

NEWS

CHURCH WORLDWIDE

Is *The Hobbit* a Christian Film?

Travel along, if you dare, with Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*—either J.R.R. Tolkien's beloved 1937 novel or the first installment of Peter Jackson's film trilogy based on the book, which opened in theaters in December.

Either way you will essentially be traveling in a world constructed on Christian principles, says Devin Brown, professor of English at Asbury University, a Christian liberal arts college near Lexington, Ky.



PHOTO COURTESY THE HOBBIT

Ian McKellen as the wizard Gandalf the Grey in *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*.

That's not to say that *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are explicitly Christian tales. Jane Chance, professor emerita of English at Rice University and editor of *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth*, said there are definite undertones of

Christian theology throughout the Tolkien books, but you won't find that on the surface.

Tolkien "did not feel you should be explicitly allegorical or Christian," Chance said. "That doesn't mean you can't create a Christian subtext. That's what he does throughout his writing."

Churches under Fire for Using Gun Classes as Outreach

A few dozen churches in the U.S. offer concealed carry certification classes as a way to reach out to non-Christians and attract new members.

But in the wake of the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., in which a gunman killed 20 children and six adults, such classes are coming under sharp criticism from fellow Christians.

Richard Cizik, formerly a top official at the National Association of Evangelicals and now head of the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good, said he is concerned about churches using weapons training as a means to reach non-Christians. "This seems to be an ethically suspect message," he said. "The gospel should be 'Put your faith in Christ.' This seems to be 'Put your faith in Glock.' The church has always used a variety of methods for drawing people in. However, I do think there are plenty of organizations more suitable that could be doing the training."

—Religion News Service

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Sports Accomplishments

Houston (British Columbia) Christian School made history when it fielded a coed team in the provincial boys' volleyball championships because the school did not have enough students to field both girls' and boys' teams. The school moved up from its 12th-place ranking to ninth, quite a feat for a school with only four students in Grade 12.

Langley (British Columbia) Christian School's boys' volleyball team took home gold in its division, adding to the silver and three bronze medals it brought home in the past seven years.

Eli Tolkamp of Willoughby Christian Reformed Church was named most valuable player of the tournament.

Ten students from Rehoboth (N.M.) Christian School received All-Star honors in four sports from the *Navajo Times*. Those honored were Jordan Ide, Jennifer Lewis, Shannon Begay, Tyrell Natewa, Caleb Bia, Danny Bremer-Bennett, Tyra West, Destiny Laughlin, Tanya Watchman, and Taylor Begay.

Caleb Bia was also named Player of the Year for boys' soccer.

—Tracey Yan and Shashi DeHaan

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Cupcake Wars Raise Money for Mental Health

Students at Unity Christian High School in Hudsonville, Mich., baked 4,200 cupcakes to raise awareness of mental health and teen suicide.

Unity's Cupcake Wars raised \$4,000 for the Mental Health Foundation of West Michigan.

The campaign grew out of adversity after a Unity student took her own life earlier last fall.

Student organizer Nana Temple said she now thinks about what she's going to say before speaking.

"You might not think what you say has that much input on someone, but it's that one word that can make or break someone's day," Temple said.

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—Greg Chandler



Unity Christian High's Cupcake Wars raised \$4,000 for suicide awareness.