

**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.***

# First Christian Letter

April 2010

Volume LIII, Issue 4

## What Is Easter?

What is Easter? Some say it's a time to buy a new outfit and display it for all to see, even better if in a parade. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, someone wrote: "At Easter let your clothes be new, or else be sure you will rue."

Some say it's a little bit of all these things:

\*A time to buy chocolate eggs and bunnies in a basket and drop them at the front door so that children can know that the Easter Bunny came once again.

\*A time for an Easter egg hunt, whether it's at the White House or your own house, bringing fun and joy, with a prize for the person who finds the most eggs.

\*The one time of year that many go to church at

all, to see and hear the spectacle of Christianity in flower-decorated sanctuaries where music and sermons soar in praise of their Savior.



\*It's nothing more than an ancient Saxon celebration of spring, named after the Teutonic goddess of

spring, Eastre, whose earthly symbol was the rabbit. Early Christian missionaries gradually reshaped it as a Christian celebration. By using her name to celebrate Jesus' resurrection, it made it more acceptable for Saxons to accept Christianity.

\*The name Easter also could have come from ancient Latin sources at a time when celebrants donned white clothing after being baptized. There is little doubt that the celebration is rooted in Judaism and Passover, when the Jews escaped Egypt and built a new nation and when Jesus was crucified.

\*It's nothing more than an American celebration of

*(Continued on page 5)*

## You, Too, Can Be An Evangelist!

The voice of evangelism speaks in many different ways. Just listen:

"Like you, I really enjoy singing in a choir. In fact, for the past several years I've been singing with my church choir and it just boosts my energy level for the next week. If you are interested you are more than welcome to join me

sometime to check it out. I can introduce you to our choir director and see if we can make a space for you."

"I completely agree with you, there don't seem to be many places where we can

have deep conversations like this. Actually, that is one of the reasons I really appreciate the adult Sunday School class at my church. I know that there is one place I can go to discuss these types of questions. Would you be interested in joining me some time?"

"You know, I really struggled for a while about what I was supposed to do when I walked past the homeless. I really wanted to help, but I wanted to make sure that my help really made a differ-

## By Stasia Fine

ence. Then I learned about Safe Haven, which is this ministry my church does to care for the poor. I checked it out one week and was really impressed. I've been helping ever since. Didn't you say you were looking for a way to help? Why not join me this week, we can always use some extra hands."

It is often easier then I expect to invite someone to church. The hardest part is convincing myself to ask. A few years ago I went to a leadership training at

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Men's Group Bonds Over Breakfast

On the third Saturday of each month, a small group of men from FCCFC go to breakfast at the Old Country Buffet in Fairfax where you can get a serve-yourself meal very cheap.

It seems the restaurant is set up for meetings like this. There appeared to be a number of church groups having breakfast together on a recent Saturday, and most of them were men.

Bill LaLiberte set up this men's group years ago, and is the recognized leader, a role that Phil Gilliland takes on when Bill is absent. The men who attend talk about issues of the day and their lives, and often the meeting is not devoted to religious or church issues. "It's just conversation of whatever comes up," John Farris said. "I enjoy the fellowship and fun."

But there is a larger issue here: Age. We were a gray-haired group enjoying our breakfast and fellowship. Looking around the room, it seemed to be the same story with each group. Where were the younger men? That's not an idle question. It turns out that many denominations are working on this

issue—to find a way to get younger men more deeply engaged in the lives of our churches (and not just going to breakfast together).



John said Art Banks, the president of Disciples men programs for the Capital Area Region, has made engagement and recruitment of younger men a big issue. Indeed, Banks said in an interview, "the most important thing is men of all ages have spiritual needs like anyone else."

Women's small group ministries (such as Concerned Women's Fellowship) have been thriving for years, and manage to attract women of all ages. Typical programs include both conversation and service components. But it has been harder to attract men to similar programs, and that challenge seems to be growing.

Banks has been part of a number of programs to try to get more young men involved in church activities. One way to do that is to give them more challenges, he said, like working in prison ministries or the rebuilding of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

"The objective is to give men tasks that are challenging, something they can take on with blood and sweat and tears," he said.

