PRESBYTERIAN
# Tidings

November 2026, VOLUME 74—ISSUE 11 MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GRAND HAVEN, MI

## From Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon

Are you ready to be done with the midterm elections yet? I know I am. I turned in my ballot weeks ago, but oh how I wish that exempted me from the onslaught of political ads. The way our country campaigns reveals something that is truly sick in our culture and country, and I pray for the day when our political process softens its tone. Imagine if the billions of dollars spent on this election were spent fixing affordable housing, making utilities more affordable, and more. What a world that would be!

Months ago I decided it was time for our church to engage with the wisdom found in Ecclesiastes, which remains one of my favorite books of the Bible. Today we are experiencing some turbulence in our economy, and when that happens, all of our lives begin to feel unsure. Will I have enough money for the month? What will I do if costs keep rising? What will happen to my 401(k) if the AI boom goes bust?

While Ecclesiastes will not answer those questions directly (I'm pretty sure it's author didn't know what a 401(k) was!), it does help reframe God's purposes for us in life. More and more, I'm coming to see that when we learn to trust God and to focus on God's desires for how we live, the less we cling so tightly to things that matter (money, the future) but that are not the One who actually holds our lives now and forever. So, I invite you to read Ecclesiastes this month. It's pretty short, so you could even read it once a week, asking God to speak a fresh word to you each time.

Speaking of money and the future, we're in the thick of Generosity Season! (How's that for a transition?) Many of you have already turned in your 2027 pledge cards. Thank you for being timely and generous! If you haven't turned yours in, it is so, so helpful for your church leaders to have those in hand as they faithfully set next year's budget. God has blessed us to be a blessing, and that begins with how we combine our giving right here at church.

Finally, Advent gets going in November. Soon, the church will turn from the rush of the beginning of fall into the hopefulness of Advent. On this beautiful fall day, that feels so far away, but it isn't. As you work your way with us through Ecclesiastes, I pray that the Spirit of God would be moving in your life, already preparing the way for the One who comes to us.

In Christ,

Pastor Troy

## Upcoming Events

| | |
|---|---|
| **Nov. 1** | All-Saints Sunday |
| **Nov. 8** | Usher Training |
| **Nov. 8** | Echoing Air, CAS Concert |
| **Nov. 10** | Bunko Game Time |
| **Nov. 15** | Come and See Gathering |
| **Nov. 21** | PW Candy Marking |
| **Nov. 22** | Congregational Meeting |
| **Nov. 26** | Thanksgiving |
| **Nov. 27** | Church Office Closed |
| **Nov. 29** | Greening of the Church for Advent |
| **Dec. 4** | Red Cross Blood Drive |
| **Dec. 6** | PW Bazaar & Bake Sale |
| **Dec. 6** | W. Michigan Winds Small Ensembles CAS Concert |
| **Dec. 8** | Bunko Game Time |
| **Dec. 13** | Come and See Gathering |
| **Dec. 17** | Heritage Luncheon |
| **Dec. 20** | Service of Light & Hope, 5 PM |
| **Dec. 23** | Carols & Cookies Young Children's Christmas Service, 4:30 PM |
| **Dec. 24** | Christmas Eve Services:<br>4 PM Contemporary Candlelight<br>9 PM Traditional Condlelight |
| **Dec. 28** | Church Office Closed |

## Have You Completed Your 2027 Pledge?

This year, we've committed ourselves to kindness through our Kind Haven efforts – to be a place where kindness begins and where God's love is shared with our neighbors. As you consider your generosity for the coming year, think not simply about what your gift pays for, but about it makes possible. Your generosity helps spread God's kindness to our congregation, our neighbors, and our community. Kindness doesn't just happen. It grows out of people who notice, care, welcome, teach, listen, pray, serve, and give. Your generosity is a vital part of making it possible to spread that kindness to all.

