



# First Christian Letter

Easter tide 2011

Volume LIV, Issue 2

**Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson**  
Senior Minister

**Phil D. Gilliland**  
Minister of Community Life

**Lunette S. Arledge**  
Director of Music Ministries

**Karen Falkenstein**  
Office Manager

**Sunday Mornings at First Christian Church**

**8:15 AM Prayer & Communion**

**9:00 AM Sunday School**

**10:00 AM Worship**

*As disciples of Christ, we are called by God to worship faithfully, to be open to transformation by the Holy Spirit, and to serve responsibly our changing community.*

## The Joys of Volunteering

It is a duty, a way to do God's will, and feel good at the same time. It can strengthen our church in many different ways and help make all of us come closer together.

It can be difficult and sometimes boring, even challenging and frustrating. But for the most part, it has a positive impact on people who do it.

In many respects, volunteering is the lifeblood of our church.

At least, that's what several church members said when asked about their views on giving up one's time to do church work.

Ginny George, for example, said that she does it because it is a blessing to her, adding that volunteering "is the glue that holds us

together." It creates a sense of community and boosts fellowship that might not otherwise exist, she said.

Her husband, Drex Jr., says he volunteers "out of concern for the church and concern for the people. I have done it most of my adult life." When asked what he gets out of it, Drex says, "I feel good. Just because I know that number one, it's necessary for me, but it is also appreciated."

"It's a sense of duty, a need and a desire to contribute something to my community and the world that I live in," said Steve Findley. "I get some personal benefits in both the satisfaction of doing the work, and very much the fellowship of the people I am working with." And

friendship is an added benefit, he says.

"I really am a proponent of the concept of passing it on," said Ron Hutchison. "I really feel that so much has been given to me in the way of God's love, that I am obliged to pass it on."

His wife, Cherie, spoke



of the "responsibility" of giving back. "People with talents are required to use them in a way that would help other people." A person with a good voice

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Anna Findley: On the Map

Anna Findley is the winner of a Campbell Fellowship for the Study of Geography at George Washington University, which will enable her to get a master's degree in two years.

In addition, she will lead two discussion classes as a teaching assistant this fall. Anna says there appear to be plenty of job opportunities in the field.

"My main focus is global development, and there is tons of stuff to do with migration, demographics,

population growth, and climate change and how that affects all sorts of things, like urban growth and sustainable development."



She took up geography in high school when one of her favorite teachers led a course that she loved.

Although she first majored in physics when she

went to college at Virginia Tech, she switched to international studies and then finally to geography. She graduated summa cum laude from college.

The daughter of Steve and Pam Findley, Anna racked up several awards in high school, where she took a lot of advanced placement tests, and finished her college degree a semester early.

"I'm very, very proud of her," said her mom.

To put it mildly, this is a geographer who may be going places.

## Board Acts on Organ and Organist Proposals

Wes McCune, who has been our temporary organist since Jan. 16, has been hired as the church's permanent organist even as plans are going forward to refurbish the instrument itself.

The board on April 19 approved a 10-month contract with McCune, a prize-winning organist and teacher. He will work January through June and September through December, with unpaid leave in July and August.

He will be paid \$15,000 with three weeks of vacation instead of four. Music director Lunette Arledge said the church would hire substitutes in July and August, using an extra \$3,000 budgeted for the position.

"Wes is an excellent musician, a skilled and creative worship leader, a wonderful person to work with in rehearsal, and a man of personal faith who will make an exceptional addition to our music and worship staff," said the Music Council in recommending him.

He has performed often as recitalist and accompanist for profes-

sional musicians in the area, the committee noted, and has been music teacher at John Adams Elementary School in Alexandria for more than 20 years.

The board favorably viewed a proposal to refurbish the organ, which was installed in 1972 and is showing some signs of wear, but decided to see if it could get a bid by other contractors that might make the work less expensive.

In 2005, Sharon Tweedie and her brother Loel Schaaf gave a \$15,000 memorial gift to pay for improvements to the organ in honor of their father. In her talks with the manufacturer, Cassavants Freres, Lunette discovered the cost for pipework and "revoicing" would total \$28,100.

