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A Visit to The Kilns: A Formative Experience for Two Christian Teacher Educators

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Abstract

The C.S. Lewis Study Centre at the Kilns is located near Oxford, England in the previous home of C.S. Lewis, the highly influential 20th century Christian intellectual and apologist. Two professors, who coupled a brief stay at the Kilns with an inquiry into the life of Lewis and his writings, present insights into their work as teacher educators. Three main areas are explored. The first area is the nature of our work, including a discussion of the distinct roles associated with Christian teacher educators and the importance of professional community. Next is a discussion on the quality of our work, including insights into the themes of excellence and authentic learning. The third area is what we bring to our work and includes a consideration of integrity and faithfulness. The essay closes with insights from Lewis' concept of a supposal.

Introduction

A visit to The Kilns brought an opportunity to couple a unique experience and scholarly inquiry in ways that have created new and renewed understandings about life and work. The writings of C.S. Lewis, both fiction and nonfiction, have long captured our imaginations and have helped us to reflect upon the spiritual dimensions of our personal and professional lives. Through a Scholars-in-Residence program, an invitation was extended for us to visit C.S. Lewis' home, The Kilns, near Oxford, England. From the beginning of this journey, our focus has been on how the life and writings of C.S. Lewis might inform us, as Christian professors, in two specific areas. We, first, wondered how we might strengthen the integration of scholarly work and practice with our spiritual lives. Second, we wondered how the life and work of Lewis might inform how we facilitate the development of emergent teachers in our higher education community. Other related questions came to mind throughout the experience. Following a brief description of the setting where Lewis lived and worked for more than thirty years, we will share several insights into how our brief visit is helping us to explore these questions and is shaping us as professional teacher educators at a small, northwest Christian university.

The Kilns

In the biography entitled, *Jack*, Sayer (1994) explains how Clive Staples "Jack"

Lewis and his brother, Warren, affectionately known as Warnie, came to live in The Kilns. The brothers used a portion of the money that they inherited from their father's estate to help Mrs. Janie King Moore purchase the house. Jack and Warnie lived in The Kilns with Mrs. Moore and her daughter, Maureen. The Kilns is located in Headington Quarry, just three miles from the center of Oxford. Sayer describes the house as "lovely and secluded" (1994, p. 234). Half of the property was wooded and the rest was level ground that included a garden, orchard, tennis court, and house.

Also on the property was a large pond that Lewis swam in almost every day. At one time, the pond was a pit from which clay was excavated and used for brick making, and photos in the home show the two large kilns that once stood near the house. While the kilns were no longer in use when it became Lewis' home, the property became known as The Kilns (Sayer, 1994).

During the opening tea of our visit, the Warden, Dr. Debbie Higgins, explained that the house had been sold to a private individual and later reclaimed by the C.S. Lewis Foundation. The Foundation, over the course of many years, has restored the house to the state it was in when occupied by Lewis. The C.S. Lewis Foundation seeks to honor the memory of Lewis by encouraging its continued use as a quiet place of study, fellowship, and creative scholarly work, much in the manner that characterized Lewis' own period of residency.

Our brief stay at The Kilns, including our preparation for the trip, our visit, and the reflection that followed, has influenced our vision for our work. What follows is an account of how this journey has impacted our understanding of the life and work of C.S. Lewis, particularly in those areas from which we draw insights and implications for our work as Christian teacher educators.

We begin with insights into the nature of our work. This will include a discussion of our distinct roles and of the importance of our professional community. Next we will discuss the quality of our work, including thinking about the themes of excellence and authentic learning. The third area of insight is what we bring to our work. Here we will consider the dispositions of integrity and faithfulness. We will close our discussion of insights from our visit to The Kilns with a supposal.

The Nature of our Work

Our brief residency at The Kilns resulted in insight into the nature of our work as Christian teacher educators. We were challenged to consider both the distinct roles that make up our work and the role of community in our scholarly pursuits.

Distinct Roles in our Work

The conversations we enjoyed with the Warden were among the highlights of our stay. As Dr. Higgins shared with us about The Kilns and its various residents, she made connections to her research into medieval community in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1967). She also referred to her work involving a thoughtful look at the

three distinct categories of Lewis' writings. These distinct approaches are a theme in McGrath's (2013) recent biography. He discusses Lewis as a writer of children's fiction, as an apologist, and as a scholar.