Please complete your 2027 pledge by dropping of your pledge card at church or by completing the online pledge form: https://fpgh.org/give/estimate-of-giving-for-2027/



**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

***FPGH Cares:*** Please let us know about births, hospitalizations and prayer requests. Contact Karen Nienhouse: knienhouse@fpgh.org

***Prayer Concerns:***
Mary & Ron Albrecht,
Don Anderson, Sandra Peel

***Our Sympathy:***
to Kathryn, Keith, Tyler, Parker, and Layla Marks on the death of Kathryn's mother, Patricia Ricks, on October 12. Patricia is also the sister-in-law of Michal and Rich Wheeler.

to Patricia Walsh and family on the death of her husband, Dr. Ralph Walsh, on October 14.

## Food Pantry Collection

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

Suggested items include non-perishable food items and school snacks, and household items such as toilet paper and laundry detergent. **Please note that breakfast cereal is *not* needed at this time.**

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



## The Giving Tree: Sharing the Joy of Christmas




The Giving Tree Christmas Ministry returns this year, inviting you to help make the holidays a little brighter for those in need. We're collecting $25 gift cards to Meijer and Walmart, which are especially helpful in giving families the flexibility to purchase gifts or everyday essentials.

Stop by the Giving Tree table in the Gathering Area on November 29, December 6, or December 13 to contribute. We will purchase the gift cards through the RaiseRight program, which gives Joyful Noise a rebate on each card purchased. If you prefer, you may also purchase gift cards directly from Meijer or Walmart. Please be sure to buy them in $25 denominations.

Donated gift cards will support several local programs serving our neighbors: Step Up, Hope Project, Reach the Forgotten, and the Housing Ministries of Love in Action. Thank you for helping share the joy of Christmas with our community!




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.

**Nov. 3** Lany Schoenmaker
17707 Cobblefield Ln.
Spring Lake, MI 49456

**Nov. 5** Ron Albrecht
**Nov. 26** Mary Albrecht
2900 Thornhills Ave. SE
Room 25
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

**Nov. 8** Carol Bedford
15409 Winchester Circle
Grand Haven, MI 49417

**Nov. 28** Darell Moreland
1410 S. Ferry, Rm H6
Grand Haven, MI 49417

**Tidings article deadline for December issue: November 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.




We are so grateful for the love and support our church community shows our childcare program throughout the year! Whether through donations of time, money, supplies, or prayers, every act of kindness makes a difference in the lives of our children, families, and staff.
Thank you for being part of our village and helping us create a place where little ones can learn, grow, and thrive.
We are truly blessed by you! ❤️

Love, Your Friends at

JOYFUL NOISE
Christian Childcare

# From Rev. Dr. Kristine Aragon Bruce



Dear Church Family,

As we approach Thanksgiving, I thought of 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, often quoted when it comes to a spirit of thankfulness. Below is the same passage in two different translations.

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NRSVUE

*Be cheerful no matter what; pray all the time; thank God no matter what happens. This is the way God wants you who belong to Christ Jesus to live*.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, The Message

The first translation is from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition or NRSVUE, the same translation of the Bibles in our pews and the translation Pastor Troy and I use when writing sermons. The Message is more of a paraphrase than a translation because Eugene Peterson did not translate it directly from Hebrew and Greek, the original languages in which Scripture was written, but instead relied on the translations and interpretations of other biblical scholars.

Comparing a passage of Scripture between two different translations and/or paraphrases can help widen our understanding of a Bible passage. I appreciate that The Message makes it clearer that an attitude of thankfulness shows that we belong to Christ Jesus. At first read, the NRSVUE makes it sound like we are not in God's will if we are not thankful. As if God leaves no room for times when we are disappointed, hurt, or angry, or feel anything but thankful. One can still be thankful for who God is while also experiencing a difficult time in life. In my humble opinion, The Message's translation of 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 conveys that truth better.

