

First Christian Letter

June 2010

Volume LIII, Issue 6



Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson
Senior Minister

Mark Granfors-Hunt
Director of Program Ministries
Youth and Young Adult 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.

Confessing Our Faith

by Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson

At the close of worship on May 22, 11-year-old Norah Riester walked up the aisle and was able to say with certainty, "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God and accept him as my Lord and Savior." She had spent the past six weeks thinking about the meaning of God, Jesus, Church and Spirit in Pastor's class.

Her journey toward this moment began with her birth, her parent's dedication and a home life that encouraged faith and virtue. The discipline of regular church attendance, the community of FCC, and Sunday school brought her to her decision. She now felt old enough and certain

enough, and confessing her faith was the first step in a journey of her journey. She has a spirit that you could drown in.



Walking forward on the same morning was 46 year old Stanley Terry. His path to the same confession was quite different. While I don't know enough about his early years, I do know about these past six. Largely alone, unemployed, homeless and without any kind of support system, Stanley's decision to join First Christian was also thoughtful. Recently given confidence through a job and real affirmation...and the recognition of all who had kept him alive on the streets, his moment came because of gratitude, but-

(Continued on page 5)

Pastoral Relations Committee 101

by Kevin Ogle

The church's Pastoral Relations Committee is a small group of church members who provide support for Rev. Chesson and serve as a channel of communication between her and the congregation.

Established in September 2007 in accordance with the church's bylaws, the so-called PRC meets regularly, usually 10 times a year.

According to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Guidelines, a Pastoral Relations Committee exists for three basic reasons: (1) Build

up the body of Christ; (2) Provide focused, consistent support for the pastor; and (3) Provide a regular channel of communication and feedback between the pastor and the congregation.

Unlike the church's Board, Stewards and Ministry Councils, the committee is relational, not task-centered. It gives attention to the feelings and emotional factors of ministry in the context of building up the church as the body of Christ. It is a forum for celebrating successes and accomplishments, sharing

challenges and concerns and identifying ways to address problems.

Acceptance, trust, and confidentiality are foundational to the committee's effective functioning. Members are selected by the pastor. They serve three-year terms, and two new members join the PRC each fall as two rotate off. Currently serving on the PRC (in addition to myself as the chair) are Irv Denton, Ron Hutchison, De-De McCoy, Kelly Motz, Lynn Willhoit. Lynn and I are scheduled

(Continued on page 5)

Safe Haven Receives New Gift

The check came in the mail — \$2,000. It was written by Annandale United Methodist Church to help our church defray some of the costs of Safe Haven.

The letter's author, Jay H. Morris, the missions co-chair at Annandale UMC, said that each year his church raises money to help local organizations. So this year he asked Sandy Chisholm of the Fairfax County Community Interfaith Liaison Office to recommend groups that are "especially deserving of our giving" to help the homeless.

Safe Haven was one of the groups. In writing the check, Morris said, "We recognize that need is great, especially in these trying economic times." The letter went to Phil Gilliland, Safe Haven's management chair.

Such donations are welcome and often a surprise. In the past, Safe Haven received a \$10,000 contribution from a member of a Presbyterian Church who had heard about the program.

The money is welcome because Safe Haven incurs many costs to help provide meals for the homeless and the poor. According to Mel Cotner, of our church's activists in Safe Haven, the program is spending at least \$750 a month for its needs. In addition to our own church's food contributions, other churches send food and volunteers.

Safe Haven is meeting only once a week during the summer and fall months, but plans to return to twice-a-week operations when winter returns. Not all recipients are homeless, but many are low-wage or unemployed people who need help.

Fairfax County recently approved the church's application to renew the funding for Safe Haven to help pay for staff people. FCCFC will receive \$30,000 for two people—a manager and an assistant who would help with security and with keeping a proper count of re-



ipients who attend.

Caralita Moore is leaving her job as the coordinator, effective July 1. She is going for a doctor's degree in social services, and now has a job with the District of Columbia, though she may help Safe Haven on an interim basis, said Mel.

