

CHRONICLER

Cape Girardeau, Missouri

www.evangelicalucc-cape.org

MAY 2008

What C.S. Lewis Means to Me

The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian will arrive in theaters on May 16. This adaptation is by the same creative team that produced the film of **“The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe”** a couple of years ago. Most agreed that the first film was a worthy adaptation of the classic story and the new film should also be worth seeing. Regardless of the impact of the second film, it gives me occasion for reflecting on how important C. S. Lewis has been in my faith journey.

If you are not familiar with C. S. Lewis, there are plenty of places to **start**. The film **“Shadowlands”** starring Anthony Hopkins gives some idea of the circumstances of his life, focusing on his marriage late in life to Joy Davidman Gresham. Unfortunately, the DVD of this film is out of print and very expensive, although a VHS copy can be ordered from Amazon.com from \$3.71. There are the Narnia films and BBC TV adaptations of some of the Narnia stories that are also readily available. For readers, almost all of **C. S. Lewis’ works are still in print**. Fantasy fans can start with the Narnia books, science fiction fans will enjoy his space trilogy—**“Out of the Silent Planet,” “Perelandra,” “That Hideous Strength”**—and those with an interest in mythology may find **“Till We Have Faces”** to be very exciting. Then there are all the books of Christian apologetics: **“Mere Christianity,” “The Screwtape Letters,” “The Problem of Pain,”** and others, that are available separately or in



anthologies. In **“Surprised by Joy,”** Lewis uses the story of his life to illustrate a longing for something wonderful beyond human experience that was the force behind his adult conversion experience. There is also **“A Grief Observed,”** the published version of a journal Lewis kept after his wife’s death, which might be useful to someone who has lost a loved one.

My personal involvement with C. S. Lewis began as a teenager, when I read some of the Narnia stories. They did not appeal to me. At the time, I preferred **“The Lord of the Rings”** by Lewis’ friend, J.R. Tolkien, which seemed at the time to be more adult and serious than Narnia, which after all was just for kids! Later, my parents gave me a copy of **“The Screwtape Letters.”** I think they studied it in an adult education class at church. If my parents liked Lewis, then he really could not be at all cool. I glanced at it and set it aside. As a science fiction fan, I did read the space trilogy. I realized that they were beautiful and important books that were related to the other British science fiction I had read by H. G. Wells and Olaf Stapledon, but at the same time, **there was something different about Lewis’ books that I didn’t quite “get”**—the Christian themes, of course. Years later, I reread some of the Narnia stories, and liked them very much. When the first Narnia movie came out, I read all the Narnia sto-

*“Steeped in Tradition, Stirred by the Spirit,
Sweetened with Love”*

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ries, and then reread the space trilogy, and “Till We Have Faces.” I was hooked. Michael Hester gave me a beat up paperback of “Mere Christianity” and I began working my way through Lewis’ apologetics. I completed a first reading of most of them over my recent vacation.

Lewis is famous for two bodies of work: the apologetics and the fantasies. Apologetics is the systematic defense of Christianity. Lewis had a strong interest in philosophy and was attracted to the use of reason and logic to defend Christianity to skeptics and unbelievers. Lewis was not a professional theologian. In fact, he was a professor of English literature, specializing in medieval literature. Despite this, Lewis was quite successful as a popular lecturer and broadcaster throughout the 1940s. Eventually, however, he found this work personally unsatisfying and unhelpful to his own faith journey. He shifted his energies to his fantasies and devotional books. Lewis described the **Narnia books as answering “what if” questions** about how the Christian story would play out in an imaginary world quite different from ours. The complete Narnia series plays out stories of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in a smaller world with talking animals and trees and other fantasy creatures. Lewis took a sort of scrapbook approach to fantasy, incorporating characters and themes from a wide range of myths and fairy tales. **Lewis’ friend J.R. Tolkein, the author of “The Lord of the Rings” believed that fantasy worlds should be logically constructed from the ground up and was very unhappy with Lewis’ efforts.**

