



PRESBYTERIAN *Tidings*

August 2026, VOLUME 74—ISSUE 8

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

From Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

August marks the third month of Kind Haven, so how are you doing with being intentionally kind to others? It's the intentional part that is hardest for me. Sure, I tend to be polite and kind, but choosing to take a deeper step towards others has taken effort. Every time I see the sign in my yard or the sticker on my cup, I find myself challenged to do a bit better, to be a little bit more of the kind presence of God's love to someone else. We've challenged the church to lean into being Kind Haven because it is an antidote to so much of the vitriol and even evil that exists in our world.



The Grand Haven community came face-to-face with that in the horrific murder-suicide that happened in July in the township. Words cannot suffice to condemn the violence, nor can they offer adequate consolation to those who have lost friends, co-workers, or family. Even as I write this I am still wrestling with how to understand such tragedy while holding fast to our faith. I find myself leaning into what I know about God — that God is love, steadfastly faithful, kind, compassionate, and so much more. In times like this I find myself leaning into those things even while I offer my prayers of lament. They are the solid ground under my feet even when all else feels shaky.

As we enter the final month of the summer, there is plenty to look forward to — final summer vacations, athletes resuming training, college students heading to school. Later this month, Pastor Kristine will return from her sabbatical. I hope you have been praying for her and her family during this time away. I encourage your prayers to continue as she returns to ministry in late August. When she returns, be curious about her time away. What has God been revealing in her and in her ministry? How have we as a church grown in this season? What is God calling us to do going forward?

I know that the summer has given me a little time to work on projects that needed tending. I'm excited to hold a retooled, robust confirmation process for our students, starting in October. I've been monkeying with new ways of connecting our visitors more deeply into the life of the church. The very idea of membership has become a challenge in our culture, so we're going to start offering Come and See Gatherings where we can share the heartbeat of this church with our visitors. We're hoping this move to being more relational and less class-focused helps us welcome people further in.

Finally, in September we will have our fall kickoff service and picnic. It'll be on the second Sunday of September, but this year we'll be holding both at the church. We were finding that many were choosing one or the other, and we want both! It'll be a great day for building faith and community.

Whatever August brings you, I pray that this is a blessed month for you.

In Christ,

Pastor Troy

Upcoming Events

- Aug. 1** FPGH Open as Cooling Station for Parade
- Aug. 5** Youth Kayak & Paddleboard Night (All Youth 5th-12th)
- Aug. 7** Red Cross Blood Drive
- Aug. 9** Families Linger Longer Lunch on the Playground
- Aug. 12** Youth (5th-8th) Picnic at the Beach Night
- Aug. 14** High Ropes Adventure (All Youth 5th - 12th)
- Aug 16** Come and See Gathering
- Aug. 17** Playdate on the Playground at the Imagination Station
- Aug. 19** Youth Community Service/ Art Night (ALL Youth 5th-12th)
- Aug. 30** Blessing of the Backpacks
- Sept. 7** Church Office Closed in Observance of Labor Day

Come and See Gathering Sunday, August 16

Would you like to become a member of FPGH or do you want to find out more about the beliefs and traditions of the Presbyterian Church? You are invited to attend our upcoming Come and See Gathering!

The gathering is on Sunday, August 16, between worship services from 10-11 AM.

To reserve your spot, contact Lindsay Williams at 616-842-6760 or lwilliams@fpgh.org

Attending the gathering does not commit you to membership.

Church & Pastor Contact Information

Pastor Troy Hauser Brydon:
616-604-2617,
church: 616-842-6760 x1005,
email: TroyHB@fpgh.org

Pastor Kristine Aragon Bruce:
On Sabbatical through Labor Day

Church Office:
616-842-6760, staff@fpgh.org

Prayer Concerns:

Mary & Ron Albrecht, Don Anderson,
Cheryl Horton, Sandra Peel

Our Sympathy:

to Grant and Sharon Young on the
death of Grant's brother, Jonathan
Bryant Young, on June 21.

to John, Meghan, Jack and Henry
Heritage on the death of John's
father, Bill Heritage, on July 14.

to Rob Miner and family on the
death of Rob's wife, Gail Miner, on
July 27.

Congratulations!

to Jeanne VanGelderens on the birth
of her great-grandson, John Declan
Zwart, on June 22. Proud parents
are Jacob and Kelli Zwart.

Thank You:

"250 acts of kindness have already
shown up in my life from First
Pres. Your kindness and support
took me through a very difficult
time. Thank you (and, now my left
hip matches my right).

- Karen Heinritz

Cheryl Horton thanks you all for
the cards, prayers, and care shown
to her during her recent back
surgery and recovery. The surgery
went quite well and her pain is
much relieved. Prayers for
continued healing are appreciated.



