

December 2012

Well-Loved Books for Christmas Giving & Reading
Members Comments Below + New Advent List



***Checkout this book from our OBC library**

ADULT FICTION

A WINTER'S TALE by Mark Halpern

ARCADIA by Lauren Groff (NYT 100 Notable Books of 2012)

THE ARRIVALS by Meg Moore

THE BEAN TREES by Barbara Kingsolver*

BEATRICE AND VIRGIL by Yan Martel

BRING UP THE BODIES by Hillary Mantel

BROKEN HARBOR by Tana French

CALEB'S CROSSING: A NOVEL by Geraldine Brooks

THE COVE by Ron Rash

FLIGHT BEHAVIOR by Barbara Kingsolver (NYT 100 Notable Books of 2012)

THE GIRL IN HYACINTH BLUE by Susan Vreeland

THE GLASSBLOWER FROM MURANO by Marinas Fiorato

HOTEL ON THE CORNER OF BITTER AND SWEET by James Ford

IN THE TIME OF THE BUTTERFLIES by Julia Alvarez

1Q84 by Haruki Murakami

LIGHT FROM HEAVEN by Jan Karon (**The Mitford Years**, Book 9^{*}-8 novels in Library)

LOOKING FOR CHRISTMAS by Len Cassamas

MYTHS TO LIVE BY by Joseph Campbell (The Collected Works of Joseph Campbell)

NIGHT SWIM by Jessica Keener

NIGHT CIRCUS by Erin Morgenstern

PEACE LIKE A RIVER by Leif Enger

PIGS IN HEAVEN by Barbara Kingsolver^{*}

THE PLEASURE WAS MINE by Tommy Hays

THE POISONWOOD BIBLE by Barbara Kingsolver^{*}

SHE'S COME UNDONE by Wally Lamb

THE SHACK: A NOVEL by William Paul Young^{*}

STATE OF WONDER by Ann Patchet

THE WIND UP BIRD CHRONICLE by Haruki Marakami

ADULT NONFICTION

1491: NEW REVELATIONS OF THE AMERICAS BEFORE COLUMBUS by Charles C. Mann, 2nd Edition

A HISTORY OF GOD: THE 4,000 YEAR QUEST OF JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM by Karen Armstrong

THE BATTLE FOR GOD: A HISTORY OF FUNDAMENTALISM IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM by Karen Armstrong

BEHIND THE BEAUTIFUL FOREVERS: LIFE, DEATH AND HOPE IN A MUBAI UNDERCITY by Katherine Boo (2012 National Book Award)

FAIRY TALES FROM THE BROTHERS GRIMM: A NEW ENGLISH VERSION by Philip Pullman

IN THE GARDEN OF BEASTS by Erik Larson

A GENEROUS ORTHODOXY by Brian McLaren

QUIET: THE POWER OF INTROVERTS IN A WORLD THAT CAN'T STOP TALKING by Susan Cain

SLAVERY BY ANOTHER NAME: THE RE-ENSLAVEMENT OF BLACK AMERICANS FROM THE CIVIL WAR TO WWII by Douglas Blackmon*

TEAM OF RIVALS: THE POLITICAL GENIUS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN by Doris Kearns Goodwin

THOMAS JEFFERSON: THE ART OF POWER by John Meacham

TO END ALL WARS: A STORY OF LOYALTY AND REBELLION, 1914-1918 by Adam Hochschild

TRAVELS WITH CHARLEY by John Steinbeck

MEMOIRS & INSPIRATIONAL

CRADDOCK STORIES by Fred B. Craddock (Mike Graves and Richard F. Ward, Editors)

THE GOOD BOOK IS BETTER THAN IT USED TO BE: EIGHTY YEARS WITH THE BIBLE by F. Calvin Parker.

THE HIDING PLACE by Corrie Ten Boom with John and Elizabeth Sherrill

CHILDREN'S FICTION (Including Middle Grade (MG) and Young Adult (YA))

THE FAULT IN OUR STARS by John Green (YA and adult readers)

THE HARRY POTTER LITERARY SERIES by J. K. Rowling

SPECIAL ADVENT LIST *Selected by Stephanie Cassasmas*

The Fault in Our Stars by John Green (YA Fiction)

Although written for a young adult audience, this novel opened my eyes to the challenges, victories, and tragedies faced by teens with cancer. John Green, according to my 14-year-old son, is very popular with the middle school crowd, and I can understand why. Green's experience as a chaplain in a pediatric hospital gives his work a ring of truth. The book avoids being a saccharine or overly sentimental work. I highly recommend it.