As Christians, we have a tendency to hide or push down any negative feelings because engaging in such feelings may seem like we do not have faith in God's goodness. Instead, we should be "rejoicing" and be "cheerful" at all times. This passage is not saying we should rejoice and be cheerful over whatever difficulty has befallen us. What this passage is saying is that we should rejoice and be glad that while we are experiencing a difficult situation, Jesus's love and faithfulness hold fast. Jesus is still present with us and will never leave or forsake us, especially when life throws us a curveball. Jesus Christ is our constant. His love for us remains steady, and his love for us is the same when life is great and when life is not so great. My prayer for all of us this Thanksgiving is that our thankfulness for God's constant and eternal presence with us would be renewed.

Grateful for you!

Pastor Kristine

## Update from the Session

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

- We called a meeting of the congregation for Sunday, November 22, 2026, at 10 a.m. for the purpose of electing officers and members of the 2027 Nominations Committee.
- We completed the 2026 review of the membership rolls.
- We approved funding for repairs to the chapel limestone and repairs for any places of water intrusion.
- We continued our discussions about how to be a church that is sensitive to and welcoming of people who have been hurt by other churches.

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

## 2026 CROP Walk Results




The 2026 Tri-Cities Crop Walk for Hunger achieved its goal of $60,000 thanks to everyone who walked and contributed to the hungry in our neighborhood and beyond.

There are over 400 walks in United States and 50,000 hunger fighters all with one goal: building a world where there is enough for all. Thank you, First Presbyterian, for your generosity and service in Christ's name to help the many who struggle every day to feed their families.

## FPGH Earth Care Website

The First Presbyterian Earth Care Team has been working on its web site for several years. One of our goals for this year was to provide information about local resources for recycling, composting, and re-using rather than trashing our stuff. We also wanted to provide information about local environmental organizations.

You can get to our website at https://sites.google.com/view/fpghearthcare. Or you can find the link to it on the church website at https://fpgh.org/ministries/adults. Simply go to that page and look for the logo you see here.

The information about local resources is its own page that you can get to from our home page by clicking the "Resources" tab at the very top of our home page. Also please browse the other pages. In particular our home page has information on our recent events, the PC(USA) Earth Care Pledge, what we have accomplished, and our Goals and objectives for each year.

For even more excitement, click on the "PCUSA information" tab to find a link to CANOPY, **C**reation **A**ction **N**etwork **o**f **P**resbyterian **Y**oung Adults, an online community space for Presbyterians and their friends, ages 18-35, who are interested in creation care.

## 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.

## 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

Sally Segers, Joyful Noise Director

Eric Stromberg, Youth Ministries Coordinator

Lindsay Williams, Office Assistant

Andrew Wolfert, Bookkeeper/Administrative Assistant

## 2026 Giving Reminders

**Year-End Giving**
In early November, we will send out year-to-date contribution statements. Please review your statement carefully and consider completing your 2026 pledge before the end of the year. Your generosity makes our ministries possible, and we are grateful for every gift.

You can give online at fpgh.org/give or drop off a check at church on Sunday or at the church office during the week.

**Appreciated Stock & Qualified Charitable Distributions**
As you consider your year-end charitable giving, there are several ways to support the mission of First Presbyterian Church while potentially receiving tax benefits.

- **Appreciated Stock:** If you own stocks that have increased in value, donating them directly to the church may allow you to avoid capital gains taxes on the appreciation while potentially qualifying for a charitable income tax deduction for their fair market value, subject to IRS rules and limitations
- **Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs):** If you are age 70½ or older and have an eligible IRA, you may be able to make a charitable gift directly to the church through a QCD. This can be a tax-efficient way to support our ministries while potentially reducing your taxable income.

**Please plan ahead!** Stock transfers and QCDs can take time to process, especially toward the end of the year. If you are considering either option, we encourage you to get started early to help ensure your gift is completed before December 31.

To learn more about either option, please contact Todd Olson at the church office at (616) 842-6760. We encourage you to consult your tax advisor or financial professional to determine which giving strategies may be right for you.