"We are advertising now for the jobs," Mel added. "We hope to get a lot of applicants by June 1, so that we can get somebody on board."

Technically, Safe Haven gets its money through the Falls Church Community Services Council, which includes 17 churches and nonprofit groups, Mel noted. That's because all the programs receiving county funds have to be audited, and our church is not audited regularly.

Safe "Heaven"

Safe Haven has helped many people since it began, including Jose Villar, 36, who came here from Mexico. In this testimonial, he gives credit to Fernando and Erika Reyes-Ortiz, who hold services for Hispanic people and to a program he calls Safe Heaven.

Two years ago I came to Safe Haven for the first time. I have had many problems with my life. I was drinking too much and I felt lonely and did not have a job.

Pastors Fernando and Erika helped me spiritually. As a first step, they preached to me the word of God and I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and savior. Since then, I



don't drink anymore and everything is in order.

I want to thank the volunteers of this Church for all the work they do in providing the food, cooking it, and serving it weekly for the needy. Also, I want to express my grati-

by Jose Villar

tude for the other volunteers who clean the dishes and the place. Safe Haven also helped me with medicines and psychological attention.

All of this has made a difference in my life and helped me to change it. Right now, I have a steady job. I have a car and soon I will marry.

Thanks to God because the State of Virginia is helping the people who have nothing. I would like to recommend the people to never leave Jesus and the people that do not have it to look for Him.

From the Pastor...

By Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson



Jesus tells us that we belong to one another. That we are responsible for one another. That we can and must love one another. That when you suffer, I can help love you back into life. And when I make a tragic mistake, you can help me to heal and change and re-create. It is easy to forget how much influence we have on one another, or how even a simple kindness can change another's life. We are intricately woven into one another's lives...for good and sometimes for bad. We follow Jesus because we want to make it good.

Last Sunday many of us remained after church for a family style luncheon, during which we were placed at random tables, asked to pick questions out of a bag and go around the table sharing our answers. Questions like:

What are your earliest memories of Church? How old were you? How would you describe GOD? How has your perception of God changed over the years? What is your favorite story about Jesus and how has that impacted your life? Where do you feel the presence of GOD in your life? Is prayer a part of your daily life? Tell us a story about your prayer life and how it affects you. What elements of your daily life interfere most with your life in our faith community here at First Christian Church? Can you identify a faith mentor in your life? How did you meet and what was the most powerful thing about that person?

I learned things I had never known about Shortie Simmons and David Findley, Marilyn Gilliland and DeDe McCoy...things which helped me to love them even more than I already do. It was fun and gloriously purposeful. The wonderful chatter of people laughing and sharing was beautiful. It made me fall in love with you all over again.

We don't do this enough. Sometimes we are too afraid to ask the questions that matter... to come to know the deeper places of faith and joy and pain that exist in another ~ even as we think we know them so well.

Last week I had the privilege of co-officiating the funeral service of Susanne Betts, a former member whom I had never had the honor of knowing. Phil Gilliland and I spent a few hours with the family, asking many questions and reveling in this woman who had been a part of the Christian fellowship at FCC for so many years. Phil was astounded at how little he really knew about her life, even as he felt he knew her so well. "It's a shame" he said "that it took her death for me to know how alive she really was."

*We are one, after all, you and I;
together we suffer,
together exist,
and forever will recreate each other
~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

FCC will flourish, I know, when we stop waiting to discover what lies beneath each others' well honed and protected exteriors. It is both hard and easy to do. Arm yourselves with questions like those listed above and spend some time during coffee hour finding out something new about Frances or Mary Lib or Stanley.

