



Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson
Senior Minister

Mark Granfors-Hunt
Director of Program Ministries

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.***

First Christian Letter

January 2010

Volume LIII, Issue I

New Year Brings New Lay Leadership to FCCFC

Mark Fredenburg has held some key leadership posts at FCCFC. Now he's ready to take on the biggest lay position of all, chair of the church's board.

He recognizes the challenges. As a chemistry and physics teacher at Marshall High School in Fairfax County, he wants to proceed systematically and develop a definitive plan in these tough economic times.

While not set in stone, evangelism and church growth will be areas to consider as keys to the church's plan, Mark said. It will be up to the board to approve any plan when it meets on Jan. 23. And this could mean specific goals.

"I will apply what I

know from school. You need to know where you are going and you need to have a plan to get there," he said. "And you need to evaluate your progress."



He said his approach likely would apply some of the techniques of the so-called "SMART" goals system used by school systems. It stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and

Time-bound Goals. Any goal must have these elements, he said.

Another of his management ideas is one espoused by former Fairfax County School Superintendent Robert Spillane: "Keeping The Main Thing the Main Thing" or always taking the "main thing" into account in all endeavors—for example, within the school system insuring that each activity furthered the main goal of student learning.

Mark hopes that everyone on the board will agree and support his ideas. "My first goal is to make sure everybody is on the same page," he said.

(Continued on page 5)

What Does Evangelism Really Mean?

I am often surprised by the reluctance we as Disciples express when we think of our commission as a Church to do evangelism.

Martha Grace Reese, a fellow Disciple and author of "Unbinding the Gospel," jokes that we as a main-line Christian community refer to evangelism as the unspeakable "e-word." I suspect that we are cautious about evangelism because we have seen this ministry done in ways that are counter to our Disciples' sensibilities.

We have images of the pushy preacher who wants you to believe exactly what he or she believes. We are reminded of some uncomfortable conversations we may have had with non-church-goers early in our journey of faith. We want to do evangelism, but we haven't seen a model for evangelism that matches with our beliefs.

So what are these beliefs that inform our understanding of evangelism? One of the things I love about being a part of

by Stasia Fine

the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is the unity we can find in our diversity of belief. We are a Church that encourages people to investigate and explore the Christian faith. As a result, we often come to different conclusions while still upholding some of the same core tenets. For example, we confess that we believe and accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. What that means though varies from person to person.

(Continued on page 5)

“Brewing” Good at First Christian

For as long as I can remember, coffee has been served here at FCCFC. It used to be a part of the Crusaders Sunday School class and was available before Sunday School started in the Fellowship Hall. When Rev. Chesson arrived, she suggested making coffee available in the Foyer each Sunday, so the Membership Council began setting up coffee. Social consciousness eventually led to the use of free-trade coffee at the “coffee bar.”

After a period of time serving coffee from “Stacy’s,” a local coffee house, Ginny George discovered THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST COFFEE PROJECT. This project is a partnership between the Disciples Home Missions, Week of Compassion and Equal Exchange. It is a way for our congregation to join hands with small farmer communities in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the U.S.

Through the Project, farmers



ceive fair prices for their crops, affordable credit and long term trade relationships with a trading partner they can trust, Equal Exchange. In addition, for every pound of fairly traded products Disciples order through the Project, Equal Exchange makes a donation to the Disciples Hunger Relief and Food Security Fund.

Disciples Home Missions, a General Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), is the enabling and coordinating division of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in congregational program and mission in North Amer-

By Drex George

ica. DHM's priorities include leader development, congregational transformation, faith formation and Christian vocations.

Week of Compassion is the relief, refugee and development ministry fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. and Canada. WOC helps North American Disciples contribute to relief and development efforts world wide. WOC also encourages and supports volunteer groups in "hands-on" mission and service opportunities in North America and abroad.