Before this work can be done, said Lunette, it is imperative that the church repair significant water damage and crumbling plaster that threatens to damage the instrument. The board agreed it will explore and solve the problem. No estimate for this repair work was available, and it would be over and

beyond the \$28,100.

Some suggested that money from memorial funds could be used to cover the additional costs.

In general, Lunette said, it was wise to contract with the company which built the organ and that she was convinced by the firm that "all the parts work together as a whole." Still, at the suggestion of some, she will explore whether there may be other companies interested in bidding on the work and whether their work would be adequate.

She said some of the pipes are sagging or collapsing and work needs to be done to solve the problem. The reeds inside the pipes need to be "revoiced" to keep them sounding as they should, she said.

Lunette said she hoped that work on the organ could begin this summer and completed by the end of the year. She said a concert will be scheduled next year to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the installation and honor those instrumental in bringing it about.



## Scenes from Easter Sunday 2011



## From the Pastor...

By Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson

I looked out my back porch door early this morning. A light mist glimmered, and set my hopes in motion. Spring was finally touching the earth with buds and birds and something inside rose and released in an anticipatory sigh. Easter renewal was in the air after a long period of focused preparation. I was so ready to shed my Lenten skin!

As I opened the sliding glass door leading to my deck, I glimpsed movement. Searching for a robin or a rabbit, certain signs of Easter, my eyes found far more of a Good Friday sight. An old fox, trembling and bone weary. She was standing, transfixed in the middle of my back parking lot. Her tail caught my attention – thin and ragged, patches of crusted skin exposed where fur might have been - as if it was a reflection of her soul. What had been a bright, soft auburn in youth had turned thin and grey, gritty with age and dirt. Her nose twitched, perhaps at the wafts of garbage and recycling nearby. She had come out of the nearby woods into treacherous human territory to look for something to eat. Her hunger was palpable. I could see her desire. Yet before she moved toward the scents, she crouched to clean her paws as if washing her hands in ancient, religious devotion. I gingerly stepped forward on my porch to take a closer look. She noticed, startled and darted away – as afraid of me as I would likely be of her if she wasn't so hungry. Gone. I wanted to set out some food for her but knew that I would be traveling down a slippery slope.

Slippery slopes are all around. You know what I mean. Those ridges where, if we get too close we may just fall over and be swallowed alive! Need, poverty, sorrow, death, loss. As your pastor, as a mother, as a friend, I have been known to fall precipitously down well worn slopes as I overstep a tradition, overreact to an incident, embarrass my child with exuberance, push too hard for change, or recoil in angry impatience. I often wish that life was easier to navigate and that the wide open spaces of my faith could assure me which slope was right to slip down. How far dare I follow my kingdom hopes? How far dare I place my bets on the justice that is promised to come? How far dare I let myself love? How far dare I fall into the depth of need that can suffocate as easily as liberate? I sometimes must make myself search for the edges where I know I can stop. And remember that it is not all up to me.

It seems that finding the balance in life between emptiness and abundance, between Good Friday and Easter, between dying and rising is what most of us are looking for on a daily basis. A way of moving through life reaching for the Easter moments, but holding in respect the challenges that get us there. Sometimes we find ourselves locked in the Saturday in between – described by the early Christians as a kind of purgatory. We are in a holding pattern – making it, but not loving it. Sometimes not making it at all. And then God's dreams are forced upon us as we cycle back to Easter. Everything in the natural world implores us to leave the tomb and find Easter again, that place where our self imposed edges crumble and we discover green grass and tulips on the other side.

I hope and pray that we, as a church community, can continue to search for the edges that define who we are in Christ. Then decide to tumble on over and down that slippery slope that leads to....?? Well, I place my bets on life.

With all my love,  
Your Pastor

*Kathleen*



## In Memoriam: Barbara Strosnider

*Excerpts from Pastor Kathleen Kline Chesson's Eulogy, "Now You Are Light..."*

I believe in light ~ in its warmth, in its power, in its capacity to reveal and define. I love how light can find you no matter what darkness you may be lost in... and how its influence multiplies the darker it becomes. If you've ever been caught on a boat in the middle of a midnight storm, no stars or moon to reflect the sun's sleeping glory, it is easy to panic and to succumb to your own fears. But something inside keeps you searching and you suddenly spot the tiniest speck in the distance. Could it be your dock light shining – ever so dim you wonder if it is real? But as you allow yourself to trust it's reality, and focus on it as your guide... well, you know that you will be safe. That you will find your way home.

