

From Pastor Chad

I broke down and took my kids to see *The Hobbit* this week. I didn't really want to do it. It seemed terrible to corrupt their imagination of Tolkien's epic tale with the images and special effects of Hollywood. I generally feel this way about complex narratives that are turned into movies.

I want to protect my children's imagination and give them a chance to live with the pictures Tolkien drew with words. I won't let them see the *Harry Potter* films until they've had a chance to read J.K. Rowling's wonderful books. It seems to me that part of my job as a parent is to give my children a chance to experience the great stories the way they were meant to be heard.

I've probably read *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* 5 or 6 times and each time I am completely taken into the story and world that Tolkien has created; the rich complex history, the quirky characters, the moral depth, the social commentary, the theological commentary, and the grand narrative of his stories is so totally compelling it seems impossible for a 2 or 3 hour film (or even 8 hours of film, which the *Hobbit* will ultimately be) to do it justice.

Kim read them *The Hobbit* last year and they loved it. We are now listening our way through the unabridged book on tape version of *The Lord of the Rings* read by Rob Inglis (he does a wonderful job). So, I cracked and we went to see Peter Jackson's (and a bunch of other very creative people's) imagination in 3D on a big screen.

I've got my critiques, but for me, they got the essence of Tolkien correct in one powerful exchange between Gandalf and Galadriel (interestingly enough this is not even an encounter that took place in the book).

Gandalf the wizard is asked by Galadriel (a powerful and mysterious elf queen) why he has brought the hobbit Bilbo on his quest and Gandalf replies,

Saruman (another wizard who does not approve of Gandalf's quest) believes it is only great power that can hold evil in check, but that is not what I have found. I have found it is the small everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keep the darkness at bay...small acts of kindness and love.

This is really a powerful line. J.R.R. Tolkien was a faithful Christian who is famously credited with nudging C.S. Lewis toward his Christian faith and Christian themes of grace, mercy, hope, and love among others are woven into his stories. The writers of the screenplay for *The Hobbit: An Unexpected*

Journey got to the very essence of the role of Hobbits in Tolkien's stories. They also got a big chunk of the truth of the Gospel.

These words from Gandalf are the essence of the Christmas good news we proclaim. "Great power" is not what overcomes darkness or even what holds evil at bay. God's way of working in this world seems like "folly" to the world (as the Apostle Paul wrote) and yet, it is in the weakness displayed in the birth of a baby to an ordinary family, and the weakness displayed on the cross that we place our hope.

The first installment of *The Hobbit* on the big screen is worth your time, but even more powerful is to read or re-read the book with an eye for the many ways Tolkien declares the Gospel we proclaim each day with our lives.

As we enter this New Year it is not a bad idea to remind ourselves that it is in the everyday, and often ordinary, lives we live that we have great

opportunity to shine light into the darkness.

but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

(1 Corinthians 1:23-25,
The Message)



Evening Circle

The next meeting of the Evening Circle will be **Wed., Jan. 23rd, at 7 p.m. in the Getz Library**. If you are bringing your children to "The Channel," this is a perfect opportunity for you to join us! We are using a Bible study from Presbyterian Women, "Dispatches to God's Household: The General Epistles." The next lesson is entitled, "A Spiritual House and Household Matters." Nancy Knight will be leading the lesson, which is based on

1 Peter 1:1-10 and 3 John 1-8. Dot Ollerenshaw will be providing light refreshments. All women are welcome to join us for an informal evening of study, discussion, and prayer. For more information (or to check on plans if the weather is bad), please contact Nancy Knight at [537-4347](tel:537-4347) or nvknight@embarqmail.com, or Joni Nodes at [236-7996](tel:236-7996).

ASP Work Trip

Our church has 11 volunteers signed up to go on the ASP Work Trip to be held July 20-27th. This year we will be traveling to Kentucky, again joining in with 5 other churches in the "BYG" or Big Youth Group. **We have one more spot available — but it won't be held long**, since other churches have a waiting list. If you are interested, please **contact Nancy Knight immediately** at 537-4347. Some of our volunteers have already been working to raise funds for their trip. **The second deposit of \$150 is due February first!** If you are planning to work to raise all of your trip cost, please tell

Nancy or Christy Young, BYG Director. Deposit checks should be made out to **“BYG Work Camp”** and may be mailed directly to Christy at Community Presbyterian Church, P.O. Box 148, Chester, NJ 07930, sent to our church office, or given to Nancy. Let us know if you need more information, or see www.asphome.org. This is a wonderful, life-changing mission, both for the families in Appalachia and for our volunteers!

Help Save a Tree

Did you know that you can receive this newsletter via e-mail? If you are interested in helping us save paper and postage please consider having the newsletter sent to you electronically. E-mail to: lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com and ask to be signed up. Also, the newsletter is available on our church website: www.lowervalley.org.

Church Directory

Don't forget to send Claudia your picture for the church directory. If you can't e-mail, it we can scan it.

Otherwise, send a nice quality .jpeg file to the office: lowervalleyipc@embarqmail.com.

Offering Envelopes

Please remember to pick up your 2013 offering envelopes from the table in the narthex.

Fellowship Hosts

Needed

We are in need of volunteers to host coffee and conversation. There will be a sign up sheet in the kitchen each Sunday. Host alone or with friends! Expenses can be reimbursed. If you have questions, contact Lisa Coffaro at coffaro423@comcast.net or 832-0409.