Peace Like a River by Leif Enger (Fiction)

A novel about trust, familial love, exile, and miracles, *Peace Like a River* may be the first book I've ever felt could be compared with *To Kill A Mockingbird*. The narrator, Reuben Land, tells us the story of his brother's having shot two local bullies, his subsequent trial, his escape from prison, and the family's search for him. The writing is lyrical and beautiful. Leif paints Minnesota and the Badlands of North Dakota with a beautiful brush. The language alone would make me recommend this book, but it is the series of miracles experienced by the family that made my heart ache. I wanted to know Reuben's father. I won't spoil these mystical and beautiful miracles for you. The tragedies throughout the story pale in comparison to the gentle works of God experienced by the family.

Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern (Fiction)

This seems to be one of those novels that people love or hate. It was one of my favorite books of the year, and I still, three months after reading it, live with the characters and the circus. The story centers on a young woman and young man who are engaged in a game of magical competition without even

knowing it. The children grow up to learn that they are now inextricable from a circus that travels at night and appears unanticipated in various towns. The book layers characters in a way that stretches the story in a luscious way that feels very Victorian. Anyone who enjoys magical realism will love this book.

Looking for Christmas by Len Cassamas (Fiction - Short Stories)

I may be a little biased in my review of this collection of short stories since my husband wrote it, but he knows that I will never praise his writing unless he has hit just the right notes. Some of the stories are commentaries on modern day hypocrisy, some are gentler in tone. The best story by far is The Xmas Revenge of Eliza Hackle which Len originally wrote about two years ago. It's one of my favorite pieces of his writing as he has an unnamed narrator tell us the story of Eliza and of justice coming in very strange (and not necessarily ideal) ways. The book is available in print and Kindle editions through Amazon and is also available for Nook.

Travels with Charley by John Steinbeck (Non-Fiction, Travel Essay)

When I was a child, I would guess around ten or eleven, my uncle, who I call "John" with no avuncular title, took me to the bookstore and bought me a copy of Travels with Charley. I had always, always wanted a dog, and I had always, always wanted to escape my home life, so reading about Steinbeck's travels around the country in a modified camper truck called Rocinante filled a space in my imagination that was aching for just this story. Steinbeck has always wanted to travel, always felt that yen for the open road, so he takes matters into his own hands and sets out on a journey through 1960's America with his blue (yes, blue) standard poodle, Charley, for company. Two items from the book always stand out to me: the fact that not once along the way is this Pulitzer prize winning author recognized, and the tale of his attempt to travel into Canada and the adventure of trying to get back into the US. I've read the book five or six times and highly recommend the audio book version read by Gary Sinise.

READ OTHER MEMBER'S COMMENTS BELOW:

Cathy Bauer

The Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam by Karen Armstrong. From Amazon: Karen Armstrong brilliantly and sympathetically shows us how and why fundamentalist groups came into existence and what they yearn to accomplish....Armstrong characterizes fundamentalism as one of these new ways of being religious that have emerged in every major faith tradition. [She] sees fundamentalist groups as complex, innovative, and modern -- rather than as throwbacks to the past -- but contends that they have failed in religious terms.

I had also started reading **A History of God: The 4,000 year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam** by Karen Armstrong in paperback, but having it in my Kindle makes it less heavy! Armstrong describes fundamentalism as a reaction to our modern society's embrace of logos at the expense of mythos. She postulates that fundamentalists are trying to restore mythos as a way to spiritually survive for whom logos is not enough.

In a bit of serendipity, I had read **Myths to Live By (The Collected Works of Joseph Campbell)** which consists of a dozen essays/talks Joseph Campbell prepared between 1961 and 1971. The ancient mythic themes come alive as he weaves the observations of 20th Century everyday living with flashbacks of times ago. He story tells and teaches using 13 broad topics such as love, the beginnings of humankind, war and peace, schizophrenia, and the moon walk. He also examines all of the ways in which myth supports and guides us, giving our lives meaning [and] shows how the myths we live by can reconcile all of these pairs of opposites and bring a sense of the whole. (Summarized from Amazon reviews)

Joseph Campbell was a scholar in comparative religion and mythology. His other works include **The Power of Myth** and **The Hero with a Thousand Faces**.

