

Do you love books and reading? If so, you are warmly invited to come and join us at Book Club this year. All church members and friends are welcome! We meet the fourth Monday of each month except for December and May this year where we meet on the third Monday, with the first meeting Sept. 23 from 7-8:15pm. Our meetings will be hybrid, both Zoom and in person in room 200; you can do either and can change at any time. You don't have to commit to the whole year of reading; feel free to join us for any of the discussions. But once you come, you may find that all this year's selections sound good. Hope to see you there in September. All the reviews below are adapted from Amazon Reviews.

BOOK CLUB SELECTIONS for 2024-2025

September 23, 2024

For Whom the Bell Tolls : Ernest Hemingway. 1942. 480p.

For Whom the Bell Tolls tells of loyalty and courage, love and defeat, and the tragic death of an ideal. Robert Jordan, a young American in the International Brigades, is attached to an antifascist guerilla unit in the mountains of Spain. In his portrayal of Jordan's love for the beautiful Maria and his superb account of a guerilla leader's last stand, Hemingway creates a work at once rare and beautiful, strong and brutal, compassionate, moving, and wise. Greater in power, broader in scope, and more intensely emotional than any of the author's previous works, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* stands as one of the best war novels ever written.

October 28, 2024

A Is for Alibi : Sue Grafton. 1982. 320p.

In *A is for Alibi*, tough-talking private investigator Kinsey Millhone has set up a modest detective agency in a quiet corner of Santa Teresa, California. A twice-divorced loner with few personal attachments, she's got a soft spot for lost causes. That's why she draws clients like Nikki Fife. Nikki is out on parole after serving time for allegedly killing her husband, and needs Kinsey's help to find the real killer. But clearing Nikki's name won't be easy.....

November 25, 2024

The Storyteller of Casablanca : Fiona Valpy. 2020. 315p.

Morocco, 1941. With France having fallen to Nazi occupation, twelve-year-old Josie has fled with her family to Casablanca, where they await safe passage to America. Life here is as intense as the sun, every sight, smell and sound overwhelming to the senses in a city filled with extraordinary characters. It's a world away from the trouble back home—and Josie loves it. Seventy years later, another new arrival in the intoxicating port city, Zoe, is struggling—with her marriage, her baby daughter and her new life as an expat in an unfamiliar place. But when she discovers a small wooden box and a diary from the 1940s beneath the floorboards of her daughter's bedroom, Zoe enters the inner world of young Josie, who once looked out on the same view of the Atlantic Ocean, but who knew a very different Casablanca.

December 16, 2024

Small Things Like These : Claire Keegan. 2021. 128p.

It is 1985 in a small Irish town. During the weeks leading up to Christmas, Bill Furlong, a coal merchant and family man faces into his busiest season. Early one morning, while delivering an order to the local convent, Bill makes a discovery which forces him to confront both his past and the complicit silences of a town controlled by the church. An international bestseller, *Small Things Like These* is a deeply affecting story of hope, quiet heroism, and empathy from one of our most critically lauded and iconic writers.

January 27, 2025

The Sun Walks Down : Fiona MacFarlane. 2023. 352p.

In September 1883, a small town in the South Australian outback huddles under strange, vivid sunsets. Six-year-old Denny Wallace has gone missing during a dust storm, and the entire community is caught up in the search for him. As they scour the desert and mountains for the lost child, the residents of Fairly—newlyweds, farmers, mothers, Indigenous trackers, cameleers, children, artists, schoolteachers, widows, maids, policemen—confront their relationships, both with one another and with the landscape they inhabit.

February 24, 2025

A Day of Fire : Kate Quinn et al. 2014. 352p.

Pompeii was a lively resort flourishing in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius at the height of the Roman Empire. When Vesuvius erupted in an explosion of flame and ash, the entire town would be destroyed. Some of its citizens died in the chaos, some escaped the mountain's wrath . . . and these are their stories:

Six authors bring to life overlapping stories of patricians and slaves, warriors and politicians, villains and heroes who cross each other's paths during Pompeii's fiery end. But who will escape, and who will be buried for eternity?

March 24, 2025

The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store : James McBride. 2023. 400p.

In 1972, when workers in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, were digging the foundations for a new development, the last thing they expected to find was a skeleton at the bottom of a well. Who the skeleton was and how it got there were two of the long-held secrets kept by the residents of Chicken Hill, the dilapidated neighborhood where immigrant Jews and African Americans lived side by side and shared ambitions and sorrows.

As the characters' stories overlap and deepen, it becomes clear how much the people who live on the margins of white, Christian America struggle and what they must do to survive. When the truth is finally revealed about what happened on Chicken Hill and the part the town's white establishment played in it, McBride shows us that even in dark times, it is love and community—heaven and earth—that sustain us.

April 28, 2025

The Women : Kristin Hannah. 2024. 480p.

Women can be heroes. When twenty-year-old nursing student Frances “Frankie” McGrath hears these words, it is a revelation. Raised in the sun-drenched, idyllic world of Southern California and sheltered by her conservative parents, she has always prided herself on doing the right thing. But in 1965, the world is changing, and she suddenly

dares to imagine a different future for herself. When her brother ships out to serve in Vietnam, she joins the Army Nurse Corps and follows his path. As green and inexperienced as the men sent to Vietnam to fight, Frankie is over-whelmed by the chaos and destruction of war. Each day is a gamble of life and death, hope and betrayal; friendships run deep and can be shattered in an instant. In war, she meets—and becomes one of—the lucky, the brave, the broken, and the lost.

May 19, 2025

The Great River : The Making and Unmaking of the Mississippi : Boyce Upholt.
2024. 352p.

The Mississippi River lies at the heart of America, an undeniable life force that is intertwined with the nation's culture and history. Its watershed spans almost half the country, Mark Twain's travels on the river inspired our first national literature, and jazz and blues were born in its floodplains and carried upstream. In this landmark work of natural history, Boyce Upholt tells the epic story of this wild and unruly river, and the centuries of efforts to control it.