The Coffee Fellowship continues to offer both coffee and teas purchased through this project. However, as you may know, free-trade products can be more expensive, so the “Brew Crew” asks that you give generously so that we can continue this ministry into the future.

24 Hour Chain of Prayer

Scriptures are to be read to understand them, and then “to receive any benefit from them, we must earnestly pray for the Spirit to apply them and to explain them to our hearts,” said Alexander Campbell (1786 – 1866)

The Chain of Prayer is a continuous prayer by many persons during a certain period of time. The Chain of Prayer is viewed as a powerful force that offers to those who share in it the opportunity for a time of uninterrupted dialogue with God. When our congregation keeps its Prayer Vigil, it becomes an essential link in a vast Chain of Prayer. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) con-

gregations are thus joined together in unbroken prayer from the early hours of Jan. 1 until sunrise Easter morning.

“May the Lord direct our minds into the love of God, and patient waiting for the Lord Jesus. Prayer is the means by which we receive the grace of God, and enjoy sweet communion with the Father and the Son.”

**Barton Stone
(1772 – 1844)**

This year, the Worship Council has decided that we will begin

our Lenten observation with our participation in the Chain of Prayer under auspices of the Disciples Home Missions. We will need 48 people to sign up for half-hour periods beginning at 8:00 PM Feb. 17 through 8:00 PM Feb. 18. We have selected this time period as it is the beginning of Lent. We will hold our Ash Wednesday service and begin the period of Lent with our participation in this continuing prayer around the nation and world.

Announcements will begin and a sign-up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board in the Foyer starting Jan. 17. Please consider participating in this global prayer vigil.

From the Pastor...

By Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson

Dearest First Christian Congregation,

Last month, for the first time in my ministry at FCC, we completely canceled services on a Sunday...and during Advent no less! The blizzard also forced us to postpone the Christmas pageant; cancel the annual Christmas caroling that is such an important connection to those unable to travel to church; and eliminate an occasion to gather together to share an important time of preparation and reflection. That was a very big deal. At the same time, the decision was a “no-brainer.” After all, it does no good to hold services and potentially put at risk those who will try to travel “no matter what.” I must confess, I faced my own concerns: an angel on one shoulder

said, “The church must always be open.” The other said, “people can worship God in the safety and warmth of their homes.” I have never before *not made it* to church on a snowy Sunday. But on Dec. 20, I gave in and stayed home. It felt right.

I appreciated your support of this decision, as your emails returned to me indicated. Fortunately, on Christmas Eve and at the Dec. 27 service, we were able to make up for some of what we lost. Let us rejoice and give thanks in that! Let us also rejoice in the fun many of us were able to have with our family and friends, or as we experienced the beauty and power of the snow. I’m sure that many of us felt God’s presence in large and wonderful ways.

The snowstorm, of course, was not the only thing that was in the news during Advent and Christmas-tide. Many of us also thought about war, global climate change, and healthcare reform. Depending on whom one listens to and the perspectives nurtured within us, the recent decisions made on all three subjects are either the best...or the worst...things to happen to us in a long time. Let us pray that by the time they are finished, the government decision-makers will have succeeded in finding a path to a peace-oriented process in Afghanistan and Iraq, reduced risk associated with global warming, and improved access to healthcare for all Americans... and without unnecessary collateral damage.

As I reflect on the challenging year we are leaving behind, I pray that jobs return; that housing prices stabilize; that foreclosures end; that the finances of government at all levels stabilize so that necessary services can be delivered to us all, most especially to the least of these our brothers and sisters; and that the members of FCCFC are able to rejoice in God’s blessings. I pray that the church challenges of 2009 can transform to the renewal of 2010 – inclusive of strategic plans for sharing our Good News and growing our amazing church in ministry, mission, and members.

I came across the following message from what struck me as an unlikely source...an American president. In 1927, then President Calvin Coolidge issued a Christmas message on Dec. 25. His elegant and simple words still ring true.