Each month we share birthdays of
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.

Aug. 5 Barbara Spring
1504 Pineridge Street
Grand Haven, MI 49417

Did You Know?

Kindness is uplifting and
transformative. Research
shows it improves mental and
physical health, increases
social connection, enhances
learning environments, and
strengthens workplace culture.

SUMMER HOURS

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

Tidings article deadline for September issue: August 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.

Blood Drive August 7

The American Red Cross has
declared only the second national
blood crisis in its history. All
blood types are urgently needed
after the nation's blood supply
dropped nearly 25% in June, with
donations at a four-summer low.
Your donation can help save
lives. Please use the link below to
schedule an appointment today.



Our next blood drive:

Friday, August 7

11:00—4:15 p.m.

**First Presbyterian Church
Schedule your donation at:**

redcrossblood.org

*Note: Come to give blood in
August for a \$20 Amazon Gift
Card by email.*

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
- Boxed skillet dinners
- Granola bars
- Boxes of cereal
- Canned chunky-type soups
- Mac & cheese
- Toilet paper

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



Save the Date: CAS Opens with Big Band Jazz!

Get ready to swing into a new season of great music! The Community Artist Series of FPGH opens its 2026–27 season with the exciting sounds of the Grand Rapids Jazz Orchestra on Sunday, September 27, at 4:00 p.m.

For over four decades, the GRJO has been a driving force in West Michigan's vibrant music scene. As one of the region's premier big bands, GRJO unites some of the area's top talent dedicated to the art of live jazz!

Save the date, invite a friend, and plan to join us for an unforgettable afternoon of big band jazz!

Confirmation Class: Is Your Student Ready to Take the Next Step?

Is your 7th-, 8th-, or 9th-grade student ready to explore their faith and learn more about what it means to be a Christian? Confirmation is an opportunity for youth to ask questions, grow in their understanding of the Christian faith, and consider making their faith their own.



Confirmation classes will meet monthly on Sundays from 10:10–11:20 a.m. Students who attend the Gathering Service will have time to join worship for the sermon and the remainder of the service.

Class dates: October 4, November 8, and December 6, 2026; January 3, February 7, March 7, and April 18, 2027.

A retreat at the church is planned for November 13–14, 2026, and Confirmation Sunday will be May 9, 2027.

If your student is interested in participating—or if you have questions—please contact Pastor Troy at troyhb@fpgh.org. We look forward to walking with our youth as they explore and grow in their faith!

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. Dr. Kristine Aragon Bruce, Associate Pastor
Maryanne Beery, Director of Music & Fine Arts
Dr. Matt Bruce, Theologian-in-Residence
Sally Bryant, Communications Coordinator
Laura Burns, Children's Ministries Director
Marc Felt, Gathering Band Leader
Rob Hlebinsky, Organist
Karen Nienhouse, Congregational Care Ministries
Todd Olson, Church Administrator
Clara Saunders, Youth Ministries Intern
Sally Segers, Joyful Noise Director
Eric Stromberg, Youth Ministries Coordinator
Lindsay Williams, Office Assistant
Andrew Wolfert, Bookkeeper/Administrative Assistant

Men's Support Group

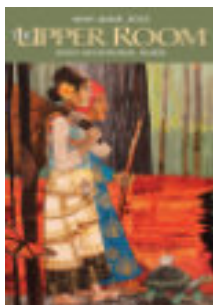
In July, Mosaic Counseling introduced a new monthly men's support group which meets at First Pres on the 3rd Monday of the month, from 5-6:30 PM, in room 16/17 on the lower level.

The group provides a safe, confidential, and supportive environment where men can connect with others who may be facing similar life challenges. Whether you're dealing with stress, relationships, work pressures, family concerns, personal growth, mental health struggles, or simply looking for connection and support, this group offers an opportunity to share experiences, gain perspective, and build meaningful relationships.

The group is open to the community and is offered at no cost. Register at mosaiccounseling.com

The Upper Room Devotionals

The Upper Room is a daily devotional published in more than 30 languages and 100 countries around the world. Every day, readers of *The Upper Room* around the world read the same story in many different languages and pray the same prayer together.



The devotionals are published every two months and are available in the church office, lounge and Gathering Area. Feel free to take a copy!

Created to Create: A Quiet, Creative Time Restarts in September

Ready for a peaceful, creative hour to regenerate and refresh? Inspired by the analog trend? You are invited to Created to Create (CTC). These gatherings happen on the fourth Tuesday of each month, beginning September 22, from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

The September session has a nature theme. All supplies are provided for two simple and no-skills-required creative projects. Then, beginning with the October session, bring whatever you'd like to spend the time on. Maybe it's carving, reading, puzzle-doing, painting, drawing, coloring, knitting, photography, or working with clay. Each gathering includes a short devotion about the connection between creativity and faith. Attend each month, or drop in as your schedule allows. All are welcome. Snacks are provided.