Don't be afraid of your neighbors. Ask them, too. Everyone wants to know that they matter. Create a small group bible study, where sharing the life of Christ helps you to find your own. The Holy Spirit will act as your advocate, as promised. And perhaps that ache in your chest may dissipate and you will find a new friend. Or the fatigue that plagues you will transform into energy. And your light will shine. And so will FCC. *We are one, after all, you and I; together we suffer; together exist, and forever will recreate each other.*

Wouldn't it be great if this summer we could take a sabbatical from meetings and programs, and spend our time learning about each other as we deepen our relationship with God? I wonder what might happen then. We really do need each other. In the Spirit of Jesus Christ, it can be so.

Faithfully Yours,

Kathleen

Community Festival & Yard Sale A Success

Jeannine Schroeder sat at her leased space in front of the church, basking in the warm sun and her success in selling clothing and other items she had piled on a table.

"I think I have sold almost half my stuff," she said. "This sale has been very successful."

Ginny George, who did a good job in organizing the whole thing, dressed in a clown's outfit with very



Many other vendors who had paid to lease a spot at the church's yard sale and community festival on May 22 agreed. There were people selling shoes, clothing, old records, jewelry, toys and trinkets.

It was the church's way of reaching out to the community and giving vendors a chance to sell some of their wares. Not all the vendors were church members.



People from many ethnic groups came to buy and also to have some fun. A carnival atmosphere prevailed. Traffic along Route Seven moved slowly as drivers looked to

large glasses, and blew up balloons for a long line of kids.

Jack Burrows proudly showed off his racing car—and even put kids in the driver's seat to show them how much protection they had from safety devices in the car.

The moon bounce drew a steady stream of customers as Bob McCoy and others watched on. Janet and Bill Miller reported that they ran out of hot dogs at noon—all 176 of them sold, they said. "I was surprised," said Janet.

Karen Falkenstein had a varied group of wares, mostly clothing that once had been worn by her children. "Everything is a dollar," she said. "We've done very well."

You could buy rough gemstones for a dollar. Shoes for sale at one table appeared to be all new.

Rev. Chesson brought old records, some of them classics. For instance, she sold a



Beatles' "Sgt. Peppers Lonely Heart Club Band" album for \$5, not a bad price. The band's "White" album also moved, as did a "Fiddler on the Roof" album.

According to Ginny George, the church was not trying to use the occasion to raise money and did not anticipate making a profit, although some vendors donated their



profits to the church. Instead, it was an effort to reach out to the community, and Ginny said she was highly pleased with the results.



Confessing Our Faith

(Continued from page 1)

tressed by the years of familiarity and the burgeoning welcome he felt here at First Christian. He wanted to give back. Completely different stories, yet both found the same moment to revel in the Christ that had brought them “safe thus far.”

One thing that has always endeared me to the Disciples of Christ is the wondrous mixture of spirit and thought that has dominated our religious landscape. We say at the end of (most) worship services...“if you have been moved

to commit yourself further to the journey with Jesus Christ here at First Christian, please come forward and join our life and help create our future.” For some, this move happens after years of thought and discernment. For others, the moment comes with tears and a pentecostal “lift.” The good news, however it happens, is an individual’s moment with God. No person, no pastor could suggest that the one coming forward or the confession was not “worthy.” Everyone is welcome.

Sometimes people can’t explain

why they have come forward. The time just felt “right.” Other times, the “confession” is resisted for years. One thing for sure, I love being a part of a church that allows for both and is most concerned about the individual walk with faith.

Welcome Norah and Stanley! You have already, and will continue to, bless us richly!

On May 30th, three more of our young people came forward to confess their faith and be baptized: Isaac Gamboa, Sydney Moon, and Marco Viola. They will be profiled next issue.

Pastoral Relations Committee

(Continued from page 1)

to complete our terms this year.

Please contact any PRC member or Kathleen if you have any matter that you would like to call to the committee’s attention (just be aware that we are not a functional committee, only advisory to the Pastor and Board/congregation). Only through talking openly with each other and sharing the truth in

love can our congregation and Pastor grow strong to carry out our callings as followers of Christ together.

The committee is primarily relational in that it supports the pastor and provides a safe community where she can share ministry challenges and successes as well as important aspects of her own personal journey.