***Christmas is not a time or a season, but a state of mind.
To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy,
is to have the real spirit of Christmas.***

***If we think on these things, there will be born in us a Savior
and over us will shine a star
sending its gleam of hope to the world.***

President Coolidge also observed, “No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what a person gave.”

May all of us be so rewarded, and may the giving and loving spirit of Christmas abide in us throughout the new year. Your Pastor,

Kathleen



News & Notes

Thank you so much for your continued prayers and financial support as I attend the school of Theology and Ministry in Seattle, Washington. I am involved in a school year-long internship with chaplains at Horizon House. Although Horizon House has many levels of care from Independent Residents to supported Living and Memory Unit Residents, we mainly focus on those who are no longer independent. What a blessing the internship is along with a reflective weekly class with others who are doing internships, too.

On the family news front, David and I have enjoyed being close to family, especially at this time of year. Ken, Lisa, and Amy (now 12 years old) attended the 11 PM Christmas Eve service where David played the organ and I played the flute. Then they stayed at our home so we'd enjoy Christmas Day together. On Christmas, our younger son Elton, and his wife, Kris, called from their home in Honolulu to announce that they are expecting a baby! What a shame ~ David and I may have to travel to Hawaii to see our new grandchild. It's a tough assignment but we'll buck up and do it. Nothing's too good for a grandchild.

I'm still on track to complete an MDiv in early June 2011. Again, thank you for your lovely gifts and support. Happy New Year, and I hope to see you in July 2010!

~Sharon Nichols

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I want to thank you all for the most generous love gift/bonus that was given to me last week. I am most grateful. First Christian and

the people here are awfully special to me. Tim and I also appreciate your many prayers for our family during these past few months. You are all very kind, caring and thoughtful. I love you all so very much! Thanks once again from the bottom of my heart. Happy New Year!

~Karen Falkenstein

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Stranded by snow on Dec. 21, Evelynda Castle spent her 90th birthday at home, alone. But she didn't feel like a prisoner. A number of friends called to sing happy birthday.

After the snow was cleared a few days later, she celebrated at her daughter's home. Prisoner no more, she went to see "The Prisoner of Zenda," a swashbuckling play with plenty of sword fighting. Evelynda was in the front row, on the same level as the actors, and at times a bit apprehensive. "I thought I was going to get stabbed," she said.

Rev. Chesson called attention to her birthday at the Sunday service, noting how active she is in church programs. Among other things, she is a regular helper at the Safe Haven program.

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After being honored for his 50 years of service as a Mason, Hugh Furmage quipped, "If I had known I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself."

Everyone laughed, including his wife Emily, there to enjoy the moment at Arlington's Masonic Lodge No. 64 in December.

Praising the charitable work of the organization, especially its hospitals, Hugh noted there are 15 Masons in his family. He joined in 1959.

A fellow Mason joked that he could now truly call himself a Free Mason, since by rule he no longer has to pay membership dues. Hugh received a "perpetual dues card" to that effect.



Rev. Chesson, also there to honor Hugh, said, "I don't think I've ever heard him complain. As a pastor, that's a significant contribution."

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CORRECTION: Holly Riester wrote a wonderful Christmas remembrance for our church newsletter last month. I loved every word of it. But somehow we made an error, misspelling her last name by putting the "e" before the "i." As someone with the same kind of challenge, I especially owe Holly a big apology.

~Bill Neikirk, editor-in-chief

Lay Leadership

(Continued from page 1)

Despite challenges posed by economic conditions, he is optimistic as he prepares to take the position. "I think we have the opportunity to really do some great stuff. I think we need to look at this with a new approach."

He is also hoping for greater involvement by the membership. "I want no more committees of

one," he said, and added that he wanted to encourage members to get involved. He wants to see an attitude of being active "because we want to be involved, not because we have to be involved."

Rev. Chesson reflected Moses, Marshall Dunn and Mark's excitement and optimism. "We are all blessed by his calling to serve in this most important position, in this most critical year."

