

2019-2020 Reading and Reflection Book Group Selections

We meet the Third Tuesday of each month at 6:45 pm

Currently we are using the Friendship Room or the Narthex at Presbyterian Church in the Colonial Heights Neighborhood, but we are always open to new locations.

Contact the church office or newsletter to note any changes

September 17 – *Less* by Andrew Shawn Greer (Fiction): Arthur Less is a failed novelist on the eve of his fiftieth birthday. To avoid attending the wedding of his ex-boyfriend, he accepts a series of invitations to half-baked literary events around the world. This takes him on an international journey that finds him falling in love, risking his life, and reinventing himself. (2018 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction)

October 15 – *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (Indigenous Philosophy & People/Botany/Ecology): Kimmerer is a botanist and professor of plant ecology. She is also a Potawatomi woman who learned to consider plants and animals to be our oldest teachers, bringing these two lenses of knowing together to help understand the innumerable life-giving gifts the world provides us and learn to offer our thanks.

November 19 – *A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth Ozeki (Psychological Fiction/Teenage Girls): In Tokyo, sixteen-year-old Nao has decided there's only one escape from her aching loneliness and her classmates' bullying. But before she ends it all, Nao first plans to document the life of her great grandmother, a Buddhist nun who's lived more than a century.

December 17 – *Where the Crawdad Sings* by Delia Owens (Fiction/Mystery): A painfully beautiful first novel that is at once a murder mystery, a coming-of-age narrative and a celebration of nature. Owens surveys the desolate marshlands of the North Carolina coast through the eyes of an abandoned child. And in her isolation that child makes us open our own eyes to the secret wonders—and dangers—of her private world.

January 21 – *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth* by Sarah Smarsh (Memoir/Working Poor/Farming): Smarsh challenges us to examine the class divide in our country and the myths about people who earn less in a country known for its excess. Her personal history affirms the corrosive impact intergenerational poverty can have on individuals, families, and communities, and she explores this idea as lived experience, metaphor, and level of consciousness.

February 18 *There There* by Tommy Orange (Multnomah County Library Everybody Reads Book/Fiction/Native American Experience): As we learn the reasons that each person is attending the Big Oakland Powwow—some generous, some fearful, some joyful, some violent—momentum builds toward a shocking yet inevitable conclusion that changes everything.

March 17 – *Ladysitting: My Year With Nana at the End of Her Century* by Lorene Cary (Memoir/African-American and Black Biography/Aging): In telling her Nana's story, Cary invites readers into a complex extended family, replete with the conflict and contradiction that accompany most families. A Black woman married to a White pastor, she recounts a distinctly American story: flight from racial terrorism in the south, economic and academic success against harsh odds, and the often-fraught mixing of races.

April 21– *The Next Tsunami: Living on a Restless Coast* by Bonnie Henderson (Narrative Nonfiction/Science/Geology/ Public Policy): On a March evening in 1964, ten-year-old Tom Horning awoke near midnight to find his yard transformed. A tsunami triggered by Alaska’s momentous Good Friday earthquake had wreaked havoc in his Seaside, Oregon, neighborhood. Henderson describes how scientists came to understand the Cascadia Subduction Zone. The story is told as the intersection of science, human nature, and public policy.

May 19 – *Washington Black* by Esi Edugyan (Historical Fiction/Slavery-Barbados): Spanning the Caribbean to the frozen Far North, London to Morocco, Edugyan's story is of self-invention and betrayal, of love and redemption, and of a world destroyed and made whole again. An 11-year old field slave is chosen as the manservant of his master’s brother, who turns out to be a naturalist, explorer, inventor, and abolitionist.

June 16 – *Blood and Ivy: The 1849 Murder That Scandalized Boston* by Paul Collins (True Crime/Forensic Medicine & Pathology): The scandalous murder of an 1849 Harvard Medical School graduate and the ensuing trial riveted mid-nineteenth-century America. Collins, a local Portland writer, explores how the case established important precedents in medical forensics and the definition of reasonable doubt.

July 21 – *Educated* by Tara Westover (Memoir/Survivalism/Women): Westover's parents followed a survivalist lifestyle, suspicious of doctors, hospitals, public schools, and the federal government. Haphazardly homeschooled, inspired by a brother who had gone to college, she purchased textbooks and by self-study passed the ACT Exam. She gained admission to Brigham Young University and continued her education at Cambridge and Harvard.

August 18 – *Becoming* by Michelle Obama (Memoir/African American Attorneys /Presidents' Spouses): Obama describes her childhood, the early years of her marriage to Barach, and takes us inside their private debate over whether he should make a run for the presidency and her subsequent role as a popular but oft-criticized figure during his campaign. In telling her story she issues a challenge to the rest of us: Who are we and who do we want to become?