As we perused the well-stocked bookshelves in The Kilns, we took note of how the works by Lewis could be categorized into these three literary forms. We considered how these literary approaches (scholarship, apologetics, and fiction) might be viewed as representative of three distinct roles pursued by Lewis, including his professional studies, (academic scholarship), his ministry (Christian apologetics), and his personal passion (author of children's fiction). We have found it meaningful to note that this author, over the course of his life, gave effective attention to each distinctive role and that these roles are interrelated.

Biographers (McGrath, 2013; Sayer, 1994) give account, for example, of C.S. Lewis' academic positions at both Oxford University (Magdalen College, 1925-1954) and Cambridge University (also Magdalen College, 1954-1963). As an academic professional, Lewis had considerable pressure to meet Oxford University expectations for scholarship (McGrath, 2013). Lewis eventually held the chair of Medieval and Renaissance English Literature at Cambridge. McGrath (2013) asserts that his preface to Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1941) and his book, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1964), are still considered some of the best academic work in this area. It is likely, however, that some readers have been unaware of Lewis' scholarly expertise in early literature, while having knowledge of his work in the areas of apologetics (i.e. *Mere Christianity*, 1952; *The Screwtape Letters*, 1942), and as a writer of children's books (i.e. *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 1950b). Such was the case with the authors of this article before we began to prepare for our visit to The Kilns.

The connection between each of these roles is evident throughout McGrath's (2013) recent biography. It is observed when, in midst of World War II, Lewis was identified as being one who might go on the radio as a voice for religious thought during uncertain times. Lewis liked the idea, but insisted that he be allowed to finish the courses he was currently teaching in medieval literature before beginning this new project. The connections are seen when this series of radio talks eventually became his well know apologetic work, *Mere Christianity* (1952). McGrath (2013) asserts that these roles eventually led to the Narnia novels, which have clear connections both to Lewis' efforts as an apologist and to his interests in medieval life.

As academic professionals, it is worth considering the various roles to which we identify (i.e. scholars, ministers, authors), and to be careful not to neglect any of these areas of a rich life. What a loss it would have been, for example, if the writing of *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) or *The Chronicles Narnia* (1950a) had been trumped by pressure to succeed as an academic. We might learn from Lewis that giving attention to each role facilitates success in each role. Finding integrity

among our roles and thinking about how they are connected is key. Engagement in one role might move us forward in another. It is also interesting to consider how God might highlight one of our roles for kingdom purposes, but that the other roles can support that work and help to give it momentum. As we have seen, this process is evident in Lewis' life.

We continue to wrestle with how we might balance the various roles that make up our professional life and how they might be integrated so that each effectively supports the other. We hope to grow in our awareness of how God is using each role for Kingdom purposes.

Scholarly Pursuits Happen Best in Community

One afternoon in Oxford, we found opportunity to lunch at a local pub called "The Eagle and Child." One of the rafters has a quote burned in large letters: "My happiest hours are spent with 3 or 4 old friends in old clothes tramping together and putting up in small pubs" (Lewis). We pondered the impact of community on Lewis, and how it might inform our work in teacher education and in the scholarly community in which we work.

Sayer (1994) says that Lewis, known as "Jack," delighted in his Thursday evening meetings with a group of colleagues he called the *Inklings*. J.R.R. Tolkien was a prominent member of the group. "There were no rules, no officers, and certainly no agenda" (Sayer, 1994, p. 249). The group met weekly, many times at local pubs, such as The Eagle and Child, or in a study room, to read their poetry and writings and receive critical feedback from their peers. Sayer says that drinks would be distributed, smokers would light their pipes, and Jack would say, "Well, has nobody got anything to read to us?" (p. 252). Some of Lewis' works received feedback from specific individuals that Jack sought out or from the *Inklings* group. Jack's brother, Warren, notes that during the meetings in 1946, Tolkien's manuscripts leading to the Lord of the Rings were read by the *Inklings* (Sayer, 1994). This was not a mutual admiration society. J.R.R. Tolkien was known for "correcting everyone's mistakes" (Sayer, 1994, p. 249). "Praise for good work was unstinted but censure for bad, or even not so good, was often brutally frank. To read could be a formidable ordeal" (Sayer, 1994, p. 252). Sayer's account of the *Inklings* indicates that this group also provided personal support for one another and that they wrestled with issues of life together, as well as, on occasion, just having fun.