In addition to his ser-

vice as the vice-chair of the board in 2009, he also served as an elder, served on the Outreach Council for years and chaired the search teams that brought us Lee Hull Moses, Marshall Dunn and Mark Granfors-Hunt.

Mark graduated from Mt. Union College in Alliance Ohio, then obtained his masters degree in organic chemistry from the University of Rochester.

He then obtained a masters degree in forensic sciences from George Washington University. He worked in a medical examiner's office for a few years, and then went into teaching.

He has been a teacher for 26 years. He and his wife, Diana, married in 1993. He has two children, Sean and Lindsay, and loves to play racquetball.

Evangelism

(Continued from page 1)

For some of us, that belief is described as an intimate and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. For others, that belief is a cognitive recognition of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. For others it may be a combination of the two or may even be defined differently.

We also recognize the power of sin in the world. Some of us are concerned with how that sin is expressed in social injustices, others of us with how it's expressed in individual immorality, and still others generally reference the brokenness in the world.

We also acknowledge that God offers us redemption through Jesus Christ. Each of our understandings of how God does that and what it looks like in our lives varies, but as Christians we

trust that God does provide redemption. Similarly, we have great respect for the Bible. How we interpret and read it varies, but we recognize it as a gift from God.

I strongly believe that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is one of the best equipped to do evangelism in our present time. The problem is - we aren't fully aware of our giftedness for evangelism!

We live in a society where denominational affiliation has diminished and families are exposed to a much broader sample of Christianity. Many would-be God-seekers are disillusioned by a Christianity that does not take their questions seriously. And in our transient culture people are longing for a place to call home.

As a denomination we recognize the ecumenical body of Christ and create

worship spaces that reflect this value. As a church, we value theological and spiritual investigation. Thus, we could play a role in both igniting potential seekers' curiosity and walking beside them as the Holy Spirit unveils the living God before their very eyes.

We have encountered Jesus Christ and found First Christian Church to be a place that welcomes us and challenges us in our faith journey. There is a reason we find value in calling this house of worship home and there are many others who would also.

As the new chair of the evangelism council, I invite you to think with me about what evangelism looks like in the context of the Christian Church (DoC) in the midst of Northern Virginia and the Capital area. How might we share the good news? Is it through a Faith & the

Mind lecture series? Is it by creating small dinner groups that regularly invite guests for conversations in our homes? Is it by investing in promoting our current ministries to our personal networks and neighborhoods? Is it by forming an evangelism prayer team? Is it by updating our entrance?