Barbara was light. There was a capacity about her that, no matter what darkness she found herself surrounded by, she could still maintain her flame. The darkness could not overcome her. I remember her saying so many times and in so many words, "it's OK, I'll be OK..." in the midst of increasing physical disability or emotional frustrations. And soon, a joke would be on her tongue, or a smart and sassy witticism. She was just too smart. She was not about to let the circumstances of life envelop or snuff out any of the light that she was. How much, and especially in retrospect, do I admire her tenacity and strength.

Barbara loved people, and found her meaning and her purpose in the relationships she developed, nurtured and gave herself to. She did

not sit around and wait for things to happen. She went out and went after life ~ and refused to diminish herself or her hope in the process. Kenny says that the first time he met her, he was driving a city bus and Barbara got on the bus. As she stepped on the step he said to her, "how are you, young lady?" She replied with a broad smile, "I'm Barbara!" And her light spilled out all over.

Barbara Lee Strosnider was born on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, 1947 in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. She was the second daughter of Wanda and Harold, her older sister Karen born two years before her. Following Barbara two years later was Ruth, her beloved little sister. Karen died while young and I know little of those circumstances, but she was close with her sister Ruth ~ whose death two years ago was deeply devastating.

Barbara's mother, Wanda shared with me that she was named "sunshine and showers" by her great grandmother Pennington. Evidently, when Barbara was young, she would become so immediately happy upon greeting her great grandmother that tears of joy would run down her cheeks at the same time she had a huge smile. Or perhaps as well, Barbara learned to smile through her tears. I think that both are true. She was a unity, Barbara. And often a contradiction. As Kenny said, "she liked to keep



moving." She wouldn't let a momentary set back paralyze her. She soldiered on, "a real good person" Kenny said. Indeed she was.

Barbara became my friend almost immediately upon coming to First Christian. As I was searching for after care for my then 8 year old daughter, Barbara appeared, as if by magic, with a willingness that soothed. She loved it, picking Joslyn up from the bus stop most days after school – often along with many of Joslyn's friends and watching her until her dad or I were able to get home from work. She did this for at least two years, and I don't know what I would have done without her willingness and flexibility. She said to me shortly after my first months here at FCC, "I want to be the first new person to join First Christian with you as pastor." She joined in September of 2003 and quickly involved herself in so many areas of church life. Serving on the diaconate, chairing the membership council, preparing snacks for Vacation Bible School, participating with Logos Dei, our speech choir. She also home baked our communion bread every Sunday for years – a special recipe from her mother, who used to bake it for her church.

Though Barbara was so often was surrounded by an edge of darkness, the darkness did not overcome her. And now, her light is richer, and more penetrating than ever before. I wish it didn't take our own overcoming darkness to reveal all the contours of her light. But somehow by the grace of God, I believe she knows "For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true."

(Continued from page 1)

should sing in the choir, she said.

But Cherie and others spoke of the learning that a volunteer picks up, such as learning about people and one's own relationship with God. Without such experiences, he said, "you would be living in a foggy world instead of seeing things clearly, and that would be everything new that you learn from a different person's perspective."

But one thing hangs over volunteering in our church. Even though there are many good, terrific volunteers, finding enough people to fill all the jobs is a challenge, particularly one that takes a lot of work—such as facilities, now handled by a group of people. This means more recruiting of newer members.

"I just feel like everybody at church has a small gift to give," said Janet Miller. "There is a lot of work to do. If I can do my small part, that is good." But sometimes it is difficult, she said, adding, "I get satisfac-

tion from feeling that I have helped. A lot of things I do enjoy with a group of people."

Priscilla Holbert, who volunteers for Safe Haven, said, "I do it selfishly for myself. I do find I get as much out of it (Safe Haven) as they do, I feel a closeness to these people."



Another Safe Haven volunteer, Betty Wright, who is not a member of FCCFC, said it is a "worthwhile cause. This is what churches everywhere should be doing. This is the only church I know which is doing the right thing."

