

“The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express that same delight in God which made David dance.” – C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*

To our 2021 C.S. Lewis Retreat Registrants:

Dear Friend,

We know that attending an event in-person is a more complicated decision today than it has been in the past. Hosting an event is too. When we first planned the 2021 C.S. Lewis Retreat, we were under one set of pandemic-related conditions in spring 2021. When we opened the event for registration in June, we were under a different set of conditions. Our early bird registration deadline communications in late August were under another set. And this email today reflects yet another chapter in this ongoing situation.

Through all this, we’ve been blessed by your prayers, your understanding, and your generosity. I can’t ever fully express how much this means to us as a team and to me personally.

Our community, like our namesake, values faith, learning, fellowship, and hospitality. We value the “mere Christianity” that Lewis outlined in his lectures of the same title, which tells of one house with many rooms, of a commonality in the hallway before leading to a variety of doors to specific denominational and worship concerns. We are a community that is orthodox in its faith but varied in its expressions of that faith. Our community involves different generations, denominations, personal talents, and individual backgrounds. This integration in the body of Christ, inspired by Lewis’s example, is a joy to us all.

Thank you for being part of our community of faith, reason, and imagination in the company of friends!

Given the great care we have for this community in all its variety and the regularly shifting pandemic conditions, we’ve purposefully waited until now to make a final decision on how the retreat at Camp Allen will be run regarding COVID-19 protocols. We’ve prayed, deliberated, and held extensive discussions with Camp Allen. We have come up with the following plan:

- We will hold the event with a baseline of Camp Allen’s requirements. We value the wisdom of Camp Allen’s leaders as they are the ones regularly knowledgeable about how things are in the world of conference planning in their city. [Please download a pdf of their current precautions here.](#) They include Camp Allen staff wearing masks, encouraging groups to wear masks and be aware of distancing, and extra cleaning protocols.

- We will not “police” or require proof of vaccination or test results. We trust that members of our community will take appropriate steps to show love for one another by safeguarding each other’s health and helping one another to feel welcomed and cared for, even where our convictions may differ.
- *For the sake of those members of our community who cannot be vaccinated or are otherwise at risk:* If you are not fully vaccinated, we ask that you make responsible decisions regarding the event, overall, but especially if you are experiencing symptoms of illness. Many of us will be individually getting tested for COVID within 3 days before the Retreat begins. If you are experiencing symptoms of illness or test positive for COVID, rather than risk spreading COVID to other attendees, or through them to those they may interact with later, we are happy to convert your in-person registration to an online ticket. *(Again, these are our policies for your event tuition; there is a 25% cancellation fee for room/board at Camp Allen).*
- Beyond Camp Allen’s baseline, we are adding the following accommodations:
  - We are capping in-person registration to 120 registrants maximum.
  - We will designate a separate seating section in the larger meeting rooms for those who would wish to extend distancing and to wear masks in that specific section. **Do note:** one breakout room during each set of breakouts will also be in the larger meeting room. Other breakout rooms will be smaller.
  - For those who have respiratory issues that make mask wearing difficult, you will have the option of wearing an orange sticker on your name badge to designate this to others.
  - **We are announcing this week that we will be also streaming the event live.** While some activities and sessions will be available only to those attending in-person, *all in-person and online streaming registrants will have access to videos of the main 9 sessions\* for 3 months after the event.* As much as we would love to see everyone in-person, we would understand if you prefer to convert your in-person registration to online registration. **Important Note: this applies to the C.S. Lewis Foundation tuition for the event. If you’ve booked room/board at Camp Allen, they have their own cancellation policies, and you would need to cancel your lodging with them.** \*Note: we will be filming 4 of the ten breakout sessions.
  - Weather permitting, Camp Allen has outdoor areas to visit in for those who would like to do so.

Again, we thank you for your hospitality, generosity, and understanding. We are truly excited to see you at Camp Allen in just a few weeks.

If you have questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”  
(1 Corinthians 14:19)

Yours in Christ,

Steven S. Elmore  
President  
C.S. Lewis Foundation

P.S. Especially during these times, we ask that you please help us to promote the Retreat, either the in-person or live streaming version, to anyone you know who might be interested in attending.

P.P.S. As a nonprofit organization, we are always grateful for all of our volunteers, staff, sponsors, and attendees! We can't do it without you!

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#### **From 2019 Retreat attendee, Nicole Howe:**

*The C.S. Lewis Retreat had a profound impact on my heart, mind, and soul. As a first-time attendee, I was taken utterly by surprise from the moment I arrived to the moment I returned home. In true Lewis fashion, the entire experience would pierce my unsuspecting heart with stabs of joy that awakened my longing – a longing that was as satisfying as it was painful. From the deep friendships I made, to the intellectually stimulating workshops, to the poetry reading nights, to the slow lingering conversations in between sessions to the stunning dance of the Ad Deum Dance Company...it seemed every part of me was engaged and awakened. I laughed, I cried, I reflected, I celebrated, I mourned I discovered, I remembered. I was given the space and opportunity to feel it all, as the Holy Spirit breathed in and through each gathering. The C.S. Lewis Retreat is not just a conference, it's a community – a community brought together, not only by a shared love for Lewis, but by a shared love for the values he espoused. Truth, goodness, beauty, imagination, reason – these are the threads that weave through each of our stories and unite us together. I found myself looking around the room more than once, whispering under my breath, this is what the body of Christ is meant to feel like. It was a glimpse of heaven that made me ache for home, and I am forever changed by my surprising tangle with these wonderful people I now call my friends.*

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#### **A Further Question and Thought**

We have received a few questions this year about whether we should even plan *any* in-person event until such time as everything is fully in the clear. We've had much discussion since March 2020 about this. We have no perfect answer, and ultimately, we muddle through as faithfully we can while we trust in God's sovereignty and providence.

Events have long been at the heart of what we do at the Foundation. We believe that even the most wonderful online events cannot equal the spiritual, psychological, and personal growth that occurs through in-person meetings (though we do love the benefits of online events in reaching people who have obstacles to attend in-person).

Beyond that, we believe that each of us needs to decide on some level of risk in this world while at the same time avoiding becoming “a stumbling block in a brother’s way” (Romans 14:13). For an event of 120 people, this is no simple matter as any level of restriction can be interpreted as too risky or too much a stumbling block. Therefore, we thank you again for your understanding and prayers for us.

Looking to Lewis directly for guidance, we find he speaks in his essay, “Learning in Wartime,” about the importance of carrying on some level of learning and cultural activity during uncertain times. For us, this has been a timely help in our decision to host in-person events as conditions allow, and we hope that it may prove so for you as well:

“If men had postponed the search for knowledge and beauty until they were secure the search would never have begun... Even those periods which we think most tranquil, like the nineteenth century, turn out, on closer inspection, to be full of cries, alarms, difficulties, emergencies. Plausible reasons have never been lacking for putting off all merely cultural activities until some imminent danger has been averted or some crying injustice put right. But humanity long ago chose to neglect those plausible reasons. They wanted knowledge and beauty now, and would not wait for the suitable moment that never come. Periclean Athens leaves us not only the Parthenon but, significantly, the Funeral Oration. The insects have chosen a different line: they have sought first the material welfare and security of the hive, and presumably they have their reward. Men are different. They propound mathematical theorems in beleaguered cities, conduct metaphysical arguments in condemned cells, make jokes on scaffolds, discuss the last new poem while advancing to the walls of Quebec, and comb their hair at Thermopylae. This is not *panache*; it is our nature.” – C.S. Lewis, “Learning in Wartime” (1939).