

## VoP Book Club List 2024-2025

### 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the Month

1. September (possibly into October): ***Go Tell it on the Mountain***, by James Baldwin. Baldwin's classic novel opened new possibilities in the American language and in the way Americans understand themselves. With lyrical precision, psychological directness, resonating symbolic power, and a rage that is at once unrelenting and compassionate, Baldwin tells the story of the stepson of the minister of a storefront Pentecostal church in Harlem one Saturday in March of 1935. Originally published in 1953, Baldwin said of his first novel, "*Mountain* is the book I had to write if I was ever going to write anything else." 240 pages
2. October: ***The False White Gospel (Rejecting Christian Nationalism, Reclaiming True Faith, and Refounding Democracy)***, by Jim Wallis (highly recommended by Pastor Chris Bellefeuille, now of Trinity Lutheran in Stillwater - their book club loves it). "It is time says Jim Wallis, to call out genuine faith—specifically the "Christian" in White Christian Nationalism—inviting all who can be persuaded to reject and help dismantle a false gospel that propagates white supremacy and autocracy. We need—to raise up the faith of all of us, and help those who are oblivious, stuck, and captive to the ideology and idolatry of White Christian Nationalism that is leading us to such great danger. Wallis turns our attention to six iconic texts at the heart of what genuine biblical faith means and what Jesus, in the gospels, has called us to do. It is time to ask anew: do we believe these teachings or not?" (Currently hard cover, maybe wait?) 304 pages
3. November - December: ***Our Hidden Conversations (What Americas Really Think About Race and Identity)*** by Michelle Norris. A very powerful and hopeful book on race, started with the Postcard Project and turned into a book with more complete stories and photos. The author is a journalist who quit NPR to do this research. She collected MANY short responses to her question about how each of us feels about race. She took the responses, organized them cleverly, then took a deep dive into some of them. Easy to read a bit at a time. The interviews are varied and culturally diverse. Not just about black/white issues; the responses cover other groups too. Each original postcard response was to be 6 words or less. My personal favorite is "underneath, we all taste like chicken," although most were quite serious, many were angry and many remained hopeful. A wonderful cross section of American thoughts and sensitivities. 528 pages

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4. January: ***Of Boys and Men*** (*Why the Modern Male is Struggling, Why it Matters, and What to do About it*), by Richard Reeves. “Reeves looks at the structural challenges that face boys and men and offers fresh and innovative solutions that turn the page on the corrosive narrative that plagues this issue. *Of Boys and Men* argues that helping the other half of society does not mean giving up on the ideal of gender equality. In the updated paperback edition, Reeves provides good-faith, fact-based analysis and offers a positive vision for masculinity in a more equal world.” 256 pages
5. February: ***The Burning*** (*The Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921*) by Tim Madigan. “With chilling details, humanity, and the narrative thrust of compelling fiction, *The Burning* recreates the town of Greenwood at the height of its prosperity, explores the currents of hatred, racism, and mistrust between its Black residents and neighboring Tulsa's white population, narrates events leading up to and including Greenwood's annihilation, and documents the subsequent silence that surrounded the tragedy.” 368 pages
6. March and April dates coincide with Lent, so we can begin to read this book, and discuss it in May: ***The Universal Christ*** (*How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See Hope For, and Believe*), by Richard Rohr. Drawing on scripture, history, and spiritual practice, Rohr articulates a transformative view of Jesus Christ as a portrait of God's constant, unfolding work in the world. “God loves things by becoming them,” he writes, and Jesus's life was meant to declare that humanity has never been separate from God—except by its own negative choice. When we recover this fundamental truth, faith becomes less about proving Jesus was God, and more about learning to recognize the Creator's presence all around us, and in everyone we meet. 288 pages

\*Please note that all dates are flexible! We can add more time, or move on, as the Spirit moves us! We can add more books if we get ahead of ourselves! We will give 7:00 a trial run to see if that helps folks, and we will revisit this if it doesn't. One need not have read the whole book, we are focused on relationship building while learning! If you just want to read without coming to the book club, that's fine too - I just want people to see what we are up to.