Although Lewis’ apologetics are not always as well organized and argued as the work of contemporary apologists such as Ravi Zechariahs and N. T. Wright, I see a very human and personal quality in Lewis that is missing in these writers. Similarly, I find that although his fiction can be a bit sloppy and unbalanced, it is also full of an energy and joy that comes right from the heart of its author. Lewis, as noted earlier, was not a professionally trained theologian, but was well educated in philosophy and literature. He was an atheist from the age of 15 to his conversion at age 31, when he became an enthusiastic member of the Church of England. He was a fan of science fiction and had a wide-ranging correspondence with all kinds of people around the world. All this gives a fresh perspective to his work, although the professionals also claim that this leads him to make

historical and theological mistakes.

He was also something of an eccentric in his personal life. While being trained for the army, Lewis and another trainee promised that if either died during the war, the survivor would take care of both their families. The friend was killed in **WWI and Lewis took care of the friend’s mother and sister for the next 20 years.** The Lewis household also included his alcoholic brother Warnie. Lewis did not marry until he was 58 years old. He married Joy Davidman Gresham, a Jewish-American convert to Christianity and one of his fan mail correspondents. Joy died just 4 years later from bone cancer. Until his death, Lewis **raised Joy’s two sons, one of whom is a non-denominational Christian pastor,** while the other returned to the Jewish faith. Lewis died in 1963 at the age of 64, on the same day that JFK was assassinated..

Although Lewis lived a somewhat sheltered academic life and he traveled very little, his work reflects openness to human contact and involvement. Lewis was not a confessional writer, he did **not fill his books with personal anecdotes or “air his dirty laundry” in public.** Even a book like “Surprised by Joy,” which takes the form of an autobiography, provides only those personal details that are needed to explain his loss of childhood faith and adult conversion to Christianity. However, his books, at their best, have the feeling of stories told by a good friend over a pint at the Eagle and Child pub, where Lewis and his friends met to discuss their works in progress. Lewis was a great and loyal friend and was generous with his time and energy. He never claimed to be a role model, but his life shows a faith not just lived out in preaching and teaching, but in his relationships with friends, family, and strangers each day of his life. It is the presence of this Christian life behind the words that give his words a weight and power that is so lacking in many books written by professional theologians and pastors. Because of this, his works, despite their weakness and flaws, will continue to be read by children and adults, believers and skeptics, until the end of this world.

—Your Friend in Christ,
Pastor Daniel Johnson

Spiritual Fellowship

Mary– Martha News

Mary Martha Circle will meet on Thursday, May 1st at 1:30 PM. The devotions will be given by Fern Schlimme. Hostesses are Fern Schlimme and Verna Best. Plans will be made to carpool **to the Area UCC Women's Luncheon at Emmanuel UCC on June 5th.**

May Friendship Day



Church Women United will host the May Friendship Day at **St. Vincent's Catholic Church**, 742 Forest Drive on May 2, 2008.

A light meal will be served at 6:00 PM with a program to follow.

All ladies of the area are invited to participate.

Always Say A Prayer

The ASAP group is open to suggestions for a group activity in May. Contact Carolyn Best or Bonnie Stahlman with your ideas.

Shannondale Float Trip

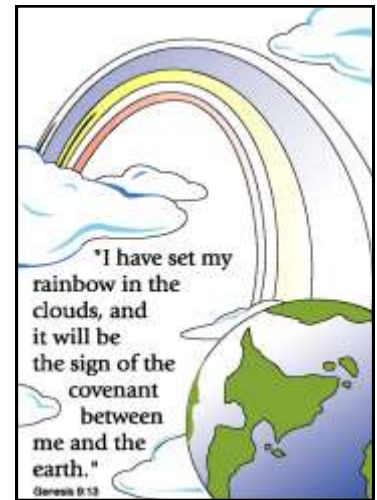
The ASAP group is planning a trip to Shannondale for a Float & Retreat weekend on June 6, 7, & 8. Please let Gary Metje know if you are **planning on going as menu's need to be planned and food bought.** Families can bring **their special "treat items" to share for non-meal snacks.**

