



BLACK MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

Four Influences on Lewis and Tolkien's Storytelling

five-week series with Dr. Corrie Greene

Wednesday nights, 6:00-7:00 p.m. in CR1

JAN 10: Friendship When CS Lewis met JRR Tolkien for the first time in 1926 he concluded in his diary: “No harm in him [Tolkien]: only needs a smack or two.” From that first meeting sprang a friendship lasting from 1926 to Lewis’s death in 1963. The two form the Inklings, whom Tolkien described as an “undetermined and unelected circle of friends,” reading their latest efforts aloud, opening themselves up to the critique and criticisms of one another. Rather than examine the men present in the Inklings, we will examine the impact of collegial and friendly criticism on thought and world-view, and how actively engaging this kind of vulnerability nourishes unifying growth.

JAN 17: War Winston Churchill, looking back at his time of service during World War One, described its effect on humanity as injurious “to the structure of human society which a century will not efface, and which may conceivably prove fatal to the present civilization.” As soldiers in World War One and active civilian participants in the home-front war efforts of World War Two, Lewis and Tolkien strove, through their story-telling, to find a solution to the injuries wrought to humankind by the machine of war. Together we will investigate the influence two world wars held on these authors along with the messages of hope, unity, and peace pervading their stories.

JAN 24: Women Their writing of female characters derided as “cod-Wagnerian pomposity . . . boys-own-adventure . . . small-minded . . .” and “ghastly, priggish, half-witted . . . mean-minded . . . muscular misogyny . . .” both CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien face accusations of representing women as inferior to men (and believing the same, personally). Tonight, we will “poke the bear” of gender equality, examining a few of the female characters in the LotR series and the Narnia series alongside the influential women in Lewis and Tolkien’s personal lives: Poet Ruth Pitter; Poet/Editor/Journalist Joy Davidman; Theologian and Mystery Writer Dorothy L. Sayers; Philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe and more.

JAN 31: Beer, Scarcity, and Sehnsuct Meeting at least weekly to enjoy beers and banter, Lewis and Tolkien experienced a growing reality of scarcity during and after the end of World War Two. Pivotal in their understanding of Christianity as well as their individual narration of mythologies and middle-earth is the concept of sehnsuct, or “inconsolable longing . . . desire for our own far-off country . . . for something that has never actually appeared in our experience . . .” For our last structured session, we will tangle with how scarcity – making a previously taken for granted resource finite – causes us to hold tightly to those things we value, while at the same time opening our grasp to the unknown.

FEB 7: “You are quite a little fellow in a wide world after all!” With The Hobbit’s parting line reminding us of all we know and all we do not yet understand, we will spend this session discussing some of the questions that may have come to us during previous evenings together . . . or maybe they came to us out of the blue as we went about our daily lives. Designed as an open forum, where collegial conversation and inquiry creates knowledge, we can step into the Lenten season knowing we are “beginning Chapter One of the Great Story . . . in which every chapter is better than the one before” (final line of Lewis’s Narnia series).