you to read and discuss this collection of essays with us.

Although the group will pause its weekly meetings for June through August, we will continue our tradition of "Feast and Fiction" events during the summer. More details TBA in the June 2026 Presbyterian Tidings.

Please contact Linda Gritter or Katie Norton for additional information.

## A Quick Reminder About Scams

From time to time, people have received scam emails that appear to be from one of our pastors. These messages usually create a sense of urgency and may ask you to buy gift cards or send money. Please do not respond.



A few reminders:

- Our pastors will never email asking you for immediate action.
- The church will never ask you to buy gift cards or make online purchases on our behalf.

If you receive one of these emails:

- Do not reply.
- Block the sender's email address.
- If you are unsure whether an email is legitimate, call the church office to check.

We have safeguards in place to ensure financial accountability, and we are always happy to help verify suspicious messages.

## Presbyterian Disaster Relief Speaker May 17

On Sunday, May 17, at 4:00 PM, First Presbyterian Grand Haven will host Omar Salinas Chacón, a Mission Specialist for the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA). Omar will share with us about the PDA's work caring for communities adversely affected by crises and catastrophic events. He will focus on the PDA's work with natural disaster relief, such as relief efforts in North Carolina in the wake of Hurricane Helene in 2024 and the PC(USA)'s domestic response to refugees, asylum seekers, and other forced migrants at the border and throughout the country.

Please join us to hear about the PC(USA)'s disaster relief efforts and enjoy some coffee and cookies.

For questions, please contact Dr. Matt Aragon Bruce at [mbruce@fpg.org](mailto:mbruce@fpg.org)

## Food Pantry Collection

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

Some suggested items:

- Canned chunk chicken or tuna
- Boxes of cereal
- Granola Bars
- Applesauce & canned fruit
- Peanut butter
- Laundry detergent

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



## FPGH Staff Updates

### Children's Ministries Update

Please keep our Children's Ministries Director, Laura Burns, and her husband, Larry, in your prayers. Larry will undergo major surgery at U of M on May 7, and Laura will be out of the office from May 6–30 to care for him during his surgery and recovery.

If you'd like to follow their journey and receive updates, Laura and Larry have created a CaringBridge page: <http://bit.ly/4eQxr55>. We're grateful for the many volunteers who will help keep Children's Ministries running smoothly while Laura is away.

### Welcome Back, Clara Saunders! :)

We're excited to welcome Clara Saunders back as our Summer Family Ministries Intern beginning May 11! During Laura's absence, Clara will serve as the point person for Children's Ministries and will bring her heart, energy, and joy to our summer programs. We're so glad to have Clara with us again this summer.

## Lakeshore Earth Day Celebration Draws Community Together

Lakeshore's 19th Annual Earth Day Celebration brought the community together on Saturday, April 25, from 1-4 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church of Grand Haven.

The event began with a clean energy parade featuring electric vehicles and cars through Grand Haven before arriving at the church. Hosted by the Earth Care Team, the celebration featured electric vehicles, bikes, and 14 informational booths representing organizations from Ottawa and Muskegon counties.

Visitors explored exhibits on watersheds, native plants, gardening, landscaping, parks, and local outdoor opportunities. Many booths offered hands-on activities for children, including seed planting, watershed coloring, and practical ways to help keep the air clean. The County Conservation District gave away free conifer and deciduous tree seedlings and plants. Several organizations also shared educational programs for schools and community initiatives such as bike repair and bike giveaways for children.

Guests enjoyed a free buffet from Righteous Cuisine, live music from Lauryn Allen, and presentations from local experts. Speakers included Aaron Bodbyl-Mast from Ottawa County Parks, Greg Mankowski from Organicycle, and William Jennett from Barry's Greenhouse and Landscaping, who shared insights on parks, composting, native plants, and environmental stewardship.

The event was a joyful celebration of creation care, with community members enjoying the booths, food, music, and educational opportunities throughout the day.

The Earth Care Team is grateful for the community's support and hopes to host the celebration again next year.

The team is also seeking volunteers to help care for the church's Memorial Garden. Those interested can contact Michele Smith at 616-638-3112.





**HOW WE ARE FAILING PARENT CAREGIVERS AND WHY IT MATTERS**

Join us for a screening of the documentary *UNSEEN* and Q&A with author Jess Ronne

**MONDAY, MAY 11**  
refreshments 6:45 PM - film begins 7 PM in the sanctuary



**Jess Ronne**  
Author • Podcast Host • Nonprofit CEO

## Unseen: A Film & Conversation for Caregivers

Join us on Monday, May 11 at 6:30pm at First Presbyterian Church of Grand Haven for a meaningful evening of film and conversation.

We will be showing *UNSEEN*, an award-winning documentary by author and advocate Jess Ronne, which offers an honest look into the realities of caregiving. The film follows Jess and her husband as they care for their son with profound disabilities, highlighting both the challenges and the deep love woven into daily life.