## Come and See Gathering

### Sunday, November 15




Would you like to learn more about the beliefs and traditions of the Presbyterian Church, or are you interested in becoming a member of FPGH? You're invited to attend an upcoming Come and See Gathering!

Gatherings take place on the third Sunday of each month, with the next one scheduled for November 15, between worship services from 10-11 AM. It's a relaxed opportunity to learn more about First Pres, meet our pastors, and ask any questions you may have.

To reserve your spot, contact Lindsay Williams at 616-842-6760 or lwilliams@fpgh.org. You're always welcome to drop in, but a reservation helps us have enough materials on hand.

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

## Hand2Hand Expands to Serve More Children

For more than 15 years, First Presbyterian Church has partnered with the Hand2Hand program to provide food for children in our local schools to take home for weekends and school holidays. For many years, we have supported Lakeshore Middle School and Duneside Discovery Center (formerly Mary A. White Elementary), providing weekly food bags filled with 12 nutritious items. This school year, we've expanded our ministry to include Shettler and Edgewood elementary schools in the Fruitport school district!

With this expansion, we need additional volunteers to help deliver food bags to the Fruitport schools on Wednesday afternoons or Thursdays. Another option is to deliver to one of our Grand Haven schools, freeing up a current volunteer to serve the Fruitport schools. We are well staffed for packing the food bags but welcome anyone interested in helping with any part of this ministry.

Hand2Hand is supported through donations from church members, the Mission Committee, Presbyterian Women, and community organizations. We are grateful for this generous support and welcome contributions to help meet the program's ongoing needs. If you would like to donate, please write a check payable to First Presbyterian Church and write Hand2Hand fund on the memo line.

Interested in volunteering or learning more? Contact Chris Bussell at cmb1771@gmail.com or 616-846-0487, Lisa Tobin at lktgh99@gmail.com or 616-402-9870, or the church office at staff@fpgh.org.

## Thursday Night Discussion Group

The Thursday Night Discussion Group meets weekly at 7 pm in lower level rooms 16/17. Our selection for November and December 2026 is *Surprised by Hope* by N. T. Wright. In this groundbreaking work of Christian theology, renowned Bible scholar, Anglican bishop, and bestselling author N. T. Wright argues that Christians have often misunderstood the Bible's message about heaven and what happens after we die.

All are welcome to join us as we grow together on our faith journeys, learning from each other and noted authors in an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding. Contact Linda Gritter or Katie Norton for more information.

## Hanging of the Greens November 29

Do you love decorating for Christmas? We do too—and we'd love your help!

The Worship Committee invites you to join us as we get the church ready for Advent. On Sunday, November 29, we'll gather at 4 PM to transform the church for the season. This is a fun, all-ages event that sets the tone for the Advent season.

To wrap up the evening, we'll enjoy some homemade soup together. Save the date and plan to join us!

Please contact Maryanne if you would like to provide a pot of soup: mbeery@fpgh.org or sign up here:

**I'll Make Soup!**

## Joyful Noise Evergreen Fundraiser

Support the mission and programs of Joyful Noise with a beautiful, fragrant, evergreen purchase! The greenery is fresh Fraser fir, lasts all winter long, and pinecones and bows add special touches.

Wreaths come in 3 sizes:
- 22" for $31
- 26" for $37
- 30" for $43
- 30" Swags are $23, and a 25' garland is $54.

To place an order, you may contact the JN office at 616-847-6600 or office@joyfulnoise.com, or print out this order form and place your order in the black mailbox in the Joyful Noise entryway.
**Order deadline is Nov. 5**, and payment is due at pick-up on November 23.

## Echoing Air & West Michigan Winds: Two Upcoming Community Artist Series Concerts

The Community Artist Series at First Presbyterian Church of Grand Haven is offering two distinctive musical performances this fall. From the elegance of Baroque music and vocals to the variety of instrumental chamber ensembles, there's something for every music lover to enjoy!