The ASAP will again pay for the canoe rental, but individuals will need to contribute to the cost of meals and their campsite fee. We do not have the Lodge for this event, so we need to know who are camping in tents and who are in campers. We rented the Church, but it is full already. We should be able to cook in the Church basement and have our meals there as a group.

Friendship Circle

A very special day is coming up for the Friendship Circle. Mark your calendars on Tuesday, May 13, 2008 at 6:30 PM for our annual Mother-Daughter Banquet. All Mothers and Daughters are invited to come for an evening of **fun, food, and fellowship.** **If you don't have a daughter or mother bring someone else's.**

Our theme for the evening is **"Life Is A Rainbow"** and we need your help with the program. So, dress in rainbow colors. Wear just one color or wear seven different colors, wear as many colors as you want. We want to have a colorful fun night.



Union of Concerned Christians

The Union of Concerned Christians have **scheduled a "Work Day" at the Church for Sunday, May 18th starting at 1:00 PM.** Weather permitting we will clean windows on the Education Building, work outside in the yard, clean balcony windows, etc.

How much can be accomplished depends on how many people show up to work.



—Bob & Velma Roloff, Co-Chairman
—Tom Schild, Treasurer

Strengthen the Church

What does church mean to you? Mission? Compassion? Community? . . . Praise? Prayer? Peace? We could sit in a circle asking that question and come up with as many different answers as people! But the value at the heart of every answer would likely be the same: Love. Our church is love. When **we think about how the church's love – God's love** – has transformed and nourished us, we want to share it. We want others to feel the blessings of grace and acceptance, to know the joy of service and **the freedom to live fully in God's moment** – whether it brings joy or sorrow, struggle or laughter. **Each year, we receive a special offering that helps the church's love to grow and thrive.** Called Strengthen the Church, this offering funds new congregations and renews existing ones. It supports programs for youth and young adults and nurtures current and future leaders. And this year, for the first time, it will aid the industry and its message of inclusivity. We will receive this offering on **the church – Pentecost – and Mother's Day.** You are invited to celebrate **these two** – the church and those who are Mother to us – by giving to Strengthen the Church. Your generous gift today ensures a vibrant church tomorrow. Spread the Love. Strengthen the Church. [Envelops and a flyer are included with May's Chronicler.]

Spread the Love

** Information obtained from the United Church of Christ website. www.ucc.org/stc*



Council Financial Report

Beginning Check Book	Balance 3-1-08	\$32,748.60
Deposits	March	\$7,838.92
	Interest	\$0.27
Total Deposits for January		\$7,839.19
Distributions	March	\$9,416.77
Ending Check Book	Balance 3-31-08	\$31,171.02
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A.G. Edwards Account	{Memorial Fund}	
*Statement not received	Interest	---
as of 4/15/08	Deposits	---
Ending Balance	As of 2-29-08	\$11,788.70
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Check Book Balance	As of 4-15-08	\$33,376.23

Prayer List & Friends at Home

Prayer List

In case of hospitalization or surgery please notify our church office. When being admitted to a hospital be sure to tell them that you are affiliated with this congregation. * indicates a new request.

Please note: after six months names will be removed from the prayer list, unless an update is made to the church office.