Following the film, Jess will lead a conversation and share resources, including insight into housing for individuals with disabilities.

Caregiving can be isolating and exhausting, and many feel unseen in their daily struggles. This evening is an opportunity to listen, learn, and connect—whether you are a caregiver yourself or want to better support someone who is.

This event is free and open to the community. Help us spread the word—no one should have to walk this journey alone.

## Created to Create Monthly Gathering

Tuesday, May 26  
6:30-7:30 PM  
Church Lounge

- A peaceful time to enjoy creativity and connection with God.
- Bring your own art or craft supplies, or use the color pencils, paper, and clay available, or bring a book or word puzzle and hang out.
- Snacks are provided.
- All are welcome and invited.

### What happens at CTC:

At CTC, it's about the process, not the end product. Each session begins with a short devotion that explores how creativity and faith intertwine. These gatherings offer a place to set the to-do list aside, and enjoy a calm and comfortable place for your favorite creative pastime, book, or puzzle. There is plenty of space to spread out art and craft projects and supplies. So far, CTC gatherings have included weavers, word-search puzzlers, knitters, book readers, sketchers, watercolor painters, doll makers, coloring book color-ers, greeting card makers, and more.



CTC is held on the 4th Tuesday of the month through May, followed by a summer break.

### What's coming up:

May 26: CTC 6:30 p.m.

June and July: Summer break

August 25: Nature-themed art project at 6:30 p.m.

Supplies provided. Will be held outdoors, weather permitting.

September 29: CTC resumes 6:30 p.m.

### **Tidings article deadline for June issue: May 23, 2026**

Submittals, suggestions, or comments:  
sbryant@fpggh.org or staff@fpggh.org  
FPGH editorial staff reserves the right to accept or decline, edit for length and content, all submitted material.

# Children & Youth

## Building a Better Space for our Toddlers

Joyful Noise Christian Child Care is installing new cabinets in the toddler classroom this summer and is working to raise \$5,500 to complete the project. If you'd like to help, any contribution makes a difference. Here are some ways you can help:

- Send a check (made out to FPGH with "Joyful Noise" in the memo) to 508 Franklin Ave. Grand Haven, MI 49417
- Drop off a cash donation to the Joyful Noise or First Presbyterian Church offices. Let them know it's for our cabinets!
- Visit the First Pres website at: [fpgh.org](http://fpgh.org)>>click the green "Give Online" button>>choose "Joyful Noise C-Fund" from the "Fund" drop-down menu

Thank you for supporting Joyful Noise!

## LEGO Faith Builders Summer Volunteers Needed

Beginning June 14, LEGO Faith Builders returns for another summer of creativity, connection, and Bible storytelling.

One of the most beloved parts of Children's Ministry, LEGO Faith Builders invites kids to hear a Bible story and then recreate it using LEGOs. Week after week, children bring scripture to life in imaginative ways, often offering remarkable creativity and insight through their builds.



Faith Builders is a meaningful and playful way for children to engage with God's Word. Their creations are often both inspiring and surprising, offering fresh perspectives on familiar stories.

As the summer season begins, we are building a new team of volunteers to help lead LEGO Faith Builders on Sunday mornings. Serving is simple and requires no advance preparation—just a welcoming presence, a playful spirit, and a willingness to spend time with kids. Volunteers are invited to serve on just two or three Sundays throughout the summer, with flexibility for changing plans if needed.

Open enrollment for Summer 2026 leaders is now underway. Those interested in joining this joyful ministry are encouraged to sign up for the Sundays that work best for them using the following link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0444AFAD2AA1FC1-63587541-lego#/>

## Celebrate Our Graduates on Senior Sunday – May 17!

Join us in worship on Sunday, May 17, as we celebrate our graduating seniors!



Whether they are completing high school, college, or postgraduate studies, we want to recognize their hard work and achievements.

If you have a graduate in your family, please share their name, a photo, the school they are graduating from, and what their plans are after graduation, whether that is work, trade school, college, graduate school, or something else!

Send this information to Sally Bryant at [sbryant@fpgh.org](mailto:sbryant@fpgh.org) by **May 10** so we can include them in our graduate slideshow.

Let's come together to support and celebrate our graduates as they embark on their next journey!

## Send a Note to Our Grads!

Please share any advice, affirmation, or a favorite verse to be included in a booklet we will send with our high school graduates as they begin a new chapter in their lives. You may use [this link](#), or write out your note and place it in the box on the Family Ministries desk by May 10, 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*

**May 2026**

*deliver to: (or current resident)*

**Do you love LEGOS?**

**Do you want to feel like a kid again?**

**Volunteer for Lego Faith Builders  
and help kids recreate Bible stories  
with LEGOS on Sunday mornings!**

*(more details on p. 7)*

**Contact Laura to join the LEGO Faith Builders team: [LBurns@fpgh.org](mailto:LBurns@fpgh.org)**