As we have spent time reflecting on the work of the *Inklings*, we are struck by the group's ability to speak critically of each other's work in an effort to advance quality. Colleagues can often be fearful of offending one another and many times sugar coat feedback. While compassion and sensitivity is generally at the root of this action, perhaps it is the dimension of friendship that we see in the *Inklings* relationships that allowed them to be critical of one another professionally. That type of professional friendship takes time. A level of respect

and trust must be fostered for us to be able to risk sharing our work and to be open to criticism.

Our higher education system, in many ways, encourages scholars and teachers to work in isolation. Palmer (2007) says that ours is a "...profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract" (p. 12). It is easy to be absorbed in our own projects as we work our way through the tenure system.

Our experiences at The Kilns, however, have convinced us that scholarly pursuits happen best in community. We are challenged to consider how we might be purposeful about creating and engaging in scholarly community in our twenty-first century setting. While digital collaboration is one way of working together with colleagues, we have come to believe that, to capture some of the benefits we see in Lewis' life, we need to be disciplined and committed enough to community to carve out the time to be in each other's presence. This often goes against the culture in which we work. We believe, however, that the potential benefits of this type of engagement would far outweigh the sacrifice.

The Quality of our Work

Our visit to the Kilns inspired insight into the quality of our work as Christian teacher educators. The planning, engagement, and reflection of our trip gave us personal insights into the power of authentic learning experiences. We were struck by the manner in which this exceptional event was empowering us to absorb, understand, and apply facts and ideas that were new to us. We developed new notions of how carefully designed authentic learning experiences may strengthen emergent teacher development. Our experience also resulted in a renewed vision for doing excellent work.

These outcomes spoke into some current wonderings about how we might improve academic programs in a time when energy and resources at our university were being increasingly steered toward financial sustainability and student recruitment. What fresh approach might we bring to teacher development, and, from what deep well would we draw motivation to make meaningful change?

As we tie these questions of quality in our work to our trip to Oxford, we begin by articulating some of the encountered calls and challenges to excellence, and how our trip to The Kilns brought motivation to overcome those challenges. We then explore the power we discovered in this authentic learning experience and how this might strengthen our work in teacher preparation.

C.S. Lewis and Excellence

In preparation for our visit to C.S. Lewis' former home, we became familiar with some of the Lewis focused organizations. The C.S. Lewis Foundation, for example, owns and maintains the Study Centre at The Kilns. It is through the leadership of this organization that the home has been restored and furnished. Another such

community is the C.S. Lewis Institute. This group produces a devotional newsletter each month called *Reflections*.

For us, the August 2013 issue of *Reflections* was particularly meaningful. Its content spoke into some perplexing notions with which we had been grappling. In their book, *Academically Adrift*, Arum and Roksa (2011) question whether the higher education community is helping undergraduate students develop the capacity for critical thinking and complex reasoning. They are among the voices that advocate for improving the quality of academic programs. At the same time, policymakers and parents have increasingly questioned the value of a college degree in its present form (Christensen, 2011). University administration, given tough economic times and pressures from Washington to address the high cost of higher education, have asked academics to compress and streamline curriculum and have reduced their academic budgets, which often times has translated into the loss of full-time faculty. As financial concerns rise, we have heard it suggested that when it comes to teaching and learning, good is good enough, and that aspirations to strive for excellence, while perhaps admirable, may be financially unsustainable. As we were wrestling with these challenging ideas, the above mentioned issue of *Reflections* arrived in the mail.

The devotional piece had an extended quote from an address by C.S. Lewis entitled, *Christian Apologetics* (Reflections, 2013). Lewis proclaims that, when it comes to helping others to know and have faith in Jesus, quality in our academic work matters. Lewis asserts that, instead of writing more books about Christianity, there would be more influence for Christ if in other subjects, such as the sciences, “the best work on the market was always by a Christian” (Reflections, 2013). Lewis contends that one way to promote Christian faith is for Christian scholars to do good work in their field (; Lewis, 1945; Reflections, 2013, p. 1).

Our brief immersion into the life and works of C.S. Lewis has provided us with insight into the significance of work that has merit and is of distinction. It is our desire that through our commitment to growing as models of quality, integrity, and passion in our teaching, scholarship, and service, we are also growing in our witness to the truth and love of God.

