

Women of the Church Book Group
Selected WOC Books for Discussion 2022-2023

Discussions held via Zoom 4th Monday of each month at 7:00 PM except...

**NOTE: NO MEETING IN DECEMBER AND JUNE IS TRADITIONAL POT LUCK AND BOOK PITCHING
GATHERING**

Email info@firstchurchburlington.org to be added to the e-list for meeting reminders and the zoom link.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2022 7:00 PM Via Zoom (Dianne Griffiths, facilitator)

The Island of Sea Women: A Novel by Lisa See 2019 384 pages

Available Kindle, audio, hardcover, paperback

Mi-ja and Young-sook, two girls living on the Korean island of Jeju, are best friends that come from very different backgrounds. When they are old enough, they begin working in the sea with their village's all-female diving collective, led by Young-sook's mother. As the girls take up their positions as baby divers, they know they are beginning a life of excitement and responsibility but also danger.

Despite their love for each other, Mi-ja and Young-sook's differences are impossible to ignore. The Island of Sea Women is an epoch set over many decades, beginning during a period of Japanese colonialism in the 1930s and 1940s, followed by World War II, the Korean War and its aftermath, through the era of cell phones and wet suits for the women divers. Throughout this time, the residents of Jeju find themselves caught between warring empires. Mi-ja is the daughter of a Japanese collaborator, and she will forever be marked by this association. Young-sook was born into a long line of haenyeo and will inherit her mother's position leading the divers in their village. Little do the two friends know that after surviving hundreds of dives and developing the closest of bonds, forces outside their control will push their friendship to the breaking point.

This beautiful, thoughtful novel illuminates a world turned upside down, one where the women are in charge, engaging in dangerous physical work, and the men take care of the children. A classic Lisa See story—one of women's friendships and the larger forces that shape them—The Island of Sea Women introduces readers to the fierce and unforgettable female divers of Jeju Island and the dramatic history that shaped their lives.

OCTOBER 24, 2022 7:00 PM Via Zoom (Bobbi Holzel, facilitator)

The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times by Jane Goodall with Douglas Abrams and Gail Hudson 2021 272 pages

Available Kindle, audio, hardcover

Looking at the headlines, the worsening climate crisis, a global pandemic, loss of biodiversity, political upheaval, it can be hard to feel optimistic. And yet hope has never been more desperately needed.

In this urgent book, Jane Goodall, the world's most famous living naturalist, and Douglas Abrams, the internationally bestselling co-author of The Book of Joy, explore through intimate and thought-provoking dialogue one of the most sought after and least understood elements of

human nature: hope. In *The Book of Hope*, Jane focuses on her "Four Reasons for Hope": The Amazing Human Intellect, The Resilience of Nature, The Power of Young People, and The Indomitable Human Spirit.

Drawing on decades of work that has helped expand our understanding of what it means to be human and what we all need to do to help build a better world, *The Book of Hope* touches on vital questions, including: How do we stay hopeful when everything seems hopeless? How do we cultivate hope in our children? What is the relationship between hope and action? Filled with moving and inspirational stories and photographs from Jane's remarkable career, *The Book of Hope* is a deeply personal conversation with one of the most beloved figures in the world today.

While discussing the experiences that shaped her discoveries and beliefs, Jane tells the story of how she became a messenger of hope, from living through World War II to her years in Gombe to realizing she had to leave the forest to travel the world in her role as an advocate for environmental justice. And for the first time, she shares her profound revelations about her next, and perhaps final, adventure.

The second book in the Global Icons Series—which launched with the instant classic *The Book of Joy* with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu—*The Book of Hope* is a rare and intimate look not only at the nature of hope but also into the heart and mind of a woman who revolutionized how we view the world around us and has spent a lifetime fighting for our future.

There is still hope, and this book will help guide us to it.

