

The Gift of the Hobbit

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At a retreat I attended last Advent, I learned about the Hobbit tradition of gift giving. Not being a J. R. R. Tolkien *Lord of the Rings* connoisseur, I knew little about fictional Hobbit human-like characters who allegedly dwell deep in the earth. Hobbit gift giving works like this: new gifts are given to new friends. However, for people who are really significant, a Hobbit gives something personal, something the Hobbit treasures. By giving this treasured possession, we are telling the recipient she is important to us.



So this year, I am rounding up a few of my favorite things to give to a few of my favorite people. Deciding which item to give to each person is part of the gift-giving process. With each gift I'll include a note about why the object has been important to me and why I have chosen that person to receive it.

The purpose of the biblical jubilee is to rebalance the economic scales and restore peace. Those who have accumulated much over the years are to shed some of their abundance. Those who have steadily been losing ground get some relief from their struggles. Debts are forgiven. Relational fences are mended. Excesses are redistributed. Peace is restored. The whole community

benefits.

Hobbit giving is one way to participate in the jubilee celebration. It is an occasion to share a story about a place or person connected to the item. It is an opportunity to remind people how important they are to us. It helps us keep our growing collection of possessions from possessing us. Gift giving the Hobbit way means giving something of ourselves to those who have played a part in making us who we are by blessing us with their own gifts.

In this season of Advent, a Hobbit gift also reminds us of others who have shared their gifts. We recall the Magi who brought treasures to the newborn Christ child, the angels who filled the heavens with their praise, and the shepherds who spread the good news of the Messiah's birth. We remember, too, our God—who chose us, who treasures us, who gave us the greatest gift of all.

Kathryn Haueisen is a pastor in the ELCA, guiding congregations through campaigns to accomplish big goals. She has been writing since her college days. Kathryn also enjoys traveling, gardening and trying to get ahead of the technology learning curve.