In spite of the complexities and mixed messages that are common in the current higher educational climate, we have come to believe that one might sustain a commitment to excellence by continuing to seek and be inspired by models of scholarly excellence, such as C.S. Lewis, and particularly those exemplars from within the Christian community. Additionally, we are compelled to do our best work and to continue to be called to excellence when we remember for whom we are working. Paul writes, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.... It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23-24, NIV).

Authentic Learning Experiences

As we reflect on the season of growth prompted by our visit to Oxford, we have frequently labeled the trip as an authentic learning experience. By this, we mean that our short stay at The Kilns was a way of moving beyond the books and discovering the life and work of C.S. Lewis in a uniquely genuine way.

As we looked more deeply, we were surprised to find that the meaning of the phrase authentic learning experience is not as easily defined as we had expected. We learned that authentic learning tends to be a broad idea that is not necessarily tied to a specific instructional model. Rule (2006), the editor of the *Journal of Authentic Learning*, says that the questions most frequently asked of her are, “What do you mean by authentic learning?” and “What are its components?” (p. 1). Rule’s qualitative analysis of 45 refereed journal articles, which focused on authentic learning from a variety of content areas, uncovered four common themes that help to the answer to these questions. The themes are: 1) authentic learning involves problems rooted in the real world; 2) authentic learning through inquiry and thinking skills; 3) learning occurs through discourse among a community of learners; and 4) learners are empowered through authentic learning (Rule, 2006). Each of Rule’s four themes can be illustrated by our experience in Oxford and at The Kilns.

Rule’s (2006) first theme, that authentic learning involves problems rooted in the real world, suggests that “an audience beyond the classroom changes the problem from an ‘exercise’ to something more important, allowing students to become emotional stakeholders in the problem” (p. 2). As teacher educators at a Christ-centered university, the integration of our faith with our work is a priority. Lewis represents, for us, a scholar in higher education who was exceptional at faith integration. Before we embarked on our pilgrimage to The Kilns, many of our colleagues expressed a high level of curiosity and interest, and sometimes a friendly enviousness, about our upcoming adventure. It was clear that we would have an interested audience when we returned to campus. There was something about this reality that, indeed, made the work seem more important. We, without a doubt, found ourselves more emotionally involved and it is reasonable to conclude that this led to greater focus and interest in our topic of study.

Rule’s (2006) theme number two is authentic learning through inquiry and thinking skills. The inquiry process began for us when we started to dream about an experience in residence at the Kilns. When our application was approved, our motivation to learn all we could about C.S. Lewis skyrocketed. We began to lay the groundwork for our visit by expanding our understanding of Lewis’ writings and spending significant time in some of his primary works. Some of these we were revisiting, such as *The Screwtape Letters* (1942), while others we read for the first time, such as the papers collected by Walter Hooper (2003) in *Christian Reflections*. We read different biographical accounts of his life and we found that, while there was much that aligned in those sources, there were also things that differed. Inconsistencies that we found caused us to dig deeper and we went to

Oxford with unanswered questions.

We wondered, for example, “Was Lewis’ relationship with Joy Davidson a positive or negative event in his life?” We certainly came across differing takes on this question before the trip and we found ourselves heightened to the new information and attitudes regarding Lewis’ marriage that were presented to us during our stay at The Kilns.

While our brief immersion into all things Lewis does not make us Lewis scholars, it has deeply enriched our thinking around the integration of faith and scholarship and it was significant in making our visit to the Kilns both delightful and transformative.

Theme number three says that authentic learning occurs through discourse among a community of learners (Rule, 2006). Rule refers to the socio-cultural perspective that language and social discourse help us make sense of the world. While much of our pre-trip homework was done in collaboration, going to the C.S. Lewis Study Centre at the Kilns brought our inquiry into a space of greater scholarly community. We arrived at a time and place where we naturally engaged with other scholars who were thoroughly informed on the subject of C.S. Lewis. The scholars at The Kilns gathered around common interests. They seemed genuinely pleased to have new friends in the house with which to explore these interests, and they provided us with rich conversation that have become part of our growing understandings about Lewis, his life and his works.