Mel Cotner stressed that volunteering should be a lifelong proposi-

tion if one is a church member. He said he learned that from his parents, but he had found that it was in his blood, too. It is a commitment, he said. Mel is also a strong believer in public-private cooperative programs (like Safe Haven) that helps involve volunteers.

The benefit: A sense of accomplishment, Mel said.

Ron Hutchison believes that church volunteers should try to "stretch" themselves in taking a position, but to be wise about it and not bite off too much.

Ginny George stressed the value of strengthening the church through volunteerism, saying that it lifted her emotionally when many people were working together and "feeling that something positive has been gained."

Volunteers can learn from every experience, she said. But she added that a shrinking pool of volunteers is frustrating for those who want to accomplish something.

### In Memoriam: Marcos Torres

On Wednesday, April 20, Marcos Torres died of unexplained natural causes. He was discovered in the woods behind our outdoor chapel where he had died sometime during the warm night before. It appeared that he had tripped and fallen as he was seeking the clearing behind the cross, perhaps to sleep. He was dressed in clean clothes, a nice coat, and new shoes. Police investigators have ruled that no "foul play" contributed to his death. The only identification he had was a small Safe Haven ID card with his name and a number that let us know how often he visited Safe Haven. He listed no address.

Following the sharing of his photograph the next day at Safe Haven, his niece Dominga Romera, came to the church after someone recog-

nized him. She is his only blood relative in the United States. I learned that he was 31 years old. He would have turned 32 on Good Friday, April 22. He had lived here for two years working inconsistently. He was a Guatemalan native, and the husband of Bicenta Romero, who remained in Guatemala as he sent money home to her when he was able to find employment. He was the father of Ingrid (13) and Maynor (10).

Following Easter Sunday, I gave his niece an Easter Lilly when she visited again, seeking answers. They



hope to send his body back to Guatemala, though that will be very expensive. Dominga planted the Easter Lilly in the clearing in the wood where he died. We cried, and thanked God for the cross that marked his passing and the comfort he received from Safe Haven. We lamented his tragic passing and commended him to God's love and the beautiful light he was now living in ~ a new home made not with human hands but one where he would never be cast out.

- Kathleen Kline Chesson

**If you would like to contribute to a fund to assist his family in bringing him home to Guatemala, please send a check to First Christian Church with the memo line reading, Marcos Torres, Pastor's Discretionary Fund.**

## Don Stevens: Soldier, Strategist, Elder

*(This is another in a series of profiles of long-time FCCFC members).*

When the news came out he was a top U.S. official making Cold War plans for possible nuclear war, Don Stevens got this question from another church member:

“How can you be a nuclear war planner and an elder of the church at the same time?”

Don re-sponded with a question of his own: “Well, would you

rather nuclear planners not be elders of their churches?”

That answer elicited a laugh and also stopped further questioning. Even though he was constantly dealing with the nuclear threat in his job, he also was and remains an active church member. He was an elder so many years they named him an elder emeritus. He also sang in the choir for many years.

Don Stevens, now 90, had a distinguished military career. He fought in the African and Italian campaigns during World War II and then came back home to launch a career in nuclear-weapon planning.

While it is not quite accurate that he had his finger on the nuclear trigger (that, after all, is the president’s responsibility), he was deeply involved in all aspects of nuclear planning during the Cold War and retired with the title of colonel.

During World War II, he distinguished himself in units primarily responsible for air defense in Africa and then in Italy.



In 1945, with the war winding down in Europe and as U.S. forces were succeeding in their efforts to defend Genoa, a hold-out German unit on a mountain called Monte Moro complicated things, wanting to hold on until the end of the war. But their commander changed his tune and sent up a white flag when U.S. forces aimed their full strength at him. Still, he insisted on surrendering to the U.S. general in charge.

The general would have nothing to do with such arrogance, so he dispatched then Capt. Don Stevens to accept the surrender of a few hundred soldiers. Don and members of his team scrambled up the mountain to do just that. But when Don demanded that the German leader hand over his weapon, he responded: “I think you are a smart American. If you are, you will give my weapon back to me and we will go fight the Russians.”

Naturally, the offer was rejected, and Don accepted one of the last surrenders in the Italian campaign.