This immediately brought to mind images of Bill LaLiberte starting a homeless program at our church, and John and Phil and others (both men and women) working their hearts out to help poor people who come for food and shelter.

Going to breakfast is a way to share experiences and high-caloric intakes. Recently, John said, the restaurant cut off the ice cream dispenser, apparently because of heavy consumption at breakfast. "We almost boycotted," he said. It seemed that the men competed with each other on who could make the best ice-cream concoction. Men, after all, love tasks that are challenging and require blood sweat and tears.

## News from the Board's March Meeting

The church board is moving ahead with a project to reconfigure the back portion of the sanctuary.

In a letter to the congregation, the board said the change will be a positive move that will help the church move forward. It said every effort will be made to ensure that the change will be aesthetically pleasing.

The board said the move would enhance its focus on evangelism.

At the same time, the board expressed regrets about previous communications that might have been misunderstood when the idea was first broached.

The board also discussed the urgent need for a new chair of the facilities council, which has been vacant for some time. It accepted Lynne Wilhoit's suggestion that the job is too big for one person and should be broken up into several

categories.

Rev. Chesson said she was excited about progress on developing the website. She asked chairs of each ministry council to write important information for the site, so that content will be ready when the new site design is completed.

She also reported she has nine youth registered for her new pastor's class, which will meet from April 11-May 23.

## From the Pastor...

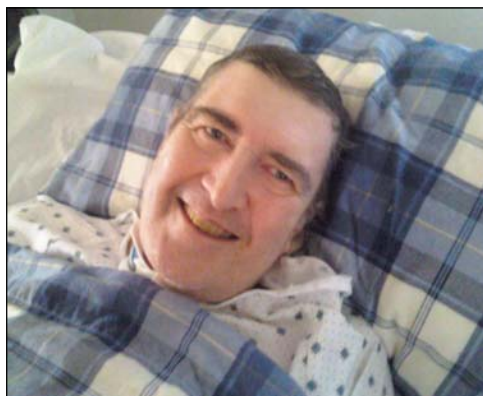
By Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson

"It's so much fun to be alive!" So giggled Ken Vandruff when I spoke with him last November. He had just returned home from a harrowing fifteen months at the Fairfax Hospital Heart and Vascular Center. He had faced death numerous times and miraculously defied all odds. The miracle man, I've come to call him.

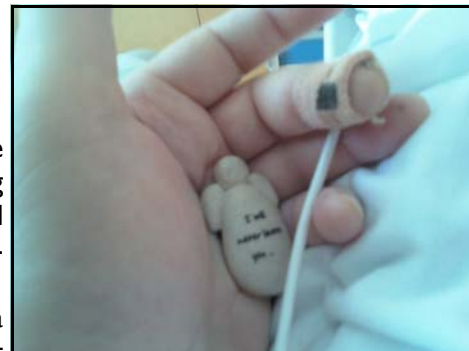
I might expect such words from a young child glowing with Santa Claus cheer or a couple dancing deliriously at their wedding banquet. But from someone who could not move his right side, had to speak through a tracheotomy tube, and whose life was completely under the control and care of others? One might wonder if the person uttering such happy sentiments could be in their right mind. I mean, is it *really* fun just to be alive?

Evidently, according to Ken Vandruff, it is. Over the past few years he has suffered through the slow erosion of his heart muscles, surgery to implant an artificial heart pump, debilitating responses to drugs, a serious stroke followed by brain surgery, and tremendous physical weakness... Then physical therapy to regain his ability to stand and walk, to another heart wrenching stroke to the loss of right side function, eyesight, voice, memory... After another brain surgery and his removal from the heart transplant list, numerous prayer vigils and the faith of his family, the miracle man himself simply kept finding a way to smile. Even if you could only see it in the movement of his eyes.

Ken knows how alive he is. It pours from his dancing spirit. His wife, Jane, beside him, he could hardly contain his joy at making it home. His hospital bed fills the living room as does his 6'2" presence. The bed sheets are embroidered with colorful peace signs. He is thrilled to eat Jane's spinach soufflé (I got some, too!) and even drink a sip of wine! He marvels at his own progress, slow as it seems. Though he returned home under hospice care, Ken has done nothing but regenerate.