NOVEMBER 28, 2022 7:00 PM Via Zoom (Patty Thomas, facilitator)

The Lincoln Highway: A Novel by Amor Towles 2021 592 pages

Available Kindle, audio, hardcover, paperback

In June, 1954, eighteen-year-old Emmett Watson is driven home to Nebraska by the warden of the juvenile work farm where he has just served fifteen months for involuntary manslaughter. His mother long gone, his father recently deceased, and the family farm foreclosed upon by the bank, Emmett's intention is to pick up his eight-year-old brother, Billy, and head to California where they can start their lives anew. But when the warden drives away, Emmett discovers that two friends from the work farm have hidden themselves in the trunk of the warden's car. Together, they have hatched an altogether different plan for Emmett's future, one that will take them all on a fateful journey in the opposite direction—to the City of New York.

Spanning just ten days and told from multiple points of view, Towles's third novel will satisfy fans of his multi-layered literary styling while providing them an array of new and richly imagined settings, characters, and themes.

JANUARY 23, 2023 7:00 PM Via Zoom (Janice Clements, facilitator)

The Book of Lost Friends: A Novel by Lisa Wingate 2020 400 pages

Available Kindle, audio, hardcover, paperback

Bestselling author Lisa Wingate brings to life startling stories from actual "Lost Friends" advertisements that appeared in Southern newspapers after the Civil War, as newly freed slaves desperately searched for loved ones who had been sold away.

Louisiana, 1875: In the tumultuous era of Reconstruction, three young women set off as unwilling companions on a perilous quest: Hannie, a freed slave; Lavinia, the pampered heir to a now destitute plantation; and Juneau Jane, Lavinia's Creole half-sister. Each carries private wounds and powerful secrets as they head for Texas, following roads rife with vigilantes and soldiers still fighting a war lost a decade before. For Lavinia and Juneau Jane, the journey is one of stolen inheritance and financial desperation, but for Hannie, torn from her mother and siblings before slavery's end, the pilgrimage west reignites an agonizing question: Could her long-lost family still be out there? Beyond the swamps lie the limitless frontiers of Texas and, improbably, hope.

Louisiana, 1987: For first-year teacher Benedetta Silva, a subsidized job at a poor rural school seems like the ticket to canceling her hefty student debt—until she lands in a tiny, out-of-step Mississippi River town. Augustine, Louisiana, is suspicious of new ideas and new people, and Benny can scarcely comprehend the lives of her poverty-stricken students. But amid the gnarled live oaks and run-down plantation homes lie the century-old history of three young women, a long-ago journey, and a hidden book that could change everything.

FEBRUARY 27, 2023 7:00 PM Via Zoom (Nancy McClellan, facilitator)

**Gorilla and the Bird: A Memoir of Madness and a Mother's Love by Zack McDermott
2017 288 pages**

Available Kindle, audio, hardcover, paperback

Zack McDermott, a 26-year-old Brooklyn public defender, woke up one morning convinced he was being filmed, Truman Show-style, as part of an audition for a TV pilot. Every passerby was an actor; every car would magically stop for him; everything he saw was a cue from "The Producer" to help inspire the performance of a lifetime. After a manic spree around Manhattan, Zack, who is bipolar, was arrested on a subway platform and admitted to Bellevue Hospital.

So begins the story of Zack's freefall into psychosis and his desperate, poignant, often hilarious struggle to claw his way back to sanity. It's a journey that will take him from New York City back to his Kansas roots and to the one person who might be able to save him, his tough, big-hearted Midwestern mother, nicknamed the Bird, whose fierce and steadfast love is the light in Zack's dark world.

Before his odyssey is over, Zack will be tackled by guards in mental wards, run naked through cornfields, receive secret messages from the TV, befriend a former Navy Seal and his talking stuffed monkey, and see the Virgin Mary in the whorls of his own back hair. But with the Bird's help, he just might have a shot at pulling through, starting over, and maybe even meeting a partner who can love him back, bipolar and all.

Introducing an electrifying new voice, *Gorilla and the Bird* is a raw and unforgettable account of a young man's unraveling and the relationship that saves him.

