

The Messenger.

Publication of:

*St. Peters Lutheran Church of Alberton &
Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Woongoolba*

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From Pastor Greg:

"The Lord of the Rings" has certainly captivated the mind of the younger generation, hasn't it!

That's brilliant, as far as I'm concerned! It gives the Christian community a perfect bridge to speak to a generation hungry for meaning in life. LOTR can help us all to see passion in the characters desiring to uphold what is good; and stand up against earthly and other evil.

J.R.R. Tolkien wrote to people living through the horrors of World War Two; people dealing with industrialisation and pollution. Look and you'll see the themes clearly. More importantly, he wrote on a deeper level and used story and characters to talk about the cosmic struggle for your eternal life and mine.

When you start to explore this third aspect of the story, the comparison between Tolkien's characters and God, is just mind-boggling!

Gandalf the Grey is a classic saviour figure! Think about his power combined with his benevolence. He is there to protect the world from the growing evil, to advise the world on how to survive. Think about his fight with the fiery demon in the Mines of Moria – he defeats the demon but is dragged into the Abyss by the heel. He dies, rising from the pit as "Gandalf the White" after... you guessed it - three days!

Let's take Frodo, who bears the ring to its destruction at Mount Doom. He carries the one ring (which is the embodiment of temptation's power) for all the other beings in Middle Earth. Frodo volunteers to do so for the good of all

others. In the story, he alone can hope to bear such a burden. What image of Christ does this bring to mind? How about Isaiah 53: 6 "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all." Frodo is an allusion to Christ, who truly bears our sins.

Doesn't it make you want to see the movies again to look for comparisons, or better still to read the books themselves – LOTR and the BIBLE. In fact, if we understand that one of Tolkien's motivations was to draw people to read their Bibles and learn of Christ and trust and live for Him, the value of LOTR is not diminished; but enriched!

One image from the LOTR is that of the coming of the eagles in times of utter hopelessness. They arrive to rescue Gandalf twice, and Sam and Frodo when the ring has been destroyed.

This is a beautiful reminder of God's promise to us, His people, found in ... Isaiah 40: 31 –

"Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Tolkien points faithfully to Jesus as the source of his inspiration and certainty of eternal life. Let us also look to the Lord Jesus for ours.

PARISH EVENTS

This year we are proposing to do something a little different during the Lenten season in our parish. The plan is to encourage greater involvement of members who find it difficult to get out in the evenings to attend Lenten Services. This year we would like to trial the concept of Small groups meeting in homes to have a devotion together and have an open discussion group using materials provided from the illustrated booklet.

We would start off with the usual Ash Wednesday Service and conclude with the normal services of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday & Easter Sunday. In place of the Lenten Services organised study groups could work through the materials at an agreed time. Members of the parish attended the Small Groups Seminar held in January and are keen to help organise and implement. The trial of this format is to attempt to include more members of the parish in preparation for the joy of Easter and encourage exploration of God's Word in a comfortable home setting.

About the materials to be used: From the Foreword

Lent is a time for renewal, or it serves no purpose at all. Lent is not a time for breast-beating, nor simply for reciting once again the history of the Passion. Lent has to do with repentance and renewal. It is a time when God's Spirit compels and encourages us to face who we are and what we have done, when God's Word breaks into our hearts with the message that we aren't meant to live as slaves of evil. Further, the message of repentance includes the cleansing power of the cross, which turns us around to face who we are in Jesus Christ and to see who and what we have become by His grace, power and indwelling. That "becoming" is what this series is about, for the forgiven, restored and renewed Christian has wonderful work to do. The components of this Lenten series describe the renewal that can, by God's power and blessing, be accomplished in us.