**"It's so much fun to be alive!"  
Ken Vandruff, November 2009**



**Ken Vandruff, holding a small angel  
which reads,  
"I will never leave you."**

What is it that has brought Ken so vibrantly back to life? To offer extravagant gratitude for a simple movement in a finger that a few months ago was dead? Was it his journey through the valley of the shadow of death? Was it the perseverance and devotion of his family? Was/is it his faith that, in the darkest moments did not abandon – or if he did lose heart, the faith of Jane, Sarah, Elizabeth and every member of this congregation? Is Ken's Easter spirit something unique to him – something extraordinary and miraculous seen only in a few chosen few? Or has it always been there, waiting to ripen in due season? Do we all have Easter lurking somewhere deep inside? The answer, I hope you know, is obvious.

I am fond of saying that we cannot define Easter. Easter must define us. So, Happy Easter, everyone! May you witness to your own resurrection story for we all have one, or two. And if you need some help, make a visit to Ken and Jane. Surely you will discover it soon enough.

With Love In the Risen, Laughing Lord!

*Kathleen*

## Free Tai Chi Classes at FCCFC

FCCFC folks can take advantage of Tai Chi classes beginning on April 5 at the church. Classes will be held from 7 PM until 9 PM every Monday and Thursday.

While the classes will be free to church members, the organization running the program—the Compassionate Services Society—will ask for donations to help defray costs.

The board approved the application for the group to hold classes at our church at a rate of \$200 a month. There may be additional charges, depending on extra costs the church may incur. The contract will be re-evaluated this fall.

Instructors said the Tai Chi classes, along with Yoga and new breathing techniques, have been shown to improve physical abilities



of the young and the old.

As Safe Haven was coming to a close one day, Huong Hoang, one of the instructors, said, “they will see a big improvement in their health.” Also, she said, some par-

ticipants have found that they do not have to rely on prescription drugs so heavily.

Irv Denton noted that, according to a recent study, Tai Chi with its slow gentle movements helped reduce blood sugar levels in diabetes patients.

In a six-month study of 62 people with diabetes, those who practiced the Chinese martial art Tai Chi weekly (two supervised sessions and three at home) significantly reduced their blood sugar levels compared with those who did not practice Tai Chi.

The classes will be held in Fellowship Hall and in the Parlor, if needed.

## “Thanks for Asking!”

Nearly 6 months ago, I completed a month of medical leave. It was a time of intense treatment aimed at restoring my body so that I could continue my work among you. Since my return, many of you have asked me how I am doing, so I wanted to provide an update. The bottom line is that although I still have some challenges, I am doing GREAT! It is truly miraculous that, following 4 years of considerable discomfort and fatigue, I have been mostly without pain and that my body continues to gain strength, flexibility, and vitality.

What changed? A few seemingly simple things:

\*Sleep – a top priority

\*Exercise – though I don’t get a lot of it, yoga and other breathing and stretching exercises helps me to maintain core strength

\*Reduction of caffeine and unhealthy foods

\*Nutritional supplements

\*Eating at regular intervals

\*Morning prayer and devotions – a personal inventory

Sleep and devotions are the most significant areas of discipline that I must make time for every day, and night. Keeping a regular discipline makes all the difference.

What hasn’t changed? Only a few things. Both eyes, especially my left, continue to experience intermittent blurriness and “white outs” which can affect reading, driving and seeing my computer screen. My vision worsens with fatigue, so making sure I sleep at night continues to be my highest priority. There are times when my driving is affected. The strain also produces some headache pain. The doctors are

## By Rev. Kathleen Kline Chesson

simply waiting for my vision to worsen before anything more significant is recommended.

I have been working more at home where it is quiet, and I can write, study, make calls and plan in relative peacefulness. This has made a huge difference, and I feel as if I have given myself a few extra years! Recognizing my personal limitations and exercising them is still difficult. When I fail to respect the boundaries that are so essential to maintaining my health, my body lets me know it quickly and clearly. I find that self care is, and remains, a top growing edge.