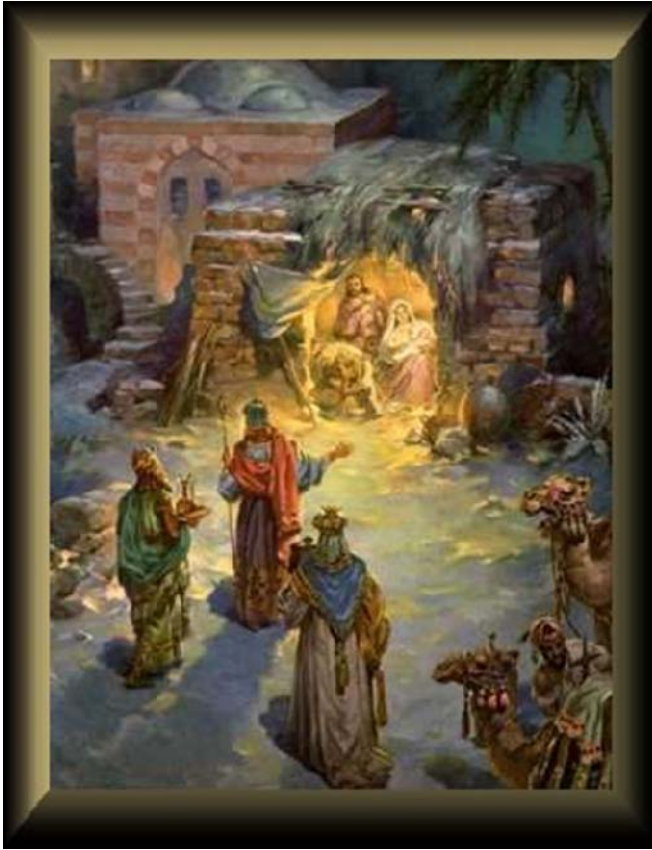


You are invited to join me in re-thinking and implementing evangelism in our context. If you are interested in joining the evangelism team, please contact me at faithnlaught@gmail.com.

Christmas Pageant

On Jan. 10, FCCFC's children put on their Christmas pageant for an extremely appreciative congregation. Although the performance was delayed by the Dec. 20 blizzard, the spirit and meaning of the pageant were not in any way diminished. The children worked under the gentle and able leadership of Tracy Roussey. Below are photos of this memorable event.





January Worship The Season of Epiphany

Sunday, January 17

Extravagance

Isaiah 62: 1-5

I Corinthians 12: 4-11

John 2: 1-11

Rev. Chesson preaching

Sunday, January 24

Fulfillment

Week of the Laity

Nehemiah 8: 1-3, 5-6, 8-10

I Corinthians 12: 12-31a

Luke 4: 14-21

Mark Fredenburg preaching

Sunday, January 31

Rejection

Jeremiah 1: 4-10

I Corinthians 13 1-13

Luke 4: 21-30

Rev. Chesson preaching

Notes on The Meaning of Epiphany By Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson

In western Christian tradition, Jan. 6 is celebrated as Epiphany. It is the celebration of the manifestation of the divine nature of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi. It goes by other names in various church traditions. In Hispanic and Latin culture, as well as some places in Europe, it is known as Three Kings' Day. This year, the season of Epiphany runs from Jan. 6 until Feb. 17 (Ash Wednesday — the beginning of Lent), a period of six weeks.

Epiphany is the climax of the Advent/Christmas Season and the Twelve Days of Christmas, which are usually counted from the evening of Dec. 25 until the morning of Jan. 6, which is the Twelfth Day.

The term *epiphany* means "to show" or "to make known" or even "to reveal." Within the church calendar, it remembers the coming of the wise men bringing gifts to visit the Christ child, who by so doing "reveal" Jesus to the world as Lord and King.

The Wise Men or Magi who brought gifts to the child Jesus were the first Gentiles to acknowledge Jesus as "King" and so were the first to "show" or "reveal" Jesus to a wider world as the incarnate Christ.

This act of worship by the Magi, which corresponded to Simeon's blessing that this child Jesus would be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32), was one of the first indications that Jesus came for all people, of all nations, of all races, and that the work of God in the world would not be limited to only a few.

The day is now observed as a time of focusing on the mission of the church in reaching others by "showing" Jesus as the Light/Savior of all people. It is also a time of focusing on Christian community and fellowship, especially in healing the divisions of prejudice and bigotry that we all too often create between God's children.

Our Epiphany Season of Worship will focus on "Reaching Beyond" in a purposeful exploration of our responsibilities as Christians to actively radiate the light of Christ. Please join us!

Service Time Reminder
8:15 AM — Prayer & Communion
9:00 AM — Sunday School
10:00 AM — Worship

**FIRST CHRISTIAN
CHURCH,
FALLS CHURCH**

6165 LEESBURG PIKE
FALLS CHURCH, VA
22044

Phone: 703-532-8220

Fax: 703-532-6383

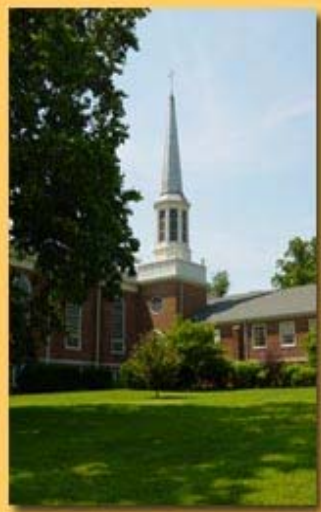
www.fccfc.org

Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson
rev.chesson@fccfc.org

Mark Granfors-Hunt
markgh@fccfc.org

Phil Gilliland
Phil.Gilliland@fccfc.org

Karen Falkenstein
karen@fccfc.org



Got News?