MARCH 27, 2023 7:00 PM Via Zoom (Donna Lee, facilitator)

West with Giraffes: A Novel by Lynda Rutledge 2021 381 pages

Available Kindle, audio, hardcover, paperback

Woodrow Wilson Nickel, age 105, feels his life ebbing away. But when he learns giraffes are going extinct, he finds himself recalling the unforgettable experience he cannot take to his grave.

It's 1938. The Great Depression lingers. Hitler is threatening Europe, and world-weary Americans long for wonder. They find it in two giraffes who miraculously survive a hurricane while crossing the Atlantic. What follows is a twelve-day road trip in a custom truck to deliver Southern California's first giraffes to the San Diego Zoo. Behind the wheel is the young Dust Bowl rowdy Woodrow. Inspired by true events, the tale weaves real-life figures with fictional ones, including the world's first female zoo director, a crusty old man with a past, a young female photographer with a secret, and assorted reprobates as spotty as the giraffes. Part adventure, part historical saga, and part coming-of-age love story, *West with Giraffes* explores what it means to be changed by the grace of animals, the kindness of strangers, the passing of time, and a story told before it's too late.

APRIL 24, 2023 7:00 PM Via Zoom (Dianne Griffiths, facilitator)

The Five Wounds: A Novel by Kirstin Valdez Quade 2021 432 pages

Available Kindle, audio, hardcover, paperback

It's Holy Week in the small town of Las Penas, New Mexico, and thirty-three-year-old unemployed Amadeo Padilla has been given the part of Jesus in the Good Friday procession. He is preparing feverishly for this role when his fifteen-year-old daughter Angel shows up pregnant on his doorstep and disrupts his plans for personal redemption. With weeks to go until her due date, tough, ebullient Angel has fled her mother's house, setting her life on a startling new path.

Vivid, tender, funny, and beautifully rendered, *The Five Wounds* spans the baby's first year as five generations of the Padilla family converge: Amadeo's mother, Yolanda, reeling from a recent discovery; Angel's mother, Marissa, whom Angel isn't speaking to; and disapproving Tíve, Yolanda's uncle and keeper of the family's history. Each brings expectations that Amadeo, who often solves his problems with a beer in his hand, doesn't think he can live up to. *The Five Wounds* is a miraculous debut novel from a writer whose stories have been hailed as "legitimate masterpieces" (*New York Times*). Kirstin Valdez Quade conjures characters that will linger long after the final page, bringing to life their struggles to parent children they may not be equipped to save.

MAY 22, 2023 7:00 PM Via Zoom (Janice Clements, facilitator)

Universe of Two: A Novel by Stephen P. Kiernan 2020 448 pages

Available Kindle, audio, hardcover, paperback

Graduating from Harvard at the height of World War II, brilliant mathematician Charlie Fish is assigned to the Manhattan Project. Working with some of the age's greatest scientific minds, including J. Robert Oppenheimer, Enrico Fermi, and Leo Szilard, Charlie is assigned the task of designing and building the detonator of the atomic bomb.

As he performs that work Charlie suffers a crisis of conscience, which his wife, Brenda—unaware of the true nature of Charlie's top-secret task—mistakes as self-doubt. She urges him to

set aside his qualms and continue. Once the bombs strike Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the feelings of culpability devastate him and Brenda.

At the war's end, Charlie receives a scholarship to pursue a PhD in physics at Stanford—an opportunity he and Brenda hope will allow them a fresh start. But the past proves inescapable. All any of his new colleagues can talk about is the bomb, and what greater atomic weapons might be on the horizon. Haunted by guilt, Charlie and Brenda leave Stanford and decide to dedicate the rest of their lives to making amends for the evil he helped to birth into the world. Based on the life of the actual mathematician Charles B. Fisk, *Universe of Two* combines riveting historical drama with a poignant love story. Stephen Kiernan has conjured a remarkable account of two people struggling to heal their consciences and find peace in a world forever changed.

JC 8/1/22