Leo Amelunke; 09-07
Loyd Bollinger
S.G. Coy
Family of Reece Dgson; 03-08
Michael “Benji” Doerhoff; 01-08
Joan Hope
Mary Huckstep
Carol Huebert; 02-08
Frankie Hutson; 11-07
Jaden, 1 & 1/2 yrs old—seizures; 12-07
Ernest & Ida Mae Jordan
*Tyler Lalumondiere—Iraq; 04-08
Kenny Mehrle
*Betty Metcalf, 04-08
Ester Nussbaum
Cheryl Olson; 01-08
[Mary Huckstep’s granddaughter]
*Helen Owens
Paul Propst; 03-08
*Wanda Pruitt; 04-08
Sharon Reif; 03-08
Kaylyn Sneathen; 03-08
Susan Spinks; 01-08
Wesley, Kailey &
Kimberley Spinks; 01-08
*Bonnie Stricker; 04-08
Andrea Truitt; 11-07
*Evelyn Warrick; 04-08

Friends at Home

Ratliff Nursing Home
717 N. Sprigg Street
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Polly Wilmsmeyer

Chateau Girardeau
3120 Independence
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Ruby Doughty

Fountainbleau Lodge
2001 N. Kingshighway
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Alta Proffer

Lutheran Home
2825 Bloomfield Road
Cape Girardeau, MO 63703

Dorothy Cole
Frank Maevers, Sr.
Leonard Moore
Andora Peetz
*Helen Owens

Home Bound
Irene Orlando
327 N. Frederick
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

“With everlasting Love I will have compassion on you ...”
Isaiah 54 : 8

Evangelical United Church of Christ
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Pastor Dan Johnson
Church Phone: 573-335-5611
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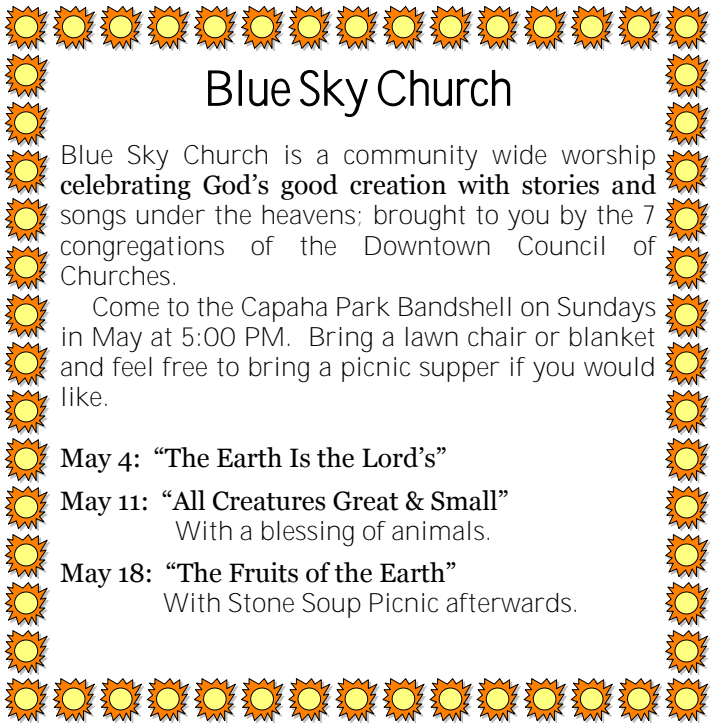
ETC.



**Meal-a-Month
for FISH**

Canned Tamales
Refried, Kidney, Pinto Beans
Enchilada, Fajita, Taco Mixes
Corn Bread & Muffin Mixes
Macaroni & Cheese
Cold or Hot Cereal
Canned Fruit

Thank You!



Blue Sky Church

Blue Sky Church is a community wide worship celebrating **God's good creation with stories and songs** under the heavens; brought to you by the 7 congregations of the Downtown Council of Churches.

Come to the Capaha Park Bandshell on Sundays in May at 5:00 PM. Bring a lawn chair or blanket and feel free to bring a picnic supper if you would like.

May 4: "The Earth Is the Lord's"
May 11: "All Creatures Great & Small"
With a blessing of animals.
May 18: "The Fruits of the Earth"
With Stone Soup Picnic afterwards.