CTC is held in the church lounge, located on the main floor, across the hall from the church office. The lounge is fully accessible.

For more information, contact Maryanne Beery at mbeery@fpg.org.



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.

Note: The Faith Formation Committee is currently working on bringing in a speaker to address current scams and how to avoid falling victim to them. Keep an eye out for details coming soon!



for the All-Church Picnic and one worship service on September 13!



Creation Care Summer

The Earth Care Team encourages you to join them this summer in focusing on caring for creation through simple, meaningful activities each month:

- **August: Use Less Vehicle Energy**

This month, we are encouraging you to think about walking, biking, carpooling, and using public transportation whenever possible. Consider organizing a biking or hiking trip to enjoy the beauty of our local and state parks and trails while reducing energy use.

- **September: Community Clean-Up Month**

We encourage you to take care of our lakes and beautiful public areas by picking up trash and weeding invasive plants. Here is a link to help identify invasive plants:

<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=invasive+weeds+in+michigan+pictures&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>. We would also love for someone to organize a church group to clean up or restore a local area together.

- **All Summer: Harvest Table & Reusable Bag Sharing**

- The Earth Care Team invites you to participate in our Harvest Table in the Gathering Area. Share your extra fruits, vegetables, herbs, and plants, and feel free to take what you can use. Together, we can enjoy and share the abundance of the season.
- Check the coat racks across from the Nursing Room for reusable bags. Take what you can use, or bring in extras to share!



Thank you for helping care for creation with us this summer! For additional information, contact Michele Smith (616-638-3112) or Ginger Aubrey (810-513-8887).

How to be Presbyterian and Healthy (and promote a healthy world)

After 12 years of effort, the 2026 PCUSA general assembly approved an overture directing that we divest and no longer invest in the [fossil fuel industry](#). Instead, we will establish a "[Green Future Endowment fund](#)" to support greenhouse gas emission reduction as well as efforts to help marginalized communities harmed by the use of fossil fuels or by the transition to renewable energy. (follow the links above to see more information.)

Individual Presbyterians can support this acknowledgment that the warming of our planet from burning fossil fuels is the greatest threat to all of earth's life that we currently face. We cannot yet avoid the use of fossil fuels completely, but we can be more responsible in the use of our cars and in considering alternatives. Viable options in our area that can make a dent in fossil fuel use are walking and bicycle riding.



Consider walking when your round-trip length is less than 4 or 5 miles. Not only will you avoid fossil fuels, but will also gain the 6,000 to 10,000 steps (about 2,000-2,500 per mile) that are often recommended for maintaining your health. For round trips of less than 10 to 12 miles consider bicycling. This distance is often considered the equivalent to the health benefits obtained by walking 4 to 5 miles.

When you can't walk or bicycle, consider combining multiple car trips into one; planning them within your family, or with neighbors or friends. Talk with your employer about establishing a car pool program. Establish metrics to help you establish when car trips are necessary; for example, that the time spent at your destination(s) is at least double the time it takes to commute to and from.

By making thoughtful transportation choices whenever possible, we can strengthen our health, reduce our environmental impact, and live out our call to care for God's creation.



Feast and Fiction

The Thursday night group is taking a break from our usual theological books and reading some fiction this summer. Please join us at 6 p.m. on August 27 in the Fellowship Hall for a potluck supper followed by a lively book discussion. Our selection for August is *Meet Isabel Puddles: A Mitten State Mystery* by M.V. Byrne.



Isabel Puddles is a widowed mother of two grown children who lives in the tiny hamlet along Lake Michigan where she grew up. The only thing she loves as much as her quirky hometown is reading a good murder mystery, but until she takes a side job styling hair at the local funeral home, she never thought she'd be living in one!

Please contact Linda Gritter at lindagritter@gmail.com for more information.

Make a Difference - Become a Connect Two Mentor

Connect Two Student Mentoring is a Christ-centered ministry of Love in Action that partners with local schools to connect caring adult mentors with students who would benefit from an encouraging, consistent relationship. Mentors spend 45 minutes each week meeting with one student during the school day, building hope, joy, and confidence while sharing the love of Jesus through their presence.

One fourth-grade student shared with his mentor this spring, "Today is my favorite day of the week because it's the day that I get to hang out with you!"

More than 80 volunteer mentors currently serve students at Griffin,

Ferry, Rosy Mound, Robinson, and Holmes Elementary Schools; White Pines Intermediate; Lakeshore and Spring Lake Middle Schools; Grand Haven High School; Walden Green Montessori; and West Michigan Academy of Arts and Academics.

