

BRYN MAWR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

VIRTUAL ADULT EDUCATION READING LISTS

Five Books on the Bible

Vincent Wimbush, *The Bible and African Americans: A Brief History* (2003)

A short and accessible book on how African-Americans have used the Bible to survive oppression in the New World

Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (1987; reissued 2019)

A classic. A lay person's guide to traditional Old Testament source criticism.

Wilda Gafney, *Daughters of Miriam: Women Prophets in Ancient Israel* (2008)

See also her more recent (but more expensive) *Womanist Midrash*

E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (1996)

A level-headed exploration of Jesus' life and teachings within his context of first century Judaism

Paula Fredricksen, *When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation* (2019)

An intriguing exploration of what the earliest Christians may have been like before the influx of gentiles into the Church watered down its Jewishness

Recommendations from Dr. Joshua Yoder, Professor of New Testament

FIVE BOOKS ON SPIRITUALITY

Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* (1994)

A classic reflection on the parable from Luke's Gospel written from the perspective of each character.

David Seindler-Rast, *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer: An Approach to Life in Fullness* (1984)

An exploration of the relationship between prayer and that sense of gratefulness that comes with love, which is at the very center of what it means to be human.

James Marton, *Becoming Who You Are: Insights on the True Self, by Thomas Merton and other Saints* (2006)

Becoming who you are, and becoming the person that God created, is a simple path to happiness, peace of mind and even sanctity.

Ronald Rolheiser, *Prayer: Our Deepest Longing* (2013)

The author delves into the places that we fear to go with our issues about prayer, encouraging us with gentle kindness and words of hope and inspiration.

Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See* (2009)

Rohr explores methods for letting go of division and living in the present.

Recommendations by Patricia Danzon, Spiritual Director at the Middle Center

Five Novels with Religious Themes

Cara Wall, *The Dearly Beloved* (2019)

The story of two young Presbyterian ministers serving a historic congregation in New York City in the 1960s. A poignant meditation on faith and reason, marriage and children, and the ways we find meaning in our lives. **Recommended by Frank Pottorff**

Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West* (2018)

The story of two young refugees in a war torn and unnamed city, who seek a new life together in this magical exploration of home, family, faith and humanity. **Recommended by Rebecca Kirkpatrick**

William Kent Kruger, *Ordinary Grace* (2014)

The story of a young man, a small town, and murder in the summer of 1961. **Recommended by Frank Pottorff**

Dara Horn, *Eternal Life* (2018)

The intertwining story of two First Century Jewish scholars who make a vow to save their son's life which makes them immortal. **Recommended by Rachel Pedersen**

Gail Goodwin, *Evensong* (2000)

The story of an Episcopal priest in a small Smokey Mountain parish and how she leads the congregation through celebrations and grief. **Recommended by Rebecca Kirkpatrick**

FIVE BOOKS ON JUSTICE

Brian Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (2015)

A powerful true story about the potential for mercy to redeem us, and a clarion call to fix our broken system of justice—from one of the most brilliant and influential lawyers of our time. **Recommended by Brian Ballard**

Sarah Miles, *Take this Bread: A Radical Conversion* (2005)

A left-wing journalist who'd covered revolutions around the world, when Miles walked into a San Francis church, she didn't discover a religion that was about angels or good behavior or piety; her faith centered on real hunger, real food, and real bodies. **Recommended by Agnes Norfleet**

Gregory Boyle, *Tattoos of the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* (2010)

For twenty years, Gregory Boyle has run Homeboy Industries, a gang-intervention program located in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles, the gang capital of the world. **Recommended by Agnes Norfleet**

Nadine Burke Harris, *The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity* (2019) The research and stories shared in this highly engaging, provocative book prove beyond a reasonable doubt that millions of lives depend on us finally coming to terms with the long-term consequences of childhood adversity and toxic stress. **Recommended by Rebecca Kirkpatrick**

Robert Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (2016)

Putnam tells the tale of lessening opportunity through poignant life stories of rich, middle class, and poor kids from cities and suburbs across the country, brilliantly blended with the latest social-science research. **Recommended by Rachel Pedersen**

Five Young Adult Novels Every Adult Should Read

Lois Lowry, *The Giver* (1993)

The story of twelve year old Jonas who lives in what appears to be a utopian society of sameness and equality.

Jennifer Mathieu, *Moxie* (2017)

An unlikely teenager starts a feminist revolution at a small-town Texan high school.

Julie Murphy, *Dumplin'* (2017)

The story of Willowdean Dixon, the fearless, funny, and totally unforgettable heroine who takes on her small town's beauty pageant.

Judy Blume , *Are you there God? It's me Margaret* (1970)

This classic novel tells the story of a sixth-grade girl who has grown up without a religious affiliation, due to her parents' interfaith marriage and explores her quest for a single religion, while confronting typical issues faced by early adolescent girls going through puberty.

Becky Aberlanti, *Simon Versus the Homo Sapiens Agenda* (2015)

The coming-of-age story focuses on its titular protagonist Simon Spier, a closeted gay high-school aged boy who is forced to come out after a blackmailer discovers Simon's e-mails written to another closeted classmate with whom he has fallen in love.

J.K. Rowling , *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1997)

The first novel in the *Harry Potter* series and Rowling's debut novel, it follows Harry Potter, a young wizard who discovers his magical heritage on his eleventh birthday, when he receives a letter of acceptance to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Recommendations by Leigh DeVries, Associate Pastor for Youth and their Families