Paula Buford

Craddock Stories by Fred B. Craddock (Mike Graves and Richard F. Ward, Editors) I used this book in my recent sermon. It's available in paperback on Amazon. These are stories taken out of context from Dr. Craddock's sermons.

Lou Clymore

I just recently reread three Barbara Kingsolver books from our church library, **The Poisonwood Bible**, **Bean Trees**, and **Pigs in Heaven**.

Carolyn Copenhaver

Beatrice and Virgil by Yan Martel, author of *Life of Pi*. From the book jacket: Here is "Another ingenious, provocative, and mesmerizing novel that explores who we are and what we are capable of doing in order to survive." I found this a riveting study of unspeakable evil, expressed through its main characters: the narrator, a taxidermist, a howler monkey, and a donkey. You've probably never read a book structurally quite like this—as always, Martel, winner of the Mann Booker Prize, explores as well the boundaries of storytelling.

1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus by Charles C. Mann, 2nd This book delivers what it promises and more: "A provocative and important story...[that] compels us to reexamine how we teach the ancient history of the Americas (Washington Post)." I recommend this for everyone's bookshelf and for the church library as well—it will shock and astonish you; it will change your paradigms forever regarding the ancient Indians of the Americas.

Sherrí Crow

Night Swim by Jessica Keener came out in January to glowing reviews. It is a coming-of-age story about a girl struggling with dysfunction-- and ultimately tragedy-- in her family. Jessica writes like a poet; her sentences are tiny works of art in themselves. Sara Gruen (*Water for Elephants*) wrote the front cover review--- not too shabby for a first novel!

The Pleasure Was Mine by Tommy Hays is the story of Prate Marshbanks, a curmudgeonly sweetheart whose wife is succumbing to Alzheimer's Disease. This is a character you will not soon forget. *The Pleasure Was Mine* was reviewed in *The New Yorker* when it was published and has gotten a lot of attention since.

Both Jessica and Tommy are good friends of ours. I would recommend their books, nevertheless, even if I had never set eyes on them.)

Becky Drysdale

To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918 by Adam Hochschild. This narrative nonfiction book follows key players in Britain during the First World War, including generals, pacifists, labor union leaders, and suffragists. Sometimes they're in the same family. After reading this book you'll understand why trusting the generals can have tragic consequences. But this is so much more readable than dry historical accounts. And if you're a *Downtown Abbey* fan, you'll find this book an invaluable companion to the social and political history of the time.

In the Garden of Beasts by Erik Larson. An American ambassador and his family live in Berlin before the Second World War and become involved with the Nazi regime in this narrative nonfiction account.

Not only was anti-Semitism rampant in Germany but also in the U.S. Ambassadors were expected to be wealthy, because the position didn't pay enough to live on.

Behind the Beautiful Forevers by Katherine Boo. A narrative nonfiction account of life in the Mumbai slums where the level of poverty is unbelievable. You'll care about these real-life characters that exist under incredible circumstances.

Broken Harbor by Tana French. The latest in French's excellent mysteries that take place near Dublin. This one tells of the aftermath of the housing boom and bust cycle there. The characters are well done and are as important as the plot. Fine writing too, which is rare in this genre.

Bring up the Bodies by Hillary Mantel. This is the sequel to *Wolf Hall*, which follows Thomas Cromwell as he helps Henry VIII to divorce Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn. (It's a different view of the unsaintly Sir Thomas Moore too.) The sequel tells of how Cromwell helps Henry get rid of the contentious Anne and go on to his next wife. Cromwell is a very capable but lowborn counselor who has to maneuver very carefully among the intrigue and jealousy of the court.

Caleb's Crossing by Geraldine Brooks. An account of the first native American to graduate from Harvard College and the young woman who befriends him and struggles against the restrictions on women of the 1660s. Both have to fight stereotypes and superstition. Brooks is one of my favorite authors.

Carolyn Hall

State of Wonder by Ann Patchet. A scientist goes to the Amazon jungle to find her former mentor, a researcher who has disappeared while working on a valuable new drug. She is also trying to find out how a former colleague died there. This book is full of surprises including poison arrows, devouring snakes, scientific miracles, and spiritual transformations.

The Glassblower from Murano by Marinas Fiorato. In the 1600s the Venetian glassblowers were virtual prisoners on the island of Murano. But the greatest of them, Corradina Manin sells his methods to Louis XIV of France to protect his secret daughter. In the present day, his descendant, Leonora Manin, leaves an unhappy life in London to begin a new one as a glassblower in Venice. Her fate becomes inextricably linked with that of her ancestor and the dangerous secrets of his life begin to be revealed.

