

# Common Ground Reading & Reflection Group

6:45 pm on the 3rd Tuesday of the Month  
We currently meet at the home  
of a participant and also by Zoom  
(each month for those requesting).

*Ongoing announcements are made through the  
Bookclubs.com and by Kate Belt with  
our email list of participants.*

Our group reads broadly, both with and without the  
lens of faith. Here are some ways of thinking about  
spiritual reading:

## **From How to Read Anything with the Eyes of Faith by Eugenia Gamble**

All of life is shot through with the presence and tenderness of God. Each human life, whether intentionally or not, unfolds around the great Biblical themes of creation, love, sin, redemption & calling.

- New things happen (creation)
- Love blossoms, changes, is sought, is lost, is recovered, is given unexpectedly (grace)
- Selfishness, prejudice, fear and violence seem to rule decisions (sin)
- In the midst of the worst imaginable, people are given fresh, albeit sometimes chastened, new and unearned starts (redemption)
- People seek and discover their true identity and purpose in the world—where their greatest joy meets the world's deepest need (calling)

## **Common Ground Reading & Reflection Group 2022-23 Schedule**

**September 20 – In Praise of Walking by Shane O'Mara (Nonfiction, 2020)** A hymn to walking, the mechanical magic at the core of our humanity. In this captivating book, neuroscientist Shane O'Mara invites us to marvel at the benefits walking confers on our bodies and brains, and to appreciate the advantages of this uniquely human skill.

**October 18 – *The Final Case* by David Guterson (Legal Fiction, 2022)** In a small rural town outside Seattle, Joanna, an Ethiopian girl adopted by a white fundamentalist Christian family, is found dead of hypothermia in her own backyard. This premise is based on a true story and trial that took place in the Skagit Valley. Royal is a criminal attorney in his eighties, and this is his final case. His son, our narrator, drives Royal every day from his office to where the trial takes place. A tightrope walk of a novel, a deeply affecting work of fiction that dares to confront life's most irreconcilable moral quandaries.

**November 15 – *On Juneteenth* by Annette Gordon-Reed (History, 2021)** Weaving together American history, dramatic family chronicle, and searing episodes of memoir, a historian's view of the country's long road to Juneteenth, recounting both its origins in Texas and the enormous hardships that African-Americans have endured in the century since, from Reconstruction through Jim Crow and beyond.

**December 13 *Driving Over Lemons; An Optimist in Spain* by Chris Stewart (Memoir/Travel, 2021)** No sooner had Chris Stewart set eyes on El Valero than he handed over a check. Now all he had to do was explain to his wife that they were the proud owners of an isolated sheep farm in the Alpujarra Mountains in Southern Spain. Lush with olive, lemon, and almond groves, the farm lacks a few essentials – running water, electricity, an access road. And then there's the problem of Pedro, the previous owner who refuses to leave.



**January 17 – *Orwell's Roses* by Rebecca Solnit (Biography/Nature, 2021)** A lush exploration of politics, roses, and pleasure, and a fresh take on George Orwell as an avid gardener whose political writing was grounded by his passion for the natural world. Sparked by her unexpected encounter with the roses he reportedly planted in 1936, Solnit's account of this overlooked aspect of Orwell's life journeys through his writing and his actions to his analysis of the relationship between lies and authoritarianism.

**February 21 *The Other Einstein* by Marie Benedict (Historical Fiction 2016)** A window into the story of Einstein's wife, a brilliant physicist in her own right, her contribution to the special theory of relativity is hotly debated and may have been inspired by her own profound and very personal insight. (Selected as alternate to Multnomah County Library Everybody Reads book, which our group already read in 2019.)

**March 21 – *Burying My Dead* by Bettie Lennett Denny (Historical Fiction/Portland, 2018)** A new to Portland journalist explores her new neighborhood making friends along the way, who join her in researching historical records and genealogies to figure out the mystery of how three souls were related to one another- – a caretaker of Lone Fir Cemetery, a Chinese victim of human trafficking, and the surviving wife of an abusive husband who has mysteriously disappeared.

**April 18 – *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus (Fiction, 2022)** A life affirming tale of a chemist ahead of her time in the 1960s, when science was dominated by males – a life-changing love affair, a dog with a huge vocabulary, and the combustible combination of chemistry, cooking and afternoon television.

**May 16 – *The Sentence* by Louise Erdrich (Fiction, 2021)** Love, ghosts, and protest in Minneapolis in the time of COVID. Tookie, upon release from prison for an unusual crime, marries the tribal cop who arrested her. She goes to work in an Indie bookstore in Minneapolis. The store is haunted by Flora, who died on All Souls' Day and refuses to leave. Tookie must solve the mystery of this haunting while at the same time trying to understand all that occurs in Minneapolis during a year of grief, astonishment, isolation, and furious reckoning

**June 20 – *Temperance Creek* by Pamela Royes (Memoir, 2016)** In the austere beauty and natural reality of Hell's Canyon of Eastern Oregon, 21 year old Pam, unable to identify with her parents' world and looking for deeper pathways, has a chance encounter with returning Vietnam warrior, Skip Royes. Skip, looking for a bridge from survival back to connection, introduces Pam to the vanishing culture of the wandering shepherd and together they embark on a four-year sojourn into the wilderness.

*In June & July we begin the selection of new books for our next year's reading list.*

**July 18 – *The Plot* by Jean Hanff Korelitz (Domestic Thriller, 2021)** Jacob Finch Bonner, a once promising novelist unable to write a second book, teaches in a third-rate MFA program. When a student gives him a brilliant manuscript, then dies without publishing it, he publishes it as his own. At the height of his glorious new life, an email arrives, the first salvo in a terrifying, anonymous campaign: "You are a thief, it says." As Jake struggles to understand his antagonist and hide the truth from his readers and his publishers, he begins to learn more about his late student.



**August 15 – *The Keeper of Lost Things* by Ruth Hogan (Fiction, 2017)** For 40 years after the loss of a keepsake and death of his beloved fiancée, Anthony Peardeew sought consolation in rescuing lost objects – things others have dropped, misplaced, or accidentally left behind – and writing stories about them. In the twilight of his life, he worries that he has not fully discharged his duty to reconcile all the lost things with their owners. He bequeaths his secret life's mission to his unsuspecting assistant, leaving her his house and all its lost treasures, including an irritable ghost.