Thank you for your support of such a significant series of changes in my personal and ministerial life. I am much better for them.

With Gratitude to God and you,  
Kathleen

*(Continued from page 1)*

spring, with all the exuberance and tackiness that we can employ, creating a part-religious, part-secular extravaganza exploited by commercial interests to boost bottom lines and the gross domestic product.

\*A good time to check out an old movie or CD with the song "Easter Parade," written by Irving Berlin. Few know that the original title was "Smile and Show Your Dimple" and that the song didn't become a standard until he changed the lyrics to make it an Easter song. Some say find an Al Jolsen recording for true musical virtuosity.

\*For some, an often a painful time when a loved one is hurting or dying or when misfortune knocks them to the ground and pins them there, asking for God's mercy and

in need of our help.

\*Easter is fickle. It moves around from year to year. That dating goes back to the year 325 AD at the Council of the Nicaea called by Emperor Constantine, who set Easter as the first Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox on March 21.

Easter is all these things and many more: Jesus' resurrection is the foundation of our faith, the Son who died for us, who gave us hope and joy, who demanded that we follow a new ethic of love and forgiveness, and who draws near to us with quiet assurance and comfort.

According to contemporary spiritual author Wendy Wright, "Easter is not merely an event of long ago. It is not only the celebration of divine desire to be at one

with humankind. It is not only the renewal of the cosmos nor is it simply our kindled hope for what is promised us. Easter is realized when we are most fully alive and aware of all that is. A former bishop of Romania has been quoted as saying, 'If we only knew the truth of it, we would know that each day is Easter.'"

Or as Rev. William Sloane Coffin put it, "It's necessary to emphasize that Easter has less to do with one person's escape from the grave than with the victory of seemingly powerless love over loveless power."

Easter is rebirth on a grand scale on a spinning planet that needs it desperately. And as the earth blooms in magnificence, so can we blossom spiritually here at First Christian Church Falls Church.

*(Continued from page 1)*

Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas. I learned an easy way for members to invite others to visit the church or join a ministry team. I found the information helpful and I suspect that you will too.

The first step is to become involved in the church in some way. It can be as simple as attending a potluck or as committed as teaching a children's Sunday School class.

Next, with this involvement in

mind, briefly answer each of these questions:

*Where is or was my involvement?*

*What is its purpose?*

*How does it make a difference?*

*Why do I enjoy it?*

*What is the best part of this event or ministry?*

*Why might others enjoy it?*

Now, think of one sentence you would be willing to share with someone in response to each of these three questions:

*What am I involved in at church?*

*What difference does this make?*

*Or, why do I find this meaningful or valuable?*

*Why would someone else find it valuable?*

Finally, sometime in the next month, use these three sentences to either invite someone to church or invite someone at church to join your ministry.

It is evangelism kept simple. After you give this a try, I would love to hear your stories about what happened.

## News & Notes

Dear Rev. Chesson,

The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra is very grateful to you and the First Christian Church for allowing us to use your facilities to hold our Feuer String Competition. This year, we had 34 students participate. The students, parents, teachers and judges appreciate the use of your facility ~ both the warm-up

space and the sanctuary for the performances. Please find enclosed a check to reimburse the church for having the pianos tuned for our final round on March 7. Thanks very much! ~Tara Nadil

\*\*

**Maddux Harrison Motz** was born at 9:30 AM on March 24 to a very proud family, Eric, Kelly and big sister Savannah Motz. He



weighed 7 pounds, 11 ounces and is 20 1/2 inches long. Mom and baby are both doing well.

## Easter Offering 2010

In the Gospel of John, Chapter 11, Jesus says to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" And Martha answered: "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

Each day, the General and Racial/Ethnic Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) answer Jesus' question the same way, not with words, but through their witness to God's good news.