In the Time of the Butterflies by Julia Alvarez. This book is set in the Dominican Republic during the rule of Trujillo. I learned a tremendous amount about this era from this book. It made me want to know more about the history of the Dominican Republic. In this book three sisters are killed because of their political opposition to the regime. There was one surviving sister. The book is told in the voices of each of the 4 sisters. It is a book about courage, love, and the human cost of political oppression. Even though it sounds like it might be depressing, it was actually inspiring.

Elaine Hoffman

Arcadia by Lauren Groff- Wonderful fiction about a little boy who grows up in a commune and religious cult. Whimsical, evocative writing. Sad and magical at the same time. I got to hear the author at the Decatur book festival this year.

Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by James Ford -Chinese man remembering a 12 year old Japanese girl who he loved as a boy just before she and her family were forced into an internment camp here in the United States. Very good and satisfying book. Very interesting historical fiction about the tensions between Asian Americans and Anglos during WW II here in the states.

The Fault in our Stars by John Green--Young adult fiction that is great read for anyone. Difficult and brutally honest portrayal of two young teens who have cancer and fall in love with each other.

Jim Holmes

The Shack by William Paul Young (2007)--approx. 247 pp. I read this book while sitting in Piedmont Hospital waiting for JoEllen to recover from her surgery. The book is about a man struggling to forgive himself and God for the senseless murder of his daughter. Though based on true accounts, it does seem unbelievable as it starts out with a letter from God telling him to go to the shack--the site of his daughter's murder. There, he encounters a rather untraditional Trinity and deals with the timeless questions of theodicy--why does God allow such evil in the world while still loving us? Young presents a decidedly Christian and Trinitarian view of theology--but I found the book interesting in presenting old arguments of freedom and necessity in new ways and in a real context of a man dealing with the unbearable pain of grief for his daughter.

Team of Rivals : The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln by Doris Kearns Goodwin (2005)--approx. 750 pp. Having just seen the recently released movie Lincoln--I returned to this book upon which the film is based. As I recall, I read the first few hundred pages with interest but never finished the book. The good news is that the movie is basically based on the last two chapters (25 & 26) "A Sacred Effort" and "The Final Days"--roughly 82 pages. Doris Kearns Goodwin's book ends with a final tribute to the slain president--recalling his claim as a 23 year old candidate for his first public office "...I have no other [ambition] so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow men...."(p.748) Here, in her last sentence--she sums up Lincoln's legacy:

"The deathless name he sought from the start had grown far beyond Sangamon County and Illinois, reached across the truly United States, until his legacy, as Stanton had surmised at the moment of his death, belonged not only to America but to the ages--to be revered and sung throughout all time." (p.749).

Jennifer Hornbuckle

Jan Karon's Mitford Series got better, in my opinion as the books came, and **Light From Heaven** is one that holds a special memory. We had a patient on our hospice service who loved the series, and had gotten a copy of the book, the last in the series, but had not read it. She truly loved life, and shared with me on our first visit that she believed the human soul was so beautiful, that it could never die. She did not want to read the book as she felt beloved characters would die, and she did not want that to happen. She was dealing with the challenge of facing her own death as well. We talked about reading it together, but she wanted to take things in her own time. I took the book on vacation, and finished reading it. I felt so good after reading it, and laid it across my chest when I finished, wanting the words to seep in as I fell asleep. The next morning, I received a call from the nurse case manager that our friend had died the night before. (I had strongly felt she would die before I returned, and had asked the nurse to call me in the event that she did). I am reminded of this very special friend every time I see it, as I feel her light from heaven, and a warm, gentle wind when I think of her.

Walker Knight

I am reading **Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power** by John Meacham--among his many achievements one important to Baptists is the freedom of religion. It's lengthy but well worth being in our library.

Katelyn

The Spark by John Ratey. This is a look at the changes that exercise effects in brain chemistry, specifically relating to depression and anxiety, ADHD, addictions, and women's health.

The Hiding Place by Corrie Ten Boom. An evangelical tale of one family's experience in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands. I read this with my 13-year-old son this past year, and recommended it to my book club, and we all really enjoyed it. This book made me feel hopeful, and I also realized that I learn history best in the context of personal narrative.