We are especially grateful for the nine members of First Presbyterian Church who are already serving as Connect Two mentors and making a meaningful difference in the lives of local students.

You can support Connect Two by joining the prayer team, giving financially, or becoming a mentor. This school year, 15 additional mentors are needed to be paired with students waiting for a caring adult to invest in their lives. No special experience is required—just a willing heart, consistency, and a desire to share Christ's love through

faithful presence. Training and ongoing support are provided.

To learn more or get involved, contact Connect Two Program Director Jill Pyle at jill@loveinactiontricity.org.

Connect Two

Student Mentorship



Join a Choir!

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

Carillon Ringers Handbell Choir

Contact Rob:

rhlebins@gmail.com

Geneva Choir

Starts Wednesday, Sept. 3

6-8:30 PM

with refreshments

Future practices are every

Wednesday 7:30-8:30 PM

in the sanctuary chancel

Contact Maryanne:

mbeery@fpg.org

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

Simple Ideas for Spreading Kindness

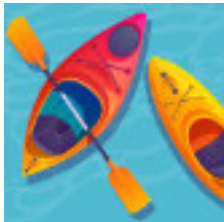
It's so easy to be kind - try some of these ideas!

- Say hello to a new student
- include someone who is left out
- Invite someone to sit with you at lunch or on the bus
- Cheer up someone who is sad
- Be a good friend
- Make a new friend
- Stand up for someone
- Share what you have
- Say "please"
- Say "thank you"
- Be honest and caring
- Use kind words, even when you are frustrated

JUST BE ♥ KIND

Youth Summer Activity Nights

We're excited to stay connected all summer long! Students entering 5th-8th grade are invited to weekly summer activity nights on Wednesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.



In addition, we are planning several special events that bring together all youth (5th-12th grades) for shared activities and connection.

Be sure to check the Family Ministries Bulletin Board for the full schedule of activities, or follow this link for our Summer Events Brochure:

[2026 Summer Youth Events](#)

Questions?

Contact Clara Saunders at

csaunders@fpgh.org or

Eric Stromberg at erics@fpgh.org.

Blessing of the Backpacks Sunday, August 30

Children, teachers, school staff, and all who are beginning a new school year are invited to bring your backpacks, school bags, tote bags, or briefcases for a special blessing.



As we prepare for another year of learning, teaching, growing, and serving, we will ask God to guide, encourage, and bless everyone entering the new school year. The blessing will take place during both worship services.

Summer Events for Children & Their Caregivers

Family Pizza Playdate Sunday, August 9, noon

After church, stay for lunch, play with friends, and meet some new ones. Children of all ages and their families are welcome. Please RSVP to lburns@fpgh.org or by using this link: <https://bit.ly/4fCZBPV>



Playdate on the Playground

Kids and caregivers are invited for our last playground playdate of the summer! Bring your own juice or water to drink, and Miss Laura will bring a treat to share!

- **Monday, August 17, 10:30 a.m.**
Imagination Station, Grand Haven

Summer Cover-to-Cover Reading Challenge!

Want a fun summer reading challenge and to grow in your faith? Join our Jesus Storybook Bible Cover-to-Cover Challenge!



The Jesus Storybook Bible is not just for kids. This book has helped adults understand the full Bible and God's love deeper. It's a great read for the whole family.

Pick up a sticker chart and your free copy of The Jesus Storybook Bible at the Family Ministries Desk.

Read all 44 stories and return your sticker chart for an entry into our Summer Grand Prize drawing!

Would you like to join the Children and Worship Team?

Our school year Sunday School Program is Young Children and Worship. It's a Montessori Worship Center. Children's Worship is modeled after the larger church gathering---gather, listen, respond, bless.

Children and Worship is a group of 20 volunteers who grow deeper in their faith as they lead Children and Worship. As a team member, you'll serve approximately 9-10 Sundays a year. There are two roles: storyteller and greeter (assistant). Children and Worship is a loving and supportive community; we would love for you to be a part of it.

For more information and how to join the team, please contact Laura Burns, lburns@fpgh.org.



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

August 2026

deliver to: (or current resident)



**Sharing kindness in
honor of 250 years**

The Kind Haven Pledge

I pledge to make kindness a daily practice by showing compassion, generosity, and respect to others.

Through simple acts of kindness, I will help make our community a more welcoming and caring place in honor of America's 250th anniversary.

We want to hear your kindness stories!

Share a moment of kindness you witnessed or experienced by sending an email to: staff@fpgh.org or post it on social media and use #kindhaven.

Your story helps inspire others and keeps the movement growing.



Just be kind.