It is also relational in that indi-

viduals on the PRC may relate to individuals in the congregation who may not feel comfortable/able to share a concern directly with the Pastor.

Some churches have chosen to allow Pastoral Relations Committees to serve also as Personnel Committees, but it is believed such joint duties adds a layer of complexity to the PRC’s purpose.

Practicing Evangelism

Innovation continues at FCCFC. In an effort to boost the church’s evangelism, the Evangelism Council headed by Stasia Fine is urging the congregation to become more social with one another.

She urged that each member consider inviting other church members to their homes for dinner along with at least one person who is not a member. The reason: to get to know people in the church more deeply and to ask the non-member guests to visit FCCFC.

It is not a new strategy because other churches outside of this area have adopted it, she says, suggesting interaction can be a powerful tool for building the church and

reaching out to others.

On Pentecost Sunday, the council took a step down that road, hosting a lunch for the congregation so that they could communicate their feelings about their faith and their church.

The council assigned seats to members who then were asked to answer questions about their faith and church—such as how comfortable are you with talking to others about your prayer life? Or what was your first church and what was it like? And many others. There were 10 tables.

At one table, Wendel Miser told the story of how his faith changed his life. Hugh Furmage told of a

church he attended in the District of Columbia. Although Erika Reyes-Ortiz said she didn’t like discussion groups, she shared a story of faith. Stanley Terry said he puts listening to good use.

Ron Hutchison, also a council member, said he was pleased with the discussions. “It was exciting,” he said. “I was apprehensive at first. I didn’t know if people would respond. But people showed that they could, and got to know each other better. This is what evangelism is.”

When members get to know each other better, he said, they can respond better in dealing with those outside the church as they try to get the church to grow.

Kathleen's Book Club

by Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson

I was asked to lead a "Summer Book Club" that has one key feature: no meetings! Instead, I have chosen two books which individuals in the congregation can choose to read on their own. I will "blog" about them on the FCCFC website in July and August. More detailed "reading assignments" will come soon, but for now, here are the two selections.

Kicking Habits: Welcome Relief for Addicted Churches, Thomas G. Bandy. This book would provide some welcome perspective for church leadership that focuses on church transformation, especially for tired leaders and declining churches. It provides the big picture of thriving church life in the postmodern world.

Kathleen's comment: This book was given to me years ago by Phil Gilliland with the directive that I should read it. Three years later, I have finally pulled it off my shelf and read enough of it to know that it could be an important book for all of us who are looking into the future with a constructive and hopeful realism.

The Secret Message Of Jesus, Brian D. McLaren. "Brian has given us an insightful and occasionally startling distillation of the message of Jesus. He is well aware of the many ways it has been distorted and debased by ourselves among others, but McLaren argues compellingly that it continues to be the best message we have – bringing clarity, guidance, and above all, hope into shadowed and floundering world." Frederick Buechner.

Kathleen's comment: A book for those looking for a renewing refresher on the biblical Jesus in amazingly open style, reminding us of the relevance and necessity of Jesus' message today.

Other Suggested Readings — Here are a few additional titles that you might consider reading this summer, either alone or in a small group.

Unbinding Your Heart: 40 Days of Prayer & Faith Sharing, Martha Grace Reece. *All-Congregation Study*. This is a six-week, church-wide, small group possibility. It's perfect for a summer for established classes and small groups, and new ones formed. A group of five of us pioneered this during Lent and though the language was a bit "evangelical" for some, the exercises and discussion, and especially the prayer, created a wonderful shared experience. I believe it can enrich FCC's community life. It will encourage the entire congregation to talk about their faith.

Kathleen's comment: I have 5 books available for anyone who would like to try this as a small group study.

The Essential Jesus, Original Sayings and Earliest Images, John Dominic Crossan. *The Essential Jesus* pictures the religious dream and social program of the historical Jesus. "Like an archival video, this fascinating book leads us back to the original voice of Jesus." —Uta Ranke-Heinemann.