On Easter Sunday, we, too, will have an opportunity to proclaim our belief in the power of the resurrection we celebrate by supporting the General Ministries of our denomination. The 2010 Easter Offering provides us with an opportunity to join other congregations as we extend the church's witness from our own doorsteps, through our local communities and around

the world. Your gift to this special Easter Offering shares the message of the resurrection by supporting ministries like:

the world. Your gift to this special Easter Offering shares the message of the resurrection by supporting ministries like:

- Hands on mission work around the globe
- Ministerial relief and assistance
- Stewardship education
- Disciples Men's and Women's Ministries
- Proclaiming our identity and history as a people of Christian unity
- Education for and learning from children and youth
- Leadership development
- Evangelism Training
- Global and domestic partnerships

The Outreach Council asks you to prayerfully consider the value of these ministries as you prepare your hearts to proclaim with Martha, "Yes, Lord, I believe . . ."

## Outreach Highlights

Did you get your Shamrock on the first Sunday in March? If you did, then you know that it was a clever reminder to bring a contribution for the Falls Church Community Service Council (FCS) food pantry. A huge thanks goes to our CYF (high school) Sunday School class for their leadership in reminding us that the second Sunday of each month is our customary collection date. While St. Patrick was undoubtedly smiling on the green theme for our March collections, the instructions the Youth included made it clear that any nonperishable item that would help a family in need is welcomed: food, personal hygiene items, cleaning products, diapers, etc. And a little Lepre-

chaun told me that the Youth are planning to continue their promotion of this ministry over the next few months. This is welcome news, since Rev. Bill Hale, the FCS director, recently met with our Outreach Council and reported that the number of requests for assistance is much higher than typical this year and the pantry needs continual replenishment. So please thank a Youth when they remind you to bring a contribution; and please be generous!

And looking into the future, mark your calendars for Saturday, May 22 when the Outreach and Evangelism Councils will sponsor a Spring Festival and Community Yard Sale. We're inviting EVERY-

ONE to get involved. If you're in a "housecleaning" mood, you might want to participate in the yard sale. For those of us with long memories, this is NOT our "traditional" Flea Market! . . . please don't drop your goodies off at the church. Instead, sellers will "rent" a spot at the yard sale for a small fee and then bring, price and sell as they prefer. Tables of hand-made crafts, baked goods, etc. would also be welcome additions to the yard sale. Or you may want to help out with the Festival activities—moon bounce, hotdogs on the grill, bubbles and balloons, face painting and clowning around. We're still working out the details, so keep looking for more information.

## By Ginny George

## Eastertide Worship “Resurrection Witnesses”

**“We are witnesses to these things” Acts 5:32**

The Gospel lessons during this Easter season speak of the different ways that Jesus appeared, and witnessed to, his Disciples following his resurrection. He appeared despite their “locked doors” and offered them his peace. He appeared by the sea and was recognized as they ate together. He appeared in the synagogue and was recognized by his teaching. He tells us that God will always be among us as we love one another, and our neighbor as ourselves. Prior to his ascension, he tells his Disciples that “from now on” he will live within them so that *they* can now become his witnesses.

The lessons from the Acts of the Apostles support the importance of becoming “witnesses” to our faith and provide specific examples of Disciples of Christ who witnessed to their faith, especially in challenging circumstances. Peter, Saul/Paul, Tabitha, and Silas are but some of the people you will meet and learn from during April and May.

### **Sunday, April 4** **Easter Sunday**

7:15 AM — Sunrise Service

Mark Granfors-Hunt preaching

8:00 AM — Easter Breakfast

9:00 AM — Sunday School & Easter Egg Hunt

10:00 AM — Celebration of the Resurrection

Special music, word and Communion

Rev. Chesson preaching

### **Sunday, April 11** **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter**

Acts 5: 27-32; Psalm 150, John 20: 19-31

Rev. Chesson, preaching

### **Sunday, April 18** **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter**

Acts 9:1-6 (7-20), John 21: 1-19

Mark Granfors-Hunt, preaching

### **Sunday, April 25** **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter**

Acts 9:36-43, Psalm 23, John 10: 22-30

Rev. Chesson, preaching

## Easter Music

For Easter, the congregation at the 10 AM service will be treated to two Handel pieces, the traditional Hallelujah chorus from the Messiah and The Lord is Risen in D major. Christopher Roussey will play the trumpet and Susan Findley the oboe.



Music Director Lunette Arledge said the Lord is Risen is not one of Handel’s best-known pieces but is clearly in his style. It was originally scored for two trumpets, she said, with Susan’s oboe serving as a second trumpet, so to speak, in this case.