Don’s wife, Adele, worked for General Electric during much of the time he was in World War II. At one point, when Don was involved in the campaign at Anzio, Adele was asked by her firm if she could read aerial photos—a skill she had learned earlier. Before long, she was poring over aerial photos of where her husband was fighting.

Don was born in Danville, Ill. He received his college degree in ceramic engineering from the Univer-



sity of Illinois in 1942, which helped launch him into the guided missile field later on. He married Adele on July 11, 1942, three days before he went overseas as a second lieutenant from ROTC ranks.

After the war, he worked as a ceramic engineer in Pittsburgh, but then got advanced degrees in aeronautics and guided missiles from the University of Southern California in 1949. He graduated from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in 1957 and the U.S. Army War College in 1962.

In the 1950s and 1960s, his career as a nuclear war planner took off, as he became part of the Defense Secretary’s weapons system evaluation group. He worked with United Nations defenses for Korea and became the commander of nuclear defense in the Niagara-Buffalo area. In 1965-67, Don was the chief of the Air Defense and Nuclear Branch’s War Plan Division for the Army, and held similar war-planning positions before retiring in 1972 and taking on consultant jobs.

Don takes credit for co-authoring the layout of the McGregor Range in New Mexico as a guided missile range and he was part of the conception of the “Patriot Missile” air defense. He counts himself as a pioneer in tactics and deployment for Army surface-to-air missiles. He holds the Distinguished Service Medal, the Bronze Star, the Legion of Merit and Order of St. Barbara.

He and Adele, an active woman with an interest in art and who at one point worked for the National Gallery of Art, have two living children—Ann Louise Stevens and Alice Jeanne Kay. A third, Charles August Stevens, died in 1947.

## Eastertide Worship

**“By God’s great mercy we have been given a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...”**

**1 Peter 1: 3b**

Christ is Risen!! Now what?

Our worship theme for the next six weeks is “Practicing Resurrection.” We will explore the time between Christ’s resurrection and his ascension, as he teaches his disciples what it means to be an Easter people. While he is not “visible” as he was in life, he is present in their lives on several occasions. During this forty day period Jesus shows his followers “how” they should practice their faith. These practices include placing radical trust in God and one another, forgiveness in order to reconfigure relationships, recognizing the Christ in our neighbors, pruning ourselves for growth, allowing the Holy Spirit to replace our natural anxiety, witnessing to the hope that is in us, worshiping joyfully and blessing others as we ourselves are blessed.

Join us as we journey on the resurrection path!

- May 1**      **Trust in God**  
Psalm 16, 1 Peter 1: 3-9,  
John 20: 19-31
- May 8**      **Recognize Christ**  
*Mother’s Day*  
Psalm 116: 12-19, 1 Peter 1: 22-23,  
Luke 24: 13-35
- May 15**     **Prune Yourselfes**  
Psalm 22: 25-31, 1 John 4: 17-21,  
John 15: 1-8
- May 22**     **Let Go**  
Psalm 31: 1-5, 1 Peter 2: 2-7a, 8b;  
John 14: 1-14
- May 29**     **Sanctify Christ**  
Psalm 66:8-14, 19-20;  
1 Peter 3: 13-22, John 14: 15-21
- June 5**      **Worship with Great Joy**  
*Youth Sunday*  
Psalm 47, Ephesians 1: 15-23,  
Luke 24: 44-53



## Easter 2011

Amid the rumble beside Route Seven,  
Easter came with a sunny heaven,  
Even as we all mourned a death,  
A homeless man whose final breath,  
Came under the stars near the chapel’s cross,  
Among the weeds and dirt and moss,  
To us he was a person, real,  
Since he’d come by to share a meal,  
Free for all if one is able,  
At Safe Haven’s feeding table,  
Where we’ve learned our lessons well,  
Where joy and sadness often swell,  
Where we know that hope can gain,  
Amid the suffering and the pain,  
And so we waved a daisy cross,  
With a bright and shiny Easter gloss,  
And dined upon an Easter table,  
And talked with Jack and Bob and Mabel,  
We listened to the trumpets play,  
A sermon, prayer for Easter day,  
And something Handel wrote just for us,  
The soaring Hallelujah Chorus,  
Down the aisle we came to sing,  
On key or off, we made it ring,  
And if that magic was not enough,  
Down the aisle came Ken Vandruff,  
To add his voice to the growing crowd,  
And in the din his voice was loud,  
Hope often speaks in such display,  
And life fights hard to find a way,  
That was our Easter, two thousand eleven,  
Amid the rumble beside Route Seven.