Rule’s (2006) theme number four states that learners are empowered through authentic learning. In this context, to be empowered means that one has a substantial amount of choice when it comes to various aspects of the learning experience. Learners, for example, may have opportunity to define a problem to be solved and to determine the path to its solution. They may be given the freedom for personal interpretations, self-assessment, or a choice of audience. These opportunities for choice are more likely to appear when learning takes place outside of highly controlled arenas in contexts that are open-ended and real-world. Rule asserts authentic learning experiences are motivating because they are, by nature, learner-centered. Advocates believe that learners benefit from authentic experiences in that they help students develop skills of inquiry and wrestle with solving problems that have no routine solutions, grow higher order and meta-cognitive thinking skills and foster the development of complex communication skills (Lombardi, 2007; Rule, 2006).

While our experience surrounding our visit to The Kilns has been thoroughly learner-centered, we offer two particular instances, Addison’s walk and a play at Holy Trinity Church, that highlight the personal nature of the trip and how our ability to choose had an impact on our learning. We begin with Addison’s walk.

Prior to our visit, we read about how Addison’s walk, near the grounds of Magdalene College in Oxford, played a role in Lewis’ faith development. On

September 17, 1931, Jack Lewis, Hugo Dyson, and J.R.R. Tolkien followed their dinner with a stroll along Addison's walk. Their walk lasted until the early morning hours. The friends at first delved into a discussion of metaphor and myth, but as the evening progressed they moved to a deep discussion about Christianity. Dyson and Tolkien helped Lewis see how the Christian narrative could be conceived as a true myth. Lewis' indicates that these discussions and new ways of thinking were pivotal in the growth of his faith (Lewis, 2004; McGrath, 2013; Sayer, 1994).

On September 17, 2013, some 82 years later, we had the opportunity personally to look out on Addison's walk, imagining Dyson, Tolkien, and Lewis strolling along, beneath the falling leaves, lost in deep discussion. There was no fanfare; not a shred of evidence that anyone but us was aware of the day's significance, but this hands-on experience coupled with revisiting their conversations and reflecting on its meaning, on the anniversary of the event, felt significant and consequential to at least two teacher educators who had an opportunity to choose to be there.

On the evening before this event, we had an opportunity that we had not pre-planned; seeing a play at Holy Trinity Church. The church was Jack and Warnie's home parish; it is a short walk from The Kilns. The play provided us the opportunity to help construct bridges between the events in Lewis' life and the spiritual messages in his fictional works. It was a highlight of our experience because the context, the content, and our previous knowledge all came together to create a rich learning opportunity. This would not have happened if we had not felt the freedom choose to engage in a last minute opportunity. Our ability to choose empowered us to learn and grow.

Empowered is a word that appropriately describes our experience of learning before, during, and after our visit to The Kilns. While challenging, it has not been overwhelming. While difficult, it has not been a burden. While sometimes tiring, it has not been tiresome. It is clear to us that one reason for this remarkable season of learning has been our ability to choose our own path and the freedom to deviate from that path if we choose.

Implications

The importance of learning to become a teacher through authentic experiences (i.e. practica, student teaching) is at the heart of most teacher preparation programs. The above reflections around authentic learning, as they apply to us as teacher educators, have led us to wonder if the authentic experiences associated with clinical practice have become so routine that we may fail to take full advantage of their power. Our recent experience with authentic learning has led us to consider how attention to the following might strengthen clinical practice:

1. Find opportunities to remind candidates that they will be impacting children, families and the community of teachers in the school in which they will be placed. Highlighting this greater audience may have the effect of increasing the emotional investment that candidates have in their own

growth as teachers.

2. If possible, capitalize on the moment when candidates learn where they will be placed. Design activities that engage candidates around the inquiry, “What can I learn now that will prepare me for this clinical practice experience?” The authentic nature of the inquiry may lead to deeper learning.
3. Design and scaffold teaching communities that include rich dialog and exploration of future and present practicum experiences. There is power in discourse among a community of learners.
4. Provide candidates, when possible, with choice in their clinical practice in areas such as grade level, context, and content. Though much in our current curriculum is standardized, and may even be scripted, empower candidates by emphasizing that artful teacher decision-making is essential.

Our visit to the Kilns has inspired us to think more deeply about our roles as learning designers. We want to take full advantage of the power of authentic experiences on behalf of our teacher candidates and the learners in their classrooms.