Kathleen's comment: What is truly essential about Jesus for you? This book could serve as a thoughtful devotional.

The next two books are appropriate for women who have struggled with their bodies, their faith, and are seeking a wholeness that integrates mind, body and spirit.

The Two Kinds of Decay, Sarah Mancuso. "This is a remarkable story of illness and recovery. She writes this account from the far end of illness, looking on it from a posi-

tion of physical strength, biting ferocity, and unsentimental wit" – Bookforum

Kathleen's comment: I read this book in the midst of the mystery of my own health challenge, and it helped me to understand how I both have contributed to my own pain, and been a victim of my own best intentions. It transformed the way I have looked at my own illness. A book for those struggling with the mystery of their own bodies, illness, and resurrection.

Women, Food and God, Geneen Roth. "She begins with her most basic concept: The way you eat is inseparable from your core beliefs about being alive. Your relationship with food is an exact mirror of your feelings about love, fear, anger, meaning, transformation, and, yes, even God...Geneen shows how going beyond both the food and feelings takes you deeper into realms of spirit and soul to the bright center of your own life."

Kathleen's comment: A book for so many of us who struggle with our bodies, our appetites, and the needs we have to transform both.

Congratulations!

FCCFC extends congratulations to Katherine Dey, who was recently honored with the 2010 Outstanding Volunteer Award for continued dedication and volunteer service to the Arlington Red Cross. She has been a volunteer there for 27 years.

And we send our love with Stasia Fine as she is Ordained into Christian Ministry at 2:00 PM on Saturday, July 10th at Noelridge Christian Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Members of the congregation are invited to attend. A reception will follow.

June Worship "Going With The Flow"

"Let everything that has breath
praise the Lord" (Psalm 150:6)

For many years, the worship team has offered a "theme" for each of our worship seasons, based on the lectionary scriptures, in order to offer continuity, teaching, and focus to the services. This summer, we have decided to "go with the flow" and allow the spirit to guide the weekly preacher in their sermon preparation. This means we will likely abandon the lectionary and allow the service to ride the winds of the weekly spirit. What's happening in the world and in our lives will likely affect the preacher's choice. If you have a topic or a scripture you would like Rev. Chesson to address, please tell her and she will likely oblige.

June and July will also offer us the opportunity to witness the baptisms of a number of our church youth who have attended pastor's class and have come to their personal faith decision. It will be an exciting time in the life of our church as eight young people claim a commitment to following Jesus Christ.

Schedule

June 6 – Teacher Appreciation Sunday

Kathleen Kline Chesson preaching

- *Following worship we will host a special reception: "From Birth to Re-Birth" which will honor our teachers, as we also share in a baby shower for Maddux Motz.*

June 13 – Baptism Sunday

Kathleen Kline Chesson preaching.

- *Annual Choir Concert and pot luck luncheon following worship*
- *We will celebrate the baptisms of Sydney Moon, Norah Riester, and Marco Viola during our 10 AM service. This will be followed by our annual choir concert, with special guest appearances by Jim Gibbs and Marshall Dunn!*

June 20 – Father's Day

Mark Granfors-Hunt preaching

June 27 – Blessing and Dedication of Maddux

Harrison Motz.

Kathleen Kline Chesson preaching

Encore! By Lunette Arledge

On Sunday, June 13, our choirs will present Encore! This year we've compiled a program of audience favorites from the last eight years, including Elvis Presley's Can't Help Falling in Love, Someone to Watch over Me by George & Ira Gershwin, a jazzy arrangement of Peace in the Valley, and the rousing spiritual, Follow the Drinking Gourd.

Our women are repeating the exquisite setting of a Lord Byron poem they did last year, featuring Susan and John Findley on oboe and French horn.

The men not only will do their rich rendition of Precious Lord but also a fun setting of Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho with both Laurie Bunn and Lisa Gibbs at the piano.

Our Carol Choir, under director Bill Rife, will enchant as they always do, and Laurie Bunn at the keyboard as both accompanist and soloist will delight as only she can.