Think of those who rarely worship and commune. Remember those who teeter on the edge of doubt or despair. And we think of our own spiritual lives for we too can become "weary of well-doing. With these thoughts in mind, Lent can never be just the usual. It presents a real opportunity for growth in our congregation. Once we have carefully examined the themes of this series, all of which focus on the particular needs of every Christian and every parish, exciting possibilities present themselves. We can invite parishioners to attend the worship life of the church with confidence because we can share in the renewal that the services highlight. We can visit and encourage one another, for what need above all else is to be renewed. We can share the Lenten series with friends unfamiliar with church in a casual home setting. We can offer what we all desperately need - renewal of life. This is why this series is titled Lent: A Time for Renewal. We believe that it is a timely, important series that can bring many blessings to many people. Please support this program.

Where are our Interns now? (Keep them and all our young members in your prayers!)

As you read this 'Messenger' Adrian Kramer will be preparing to commence the academic year at Australian Lutheran College (formerly called Luther Seminary). Adrian is enrolled in the ministry course and is going to be studying with the ordained ministry as his goal.

Greta Buhner has finished her time as Intern at Magill Parish, South Australia. She spent a few weeks R. & R. at home and has again taken up a Youth Intern position, this time at St Paul's College in Walla Walla New South Wales.

Laura Kleinschmidt has returned to Brisbane and has just taken up full time work in a Brisbane Engineering firm. She plans to put herself into her work and has already rejoined some of the activities in our parish she enjoyed before taking up her internship. It's great to have at least one back with us again. ✍

PARISH CONTINUED...

New Adult Confirmation Classes to commence mid February: It is so wonderful to see the response of fellow Christians to the real love and mercy God has shown us in Jesus, our Saviour! Following up from the Adult Confirmations we celebrated last year, we have two more people who have asked to start classes themselves. SO... if you have been considering finding out more about the Christian faith why not plan to pop along? Class times will be negotiated soon (Probably on a Sunday afternoon at this stage). If you would like to find out more or enrol, contact Pastor Greg on 3287 2084. Classes are free, run for about an hour and fifteen minutes, and are conversational in style. There's no obligation. It's a great opportunity to meet and get to know others joining the church and/or looking into matters of the faith.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church - Woongoolba

As the new year commences at the Bethlehem Pre-school & Kindy, we welcome all new families joining the centre. We look forward to getting to know our new co-director for 2004. Please tell your friends about our centre and encourage them to enrol their children for the coming years.

Sunday Kids is held each Sunday 9.00-10.00a.m. Children 3-12 years of age are welcome to attend. Bible stories, games, craft, singing, and other activities are enjoyed by all. We always need teachers and helpers so let us know if you would like to be involved.

Jesus said "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God." Mark 10:14.

A-Team and Youth Groups have issued a program for the coming months. We want lots of young people to join in the fun and activities. If you would like a calendar for events and do not get one in the mail please contact Fiona Smith on 55462644.

The Confirmation Class of 2003 -2004 will soon be meeting together for lessons again. Stephanie Brooking, Kate Dart, Emily Holland, Katie Martin, Harry Ponting, Michael Westerman & Simon Zipf, are the members of the current group of Confirmees.

A DATE TO BOOK IN YOUR DIARIES NOW!! The confirmation camp will be held at Bell on 1st, 2nd and 3rd May.

Please pray for these young people as they prepare for their confirmation into our Church community.

The Bible study and Friendship Groups have commenced for the new year. Young adults are meeting in various homes according to "The Messenger" and other groups meet as they arrange from week to week. Being part of a small group which meets together to hear God's Word is how our church family and we will continue to grow. Please take the opportunity to be involved!!! ✍

Ladies Fellowship meets on the 4th Thursday of the month 9.00 – 11.30a.m.

We have a Bible Study followed by morning tea and a short meeting. It is great to come together and share our joys as well as support each other in times of hardship and sorrow. Please come and meet with us as members of the church family. All welcome!

Matt & Sarah Kubenk have returned from their Teen-mission trip to Chile. God has blessed them through their experiences and they are anxious to share their ideas in our community to assist us in reaching out to those around us.

We thank God for their safe return to us, and look forward to their presentation.