I'm listening to **The Harry Potter Literary Series** by J. K. Rowling on CD. The reader, Jim Dale, is truly remarkable. We listen to these CDs on all of our many long car trips. The combination of the story and Mr. Dale's voice is enormously enjoyable, and makes the time in the car fly by.

Rules of Civility by Amor Towles. This is a real period piece, which is not always a favorite of mine. There was something about this one, though, that I really liked. The heroine is scrappy and somewhat cunning. You can feel that she was written by a man, which is interesting in and of itself.

She's Come Undone by Wally Lamb. This is the first of Mr. Lamb's books for me, and it won't be the last. It was painful to read at many points, in part because there was no linear path of growth for the heroine. She was all too real, all too familiar in the various aspects of her personality – angry, wounded, kind, loving, fearful, generous. This one stays with me.

Roy Sanders

1Q84 by Haruki Murakami is a novel first published in three volumes in Japan in 2009–10. The novel quickly became a sensation, with its first printing selling out the day it was released, and, according to Wikipedia, reached sales of one million within a month.

I also recommend **The Wind Up Bird Chronicle** by Haruki Marakami and **A Winter's Tale** by Mark Halpern.

Jon Spencer

The Good Book is Better than It Used to Be: Eighty Years with the Bible by F. Calvin Parker. I actually have a couple of copies that I want to donate to the OBC library. The book is by a retired and recently deceased Southern Baptist missionary to Japan. It chronicles the evolution of his thinking regarding the Bible from a very conservative but thoughtful stance to a much more progressive and open understanding. "Uncle Calvin," as he was called by me and other "missionary kids" according to missionary custom, was a brilliant and loving man. The book would make a great study book for a class or group at OBC.

It might be a little tricky to purchase as a Christmas gift, although I'm sure I could get more copies if anyone is interested. It's paperback. I did look on Amazon and they have it. I'm not sure that it could be found at a bookstore.

DeeAnn Dozier also knew him and his family well.

A Generous Orthodoxy by Brian McLaren. I am a big fan of McLaren, who is considered a leading voice in what has been called "the emerging church movement." This is my favorite non-fiction work by McLaren. One "blurb" on the back cover reads, "McLaren's book draws you toward a way of living that looks beyond the 'us/them' paradigm to the blessed and ancient paradox of 'we.'"

Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to WWII by Douglas Blackmon received the Pulitzer Prize in 2008. The book was adapted into a TV series on PBS. It documents the widespread practice in the South in those years of using Black prisoners as free "slave" labor for industry. Available in our OBC library.

Donna Woolf

The Cove by Ron Rash. A love story, I could not put down. Amazon describes the book as follows:

Deep in the rugged Appalachians of North Carolina lays the cove, a dark, forbidding place where spirits and fetches wander, and even the light fears to travel. Or so the townsfolk of Mars Hill believe—just as they know that Laurel Shelton, the lonely young woman who lives within its shadows, is a witch. Alone except for her brother, Hank, newly returned from the trenches of France, she aches for her life to begin.”

The Arrivals by Meg Moore. A very light read but entertaining. Since my daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren moved in with me in June for a temporary stay, I could identify with this family whose children all show up.

The Girl in Hyacinth Blue by Susan Vreeland. Reminded me a tad of **The Girl with the Pearl Earring**.

I am looking forward to reading over the holidays the new Kingsolver novel, **Flight Behavior**, and a book called **Quiet: The Power of introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking** by Susan Cain.

Steve Vellines

I just bought **Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm: A New English Version** by Philip Pullman from a great local bookstore, Little Shop of Stories. I suggest that others do the same. Splurge and buy the beautifully bound hardback book. Then, rediscover these old folk tales that were gathered by the Grimm Brothers and retold again and again (now by Philip Pullman). Read them aloud to your children or grandchildren or even other adults. Or, better yet -- retell them!! As Pullman states in his introduction, "you have a positive duty to make the story your own. A fairy tale is not a text."

Be forewarned: these are very old stories with sometimes violent images and Pullman has not sanitized them as Disney has. You may want to screen them first before reading them aloud to children.

Also, many people have probably already mentioned this book, but I would highly recommend the new Barbara Kingsolver book, **Flight Behavior**. I found the characters very true and you sympathized with all the characters from the scientists to the southern, rural fundamentalists.

Compiled by Carolyn Copenhaver on behalf of the OBC Library Committee
Co-Chairpersons: Harold Hoffman and Jan Murphy