What we Bring to our Work

This project encourages us to explore two dispositions that we hope to bring to our work: integrity and faithfulness. During this period of focus on the most prominent resident of The Kilns, we became aware of ways in which Lewis’ life aligns with some of the events and ideas in his writings. We have, thus, explored the notion of integrity; the bringing together of who we are and what we do. We have also been impacted by the extraordinary commitment that Lewis demonstrated to the key people in his life. We will follow our discussion of integrity by considering how growth in our faithfulness to others might impact our work.

Integrity

Lewis’ life shows up in his work, as was demonstrated in the play, *Through the Wardrobe Door*, that we saw presented at Holy Trinity Church in Headington Quarry on September 18, 2013. The script of the play was taken almost entirely from the writings of C.S. Lewis. The playwright, Susie Stead, discovered key moments in Lewis’ life that seem to surface in deeply poignant ways through stories in the *Narniatales*. The play weaves these excerpts into the telling of his life story.

As we reflected on the play’s big picture view of Lewis’ life, coupled with our in-depth reading of the Sayer (1994) and McGrath (2013) biographies, we were struck by how who Lewis’ was is so strongly reflected in his professional work. This revelation caused us to explore a connection we were seeing between Palmer’s (2007) writings in *The Courage to Teach* and the reality of Lewis’ work as a teacher and scholar. Palmer says, “We teach who we are” (p. 2). He says that as we

teach, we project the condition of our souls onto our students, content, and our way of being together. In Lewis' fictional works, we believe that the condition of his soul is revealed through the story.

In *The Horse and His Boy* (Lewis, 1954), for example, the character, Aravis, is wounded by a lion. Late in the story, Aslan reveals that he was the lion whose claws tore her back. He explains,

“Do you know why I tore you?”

“No sir.”

“The scratches on your back, tear for tear, throb for throb, blood for blood, were equal to the stripes laid on the back of your stepmother's slave because of the drugged sleep you cast upon her. You needed to know what it felt like.”
(p. 201)

This fictional account may reveal something deep in Lewis' beliefs about trials. The implications are that God sometimes allows trials so that we might better understand the impact our actions have on other people. Perhaps, also, that we might be more empathetic toward the trials experienced by others. This reveals an attitude toward life's difficulties; they may have purpose and meaning, and they may have been God ordained.

Our experiences at Holy Trinity Church and reconnection with Palmer have been significant for us as we revisit our commitment to teach at a Christ-centered university. Intentionality about the kind of life that we live to honor God is at the heart of the integration of our faith with our teaching and scholarship. As we cannot separate who we are from our classroom, it is important for us to be purposeful about living a life that honors Christ. We need to be courageous enough, as Palmer (2007) would say, to hold a mirror to our soul and take stock of the condition of our souls knowing that we will project that condition onto our students. Classrooms in which care and respect for others is evident, and that are rich in the fruits of the Spirit, are the result of daily lives that demonstrate care and respect for others and are committed to growth in the fruits of the Spirit. A life that brings glory to God will lead to teaching that brings glory to God.

Faithfulness

Most of the rooms in The Kilns have a plaque on the wall which identifies the space in some manner. Examples include: “The Common Room”, “C.S. Lewis' Study”, and “C.S. Lewis' Bedroom.” During our stay at The Kilns we were assigned to “Maureen Moore's Room.” Our introduction to Maureen will begin with her brother, Edward “Paddy” Moore.

After enlisting in the British Army during World War I, Lewis and Paddy Moore were roommates while in officer's training at Keble College, Oxford. The story is told that the two friends made a pact: if one of them were killed in battle, the survivor would care for the other's family (; McGrath, 2013; Pearce, 2010). Shortly

afterward, both went to France, Lewis reaching the front line in the Somme Valley on his 19th birthday. Though wounded, Lewis survived the ordeal and returned to Oxford. Paddy Moore, however, was killed in battle and was buried in France. Faithful to his word, Lewis embraced Paddy's mother, Mrs. Janie King Moore, and Paddy's sister, Maureen, as his own family. He moved in with his new family and found ways to provide financial support beginning in 1921. Additionally, when Lewis' brother, Warnie, was released from the army, Lewis asked him to come to Oxford to live with him and the Moores. Eventually, they combined resources to purchase The Kilns and it became their home.