The First Christian Letter is published monthly. Submissions must be received by the 20th of the month to be included in the next month's edition. Send information or inquiries to:

newsletter@fccfc.org

Bill Neikirk

Editor-in-Chief

Ashley Martinage

Production Editor

News from Mark

by Mark Granfors-Hunt

My warm greetings to you as we say goodbye to 2009 and prepare for 2010. It's been a tough year at the end of a tough decade. But before we put 2009 to rest, let's pause for a moment to reflect upon some of the good work that has taken place here at FCCFC, particularly by our youth and youth leaders.

These past three months have flown by. Ginny George did a marvelous job of setting up the programming for JYF (Junior Youth Fellowship), Chi Rho and CYF (Christian Youth Fellowship). We participated in service projects, such as neighborhood outreach events, and raising funds then shopping for our adopted Homestretch family. Parents and youth alike cooked soup and chili for an after worship event called "The Great Chili Cook Off" in which you voted for your favorite by placing your contribution in the donation bowl in front of the soup or chili of your choice. (I noticed that "mysteriously," the donation bowl in front of my chili entry disappeared...) Thank you all for your contributions and for making the event such a success.

Ginny George and Steve Findley wrote a wonderful "Blessing of the Greens" service that our youth presented for us on Dec. 6. Calvin, Bridget,

Zach, Nathan, Flannery, Brady, Taylor, Olivia, Ashleigh, Molly, Joslyn and Jenya brought us the background stories of some of the wonderful Christmas traditions that have been passed down through the ages.

Under the direction of Tracy Roussey, our younger children were prepared to retell the Christmas Story on Dec. 20. Who could have predicted that our largest recorded snowfall ever for the month of December would force us to reschedule to Jan. 10?

I would be remiss not to thank our Youth Leaders and Sponsors who so graciously contributed their time, talent and expertise to teaching and developing our youth's faith. Thanks go out to Debbie Allen, Tammy Ferguson and Cherie Hutchison for JYF; Ginny George, Eric Motz, Tracy Williams and Cristin Duddy for Chi Rho; and Aubrey Myers and Ashley Thornton for CYF.

Most of the above also teach Sunday School, and I want to thank the rest of our teachers who have also made significant contributions of time, talent and expertise. These include Judy Miller with our youngest, Kelly Motz with our younger elementary, Pam Findley with the older elementary and Leigh Duval with our high school aged youth. Holly Riester

has been a real champion by almost single handedly leading Children's Church during worship most Sundays. Thank you Holly!!

Looking forward to 2010, Lynne Willhoit has enthusiastically taken the reigns of Christian Education leadership from Ginny. We are planning out our next few months, and I am excited about what our youth groups will be engaged in. We plan on visiting and learning about differing faith traditions including Muslim and Jewish, as well as other Christian traditions and worship cultures such as the African American gospel tradition. We are also excited about the possibility of visiting some of our shut-ins and sharing worship, communion and/or song with them. I'm looking forward to working with our youth in preparation for Youth Sunday and Mother's Day. I have a special project in mind that I'm excited about and can't wait to get started on it.

This year, look for this back page section to highlight some of our youth, all of whom are outstanding. This newsletter will be the place to come to get to know our future leaders and their gifts a little better.

Happy New Year, everyone, and here's to making 2010 a wonderful year!

Mark GH