— Bill Neikirk

**FIRST CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH,  
FALLS CHURCH**

6165 LEESBURG PIKE  
FALLS CHURCH, VA  
22044

Phone: 703-532-8220

Fax: 703-532-6383

[www.fccfc.org](http://www.fccfc.org)

Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson  
[rev.chesson@fccfc.org](mailto:rev.chesson@fccfc.org)

Phil Gilliland  
[Phil.Gilliland@fccfc.org](mailto:Phil.Gilliland@fccfc.org)

Karen Falkenstein  
[karen@fccfc.org](mailto:karen@fccfc.org)



### Got News?

The First Christian Letter is published bi-monthly. Submissions must be received by the 20th of the preceding month to be included. Send information or inquiries to:

[newsletter@fccfc.org](mailto:newsletter@fccfc.org)

**Bill Neikirk**

*Editor-in-Chief*

**Ashley Martinage**

*Production Editor*

## My Two Cents

One of my favorite TV series is The Andy Griffith Show. As a matter of fact, I own a great deal of memorabilia and even have a room dedicated to its characters; but that is another story.

I am not sure if the appeal is the light-hearted comedy, memories of growing up and watching TV with my parents or a cry for simpler times. At any rate, as I was watching a rerun recently, it occurred to me that whenever there was a major event, the townspeople all gathered in such a way as to make it happen. It didn't matter if it was a concert put on by the ladies garden club or a surprise shower for two who were betrothed. They had declared in no uncertain terms that this was *their* town and in order to create the spirit that made that town work, everyone would have to be involved at some level.

It was always fascinating to me to see not only the main characters, but also many others who had come out of the woodwork. This demonstrated the depth of involvement shown by even the most obscure members of the community.

When I first arrived at FCCFC in 1982, I was like one of those bit characters who had not yet achieved notoriety here. I remember being invited to a church clean up day in preparation for Easter. Since I enjoyed doing outdoor work and was interested in meeting church members in a differ-

ent venue, I decided to come, not knowing at all what to expect.

It was like a scene out of Mayberry. I counted no fewer than 75 people moving around the building like ants on a mission to build a colony. Inside pews were being wiped with furniture oil to bring out the sheen. Fellowship Hall was being swept and mopped, windows were being washed, and the stage was being decluttered.

Outside, bushes were being trimmed, flowers were being planted, last minute repairs were being made on the outdoor chapel and the cross which would be planted in the front yard was being prepared for its joyous display the following week. Didn't these people have anything better to do on this gorgeous morning?

I can still see all the characters, both major and minor, who took part that day. Ladies with their hair wrapped in scarves as they moved meticulously up and down each aisle dusting and polishing. Men, clad in tool belts, moving about on their own private missions, like fixing leaky faucets, repairing broken tables, or replacing light bulbs. Still others were wielding hand held shears and making delicate cuts and designs that said "welcome" to all. While I had never seen an old fashioned barn-raising, it was the closest thing I knew of to express the mechanistic beauty and artistic contributions being made by all concerned.

## by Mark Fredenburg

Work, work, work ... and joy? Oh my gosh, the whistling, singing, laughing, and joking was enough to make you think that they were actually enjoying what they were doing. Maybe they **didn't** have anything better to do. What could be better? We were doing something to benefit *our* church community, preparing for one of the most sacred seasons of our year, and the only regret uttered was "I wish we could do more of this" while our hearts were filled with joy and love for one another.

Do I have better things to do? Sure. I make decisions all the time about activities in which I will participate and those I won't. I, like many of you, do not want to be at FCCFC 24/7. However, there are occasions when *our* church needs us. The more we get to know our church "neighbors," the more we will want to do things with them. This board is working on a plan to sponsor organized activities that will allow us to gather in fellowship so that we might get to know each other just a little better. We may not be able to attend every activity, but this will present an opportunity for us to become unified in our spirit and our mission. Then, it is my hope that when it comes time for the old fashioned barn-raising event to occur, the members of this church will be ready to follow the examples shown in a simpler time and gather as one.