The account that follows is shared by Walter Hooper, as told by Mary C. Pearce in 2010 while she was Warden at The Kilns.

Maureen lived at The Kilns with Jack, his brother Warnie, her mother Mrs. Moore, and a small host of help until she was married. Shortly before Jack's death, through an intricate and almost bizarre series of events, Maureen inherited a castle on the very northern shores of Scotland along with the title of Lady Dunbar, Baronet. When Jack was in the hospital, Maureen came to visit him. Walter Hooper met her at the door and warned her that he hadn't been recognizing anyone and to not be upset if he couldn't remember her. Maureen walked into his hospital room and put her hand into his. "Jack?" she said. "It's Maureen." Jack looked at her and said, "No it isn't. It's Lady Dunbar." Maureen was astonished. "Jack! How could you remember that!" And Jack replied "On the contrary. How could I forget a fairy tale?" (Pearce, 2010)

This is but one example of the faithfulness that Lewis demonstrates to the people in his life. While these relationships sometimes involved conflict and difficulty, we see an extraordinary, almost obligatory, steadfastness to those to which Lewis chose to call his friends and family. Lewis' commitment to the Moores, his brother Warnie, to friends like Arthur Greeves, Charles Williams, and others in the *Inklings*, has provided insight into the importance of faithfulness to others.

Our study of Lewis' life and our visit to the Kilns has caused us to reflect on the idea that we are called to be faithful, not just to God, but to the friends, coworkers, and students he has placed in our lives. Seeing our relationships as sacred appointments helps us to integrate our commitment to doing God's work with the responsibilities we have to others. We are called to be faithful, not just to God, but to people. Lewis' life reminds us that our faithfulness to others may be one of the places where our faithfulness to God is most clearly revealed.

Our stay at The Kilns has shaped our vision for the nature of our work as teacher educators. It has also shaped the way we think about quality in our work and it has provided insight into two of the dispositions that we want to bring to our work: integrity and faithfulness. We suspect that there will be other insights from our time in Oxford, that will be revealed when the time is right and when the Spirit

chooses.

As we conclude this reflection on our visit to The Kilns, we will consider one additional insight that, for us, supports our desire for our work to be consistent with our commitment to live as disciples of Jesus. We close by considering the power of the supposal.

Narnia as a Supposal

Lewis' (1950a) *Chronicles of Narnia* features strongly in The Kilns. Several editions of the children's books are placed here and there in the shelves, along with multiple books that discuss or were inspired by the Narnian stories. A large map of Narnia and a small sculpture of Aslan are central features in the Common Room. The children's books came up several times in discussions and during our formal tour of the home.

In a letter to J.E. Higgins, Lewis (1966) points his readers to a literary tool he calls a supposal. He writes, "Suppose there were a Narnian world and it, like ours, needed redemption. What kind of incarnation and passion might Christ be supposed to undergo there" (p. 1)? When Lewis imagined what it would look like if the Messiah stepped into a world where talking animals and humans lived side by side; he envisioned his coming as a powerful lion.

Willard (1997) provides a lens on discipleship when he asks us to consider ourselves as apprentices to Jesus Christ. We might further illuminate this approach to discipleship by applying Lewis' concept of a supposal. Suppose Jesus came and stepped into our place as a professor of teacher education. What might that look like, sound like, and what might he be thinking? In what ways might he bring his grace to our corner of the world? We have found this to be a robust way to thoughtfully consider what discipleship may mean to our particular lives.

We have prominent memories of the evening we walked from The Kilns to the parish in Headington Quarry to watch the play, *Through the Wardrobe Door*. As previously noted, the playwright creatively aligned facts and events from Lewis' life with parallel elements from *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950a). As the arts often do, the presentation opened a window into new ways of thinking that reached deeply into our souls. Following the play, walking from parish to pub, we discussed how powerfully we had been impacted by our immersion into Clive Staples Lewis. Stepping briefly into his life in such a concrete manner had quickly and substantially shaped our understanding of his life, his writings, and his influence.

A recent headline in the *Huffington Post* read, "C.S. Lewis Still Inspires 50 Years After His Death" (Bailey, 2013). We are living the truth of this declaration. The life of C. S. Lewis and our visit to The Kilns is shaping what we bring to our work and the nature and quality of our work as teacher educators, in meaningful ways.

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