Two FCC favorite guests, Jim Gibbs and Marshall Dunn, will join us for return appearances, and our own Mark Granfors-Hunt will make his First Christian show-biz debut.

Richard Kranich's percussion adds the finishing touch to a show that's always great fun. Do join us after our 10:00 worship service for a pot-luck lunch and a program that will have you tapping your foot and singing along.

Lectionary

June 6

1 Kings 17:8-16, (17-24)

Psalm 146, Galatians 1:11-24

Luke 7:11-17

June 13

1 Kings 21:1-10, (11-14), 15-21a

Psalm 5:1-8, Galatians 2:15-21

Luke 7:36-8:3

June 20

1 Kings 19:1-4, (5-7), 8-15a

Psalm 42 and 43, Galatians 3:23-29

Luke 8:26-39

June 27

2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14

Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20, Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Luke 9:51-62

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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

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CE News

Summer is just around the corner. One of the things I look forward to most about summer is the change in routine. No homework to fill evenings and longer days and vacation time provide more time to spend with immediate and extended family.

Summer also is a time when our church sees a drop in attendance. Most of this is due to travel, but also some people take a break from the routine of going to church. For many, this is a time to refuel spiritually and physically. Whatever the reasons, we would like to offer up some ideas for the summer.

“Kathleen’s Book Club”

Whether you attend church or not, Kathleen has announced two books that adult members of the congregation may read together over the course of the summer (see story on

Page 6). Kathleen will provide her interpretation of the texts in a weekly “blog” posted on the church’s website. We are exploring with the adult classes whether they would like to make the books part of their weekly class discussions.

Young Adult Experience

With many college students returning home for the summer, we are exploring an after-church experience for them and other young adults in the congregation. The experience may include lunch, fun outings, and/or discussion time.

Summer Sunday School for Children

Summer Sunday School is slated for July 11 – August 22. Currently, we are exploring a “one-room schoolhouse” approach for children in grades K – 8 (rising), having it during the

Teacher Recognition

On Sunday, June 6 we will have two special recognitions, one for our teachers during the worship service and the other following the service in a baby shower/teacher reception.

First, we will honor the numerous people who have given so much of their time and attention to teaching the children, youth, and adults of First Christian during the 2009-2010 academic calendar. This is an impressive list! I pray I haven’t left anyone off!

Judy Miller, Debbie Allen,

Tammie Ferguson, Kelly Motz, Eric Motz, Jim Almand, Phil Gilliland, Elizabeth Baird, Stasia Fine, Cliff Morgan, Jack Burrows, Irv Denton, Pam Findley, Shannon Jamison, John Findley, Mark Granfors-Hunt, Ginny George, Cherie Hutchison, Mel Cotner, Holly Riestler, Cristin Duddy, Aubrey Myers, Ashley Thornton, Tracy Williams, Sharon Blake, Kevin Ogle, Ron Hutchison, Lynne Wilhoit, Kathleen Kline Chesson.

In addition, we will shower Maddux Harrison Motz with our love in a special reception following

by Lynne Wilhoit

worship service instead of the normal 9:00 – 9:45 AM time slot, or possibly not having it at all and just concentrating on the worship service.

Vacation Bible School

We came to a big realization this year, but one that has been building for several years, that the traditional half-day, week-long VBS does not meet the needs of most parents anymore. With most families having two working parents, a three-hour daily program is difficult for parents to work into their schedules or to take off a week to help out with it. Also, with so many camps available it’s very difficult to find a week that works for everyone.

We have not given up on VBS, but are looking towards using a new model that is held for one day on a Saturday in future years.

church. Maddux was born to Kelly and Eric Motz on March 24. Teacher recognition Sunday is a perfect day for a baby shower for the Motz’s since they have both served as teachers this year. They have a small registry at Babies R Us and a small wish list (largely educational) on Amazon.com.

We are certainly blessed with the gifts of teachers, teaching, and people to teach! May we all give thanks for the teachers who have made a significant difference in our own lives.