Thanks from Don Scafuri

To the Session & the entire Lower Valley congregation:

I want to express my appreciation and thanks for the beautiful card and generous gift on the occasion of my 20th anniversary as organist/choir director at LVPC. “Card” doesn't do justice to what is a true work of art, and reading through the written notes inside was quite

a moving experience for me — a reminder of how grateful I am for the friendship, encouragement, and support extended to me over the years.

Some of you may know that, a year after moving to Lebanon Twp in 1991, I only became aware of the “opening” at LVPC because my wife happened to spot the notice in the local paper, which she just happened to pick up on a whim. Of course, I've come to see that it was no coincidence at all. From that first Sunday, being part of the church's music ministry has been a privilege and a constant blessing for me. Not only do I have the honor of playing a 1200-pipe organ (faithfully maintained by the church), but I also get to “listen in” on a great sermon by Pastor Chad every Sunday!

Finally, I want to acknowledge the LVPC choir members for their longstanding devotion in sharing God's message through music. Your commitment and courage have been a real inspiration to me.

Don Scafuri

Children's Ministry

Our children did a spectacular job on December 23rd during their performance of "The Christmas Secret"!

Thanks to all those who worked behind the scenes to make "The Christmas Secret" possible.

Special thanks to:

*Bobbie Sliker & Jeff Donlon
for set design*

*Linda Stetler, Lyn Magee,
and Karen Newman for
costume and prop
coordination*

*Sue Hostler, Laura Hostler,
and Kim Rodgers for having
the vision, editing the script,
directing, and pulling it all
together!*

**Just a reminder we are
back to our regular
Sunday School schedule.**

**Next Family Game
Night is Friday, January
25th — please join us!!**



Session Members

Here is a list of our current session members and their phone numbers:

Lisa Coffaro: 832-0409

Stephanie Donlon: 537-2604

Wendy Garcia: 867-7186

Terry Hoffman: 689-7646

John Leddie: 537-9622

Lyn Magee: 832-2142

Kim Rodgers: 832-0956

Warren Newman: 638-4332

May Saxton (clerk): 537-4963

Update on the 10th Annual Alternative Gift Fair

Last month we reported on the success of the Alternative Gift Fair, held on November 17th. At that time, the “orders” were still coming in (the supply of these gifts will never run out!). At the time of publication of the December newsletter, we had collected more than \$13,000 for the 12 participating organizations. As of this writing, we have collected over \$2,000 in additional gift purchases, bringing our total, including SERRV profits, to more than \$15,400. In numbers of

shoppers and total gift dollars, we have exceeded all previous years of the Gift Fair; our dollar total exceeded the 10% over last year that we strive for with each Fair. We were able to add additional dollars from weekly giving throughout the year to bring the total donations to AGF groups and several other charitable organizations to almost \$20,000.

Once again, the Mission Committee would like to extend sincerest thanks to everyone who prayed, helped with the fair, and shopped. Everyone’s generosity with

time, talents and money will make a big difference to the organizations as they reach out to help those less fortunate. In these difficult economic times, it is a blessing to see givers share the abundance that has been bestowed on us.

Happy New Year to all!

January 2013

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
		1	2 The Channel: 7 p.m., PH	3	4	5
6 Fellowship: 11 a.m. Celebration Chimes Practice: 11:30 a.m. Joyful Noise Ringers Practice: 12 p.m.	7 Adult Bells: 7:15 p.m.	8 Sewing: 9:30 a.m., GL Worship Committee Mtg: 7 p.m., GL	9 The Channel: 7 p.m., PH	10	11	12
13 Fellowship: 11 a.m. Celebration Chimes Practice: 11:30 a.m. Joyful Noise Ringers Practice: 12 p.m. Journey: 6 p.m., GL	14 Adult Bells: 7:15 p.m.	15 Sewing: 9:30 a.m., GL Session: 7 p.m., GL	16 The Channel: 7 p.m., PH	17	18	19
20 Fellowship: 11 a.m. Celebration Chimes Practice: 11:30 a.m. Joyful Noise Ringers Practice: 12 p.m. Journey: 6 p.m., GL	21 Adult Bells: 7:15 p.m.	22 Sewing: 9:30 a.m., GL	23 The Channel: 7 p.m., PH Evening Circle: 7 p.m., GL	24	25 Family Game Night: 5 p.m. PH	26
27 Fellowship: 11 a.m. Celebration Chimes Practice: 11:30 a.m. Joyful Noise Ringers Practice: 12 p.m. Journey: 6 p.m., GL	28 Adult Bells: 7:15 p.m.	29	30	31		

Upcoming Servers

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Communion Servers	Fellowship Host(s)
January 6	Sue Huntington	Lisa and Chris Coffaro	Sue Huntington Renee Ollerenshaw Warren Newman Kim Rodgers	
January 13	Marilyn El-Zahr	Janet and Gary Kipp		
January 20 — Family Worship	Stephanie Donlon	Linda Stetler Ed Getz		
January 27	Dick Kline	Judy Eckwielen Madeleine Argue		
February 3	Nancy Knight	Terry Hoffman Rich Ehrlich		
February 10	Joni Nodes	Renee and Jeff Ollerenshaw		
February 17	May Saxton	Marilyn and Al El-Zahr		
February 24	TBD	Cindy and Tim O'Keefe		

**If you are able to serve in one of the TBD spots, please let
Claudia in the office know. Thanks!**

January 2013

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church
445 County Road 513
Califon, NJ 07830

The Vision of our Church

Lower Valley Presbyterian Church is a community of believers who worship God in word and deed, nurture each other through prayer, friendship, and education, and seek to serve others in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Our four areas of ministry are faith development, caring for each other, outreach ministry and supporting ministry.