“The tone of the oboe pairs well with the trumpet,” Lunette said. Lunette added that our church is “really very fortunate” to have Christopher and Susan as members. Christopher is a top trumpet player at the U.S. Army Band and Susan teaches and plays professionally, she noted.

As for the Hallelujah chorus, members of the congregation who wish may come to the front of the sanctuary to sing along with the choir.

At the early Easter service, held in the outdoor chapel at 7:15 AM, the music will be a jazzy gospel song called “The Stone is Rolled Away.”

## Holy Week Worship

### **Thursday, April 1, 7:30 PM** **Letting Go of Stature** *Holy/Maundy Thursday*

This service will focus on the events of Holy Week from the triumphal entry to Jesus’ trial through scripture and music. It will include an experience of the Last Supper. Directed by the Worship Council.

### **Friday, April 2, 12:00 Noon** *Good Friday*

St. Anthony’s of Padua Catholic Church  
Rev. Chesson and Mark Granfors-Hunt will participate in the annual community Good Friday Service of the Seven Last Words of Christ. Rev. Chesson will offer a meditation on the 6th word, “It Is Finished.”

## FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH

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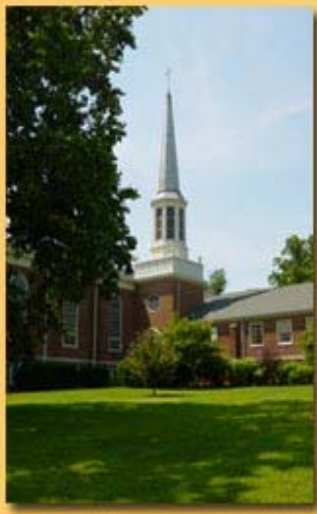
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### Got News?

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](mailto:newsletter@fccfc.org)

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**Ashley Martinage**

Production Editor

## Christian Education Notes

### Vacation Bible School July 26-30

This year's VBS program is called "ReNew: The Parable of the Sower." Using Jesus' Parable of the Sower, children will learn stewardship of the earth from the perspectives of Self, Community, and World.

Please consider volunteering to help in areas such as: registration, publicity, and planning and preparation. Please contact Cherie Hutchison or Lynne Willhoit if you can help.

### Adult Shared Fellowship Classes

April 11, May 2, and June 6

Come experience the Maranatha class on Sunday, April 11 from 9:00 to 9:45 AM in Fellowship Hall. Dis-

cover what spiritual issues are of interest to young adults in our congregation. Step into a different class experience and find out what our church has to offer. Next shared fellowship classes are May 2 (Koinonia Class) and June 6 (Connections Class).

### Pastor's Class

April 11-May 23\*

Explore what it means to be baptized into the Christian faith. This class is for anyone who thinks they may be ready for baptism, generally starting in the 5th grade.

Classes will be held on Sunday mornings from 8:30 to 9:45 AM. Baptism for those who are ready will most likely be on Sunday,

by Lynne Willhoit

May 23. Contact Rev. Chesson if you have questions. \*Please note the change in dates.

### Youth Sunday

Mother's Day, May 9

Mark your calendars for this annual event.

### Playground Clean-up

Saturday, April 10

As the flowers blossom, so do the weeds on our playground! Our playground is in need of new black groundcover, weed pulling, and branch cutting. Come join us from 9:00 AM until noon on Saturday, April 10 to renew our playground. Please contact Lynne Willhoit at [lynneoit9699@gmail.com](mailto:lynneoit9699@gmail.com) or (703) 528-4730 if you can help.

## First Christian Youth Hit the Road

On Sunday, March 21, members of Chi Rho and CYF, parents and Youth Sponsors headed into Washington, DC to visit two local institutions. First, they joined in worship at the 12th Street Congregational Church. The youth greatly enjoyed experiencing a worship service grounded in the same principles as those at FCCFC, but expressed in a very different way.



After worship, the group ate lunch at the famous Ben's Chili Bowl restaurant. The food was delicious, and the day's only disappointment was that President Obama wasn't dining there as well!