- **Echoing Air**
  **Sunday, November 8, at 4:00 p.m.**
  Step into the beauty and elegance of Baroque music with Echoing Air, an acclaimed chamber ensemble specializing in the music of 17th- and 18th-century Europe, particularly England. Featuring two distinctive high male voices accompanied by recorders and other traditional instruments, Echoing Air brings to life music that is both captivating and rich in history.

  Inspired in name by a beloved song of English composer Henry Purcell, the ensemble explores a repertoire spanning centuries, from the Medieval era to the present day. Their performances offer a wonderful opportunity to experience the expressive voices, delicate instrumental sounds, and timeless beauty of early music.



- **West Michigan Concert Winds: Small Ensembles**
  **Sunday, December 6, at 4 p.m.**
  Experience the talent and versatility of musicians from one of Michigan's oldest and largest adult community bands. The West Michigan Concert Winds Small Ensembles perform in a variety of instrumental combinations, offering an intimate musical experience with a diverse repertoire. Their performances celebrate the rich sounds, artistry, and community spirit that have made the group a valued part of the region's musical landscape for more than four decades.

Both concerts are part of First Presbyterian Church's Community Artist Series and are free and open to the public. Everyone is welcome to come and enjoy these wonderful musical experiences!

# In Our Church






## Save the Date: Usher and Greeter Training Session

Whether you're an experienced usher or greeter or new to the role, join us between services on Sunday, November 8, for a training session. We'll review responsibilities and share tips for helping everyone feel comfortable and welcome at worship. Training will take place in the Narthex (the area at the main entrance to the sanctuary)

Thank you for making First Pres a welcoming place for everyone!

***Note:*** *If you attended the training session on Oct. 18 you don't need to attend again. Interested in becoming an usher? We'd love to have you join us!*

# Youth/Children

## Halloween Fun with FPGH Youth!



Our FPGH youth group had a frightfully fun time at their Halloween party! With spooky decorations, delicious food, and everyone dressed in costumes that ranged from a Starbucks barista to a black cat, the afternoon was full of festive fun.

The fun included pumpkin painting, an eerie escape room, and a chance to turn friends into mummies using rolls of toilet paper! The group also made festive centerpieces with jars filled with (fake) creepy crawlies and Halloween lights, that were delivered to a local senior living community to help brighten residents' Halloween celebrations.



It was a spirited afternoon of fellowship, creativity, and sharing a little Halloween spirit with others in the community!

## Can You Help Feed Our Youth?

Help fuel our 5th-12th graders by providing a homecooked lunch during Youth Group!

Meals are needed for 20 people and can be as simple or creative as you'd like. Sign up on your own or team up with a friend to make it easier.

Not sure what to serve? Have questions about reimbursement? Contact Eric at erics@fpgh.org

Thank you for helping feed and care for our youth!

Dates still open are the following Sundays: Nov. 15, Dec. 6, & Dec. 13. You may sign up using this link: https://takethemameal.com/ZTWJ8324

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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*

**November 2026**

*deliver to: (or current resident)*

# Christmas Flower Dedications



Your flower dedication contributions make it possible to decorate the Sanctuary, Gathering Area and Lounge with the beautiful flowers and greenery of Christmas.

Anyone wishing to make a dedication to be listed in the Christmas Eve bulletin may do so by completing the form below and returning it by Sunday, December 13, to the church office or by dropping it in the Sunday offering plate.

Please print the name of each person you wish to honor, along with your name and telephone number. Feel free to use additional forms as necessary. Suggested donation: $15/per dedication.

DEDICATION 1. Please check one: _____ in celebration of _____ in honor of _____ in memory of:

NAME:_____

DEDICATION 2. Please check one: _____ in celebration of _____ in honor of _____ in memory of:

NAME:_____

GIVEN BY:_____ PHONE/EMAIL:_____

Make check payable to: First Presbyterian Church, with memo notation: "Christmas dedication"