

## 2022-23 WBLUMC Book Club selections

Do you love books and reading? If so, you're warmly invited to Book Club this year. All church members and friends are welcome! Our first meeting will be 7-8:15pm on Monday, Sept. 26. Our meetings will be by hybrid Zoom/in-person on the fourth Monday monthly (Christmas week we'll meet early, on Dec. 19). You can choose whichever form you prefer and can of course change at any time from one to the other. 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! For more information, [email Rick Flynn](mailto:rick.flynn@wblumc.org). See the full list below with reviews adapted from Amazon Reviews.

### September 26, 2022

#### **Cloud Cuckoo Land : Anthony Doerr. 2021. 640p.**

In the 15th century, an orphan named Anna lives inside the formidable walls of Constantinople. She learns to read, and in this ancient city, famous for its libraries, she finds what might be the last copy of a centuries-old book, the story of Aethon, who longs to be turned into a bird so that he can fly to a utopian paradise in the sky. Outside the walls is Omeir, a village boy, conscripted with his beloved oxen into the army that will lay siege to the city. His path and Anna's will cross.

In the present day, in a library in Idaho, octogenarian Zeno, Anna, Omeir, Seymour, Zeno, and Konstance are dreamers and outsiders whose lives are gloriously intertwined. Doerr's dazzling imagination transports us to worlds so dramatic and immersive that we forget, for a time, our own.

### October 24, 2022

#### **Saint Anything : Sarah Dessen. 2015. 432p.**

Peyton, Sydney's charismatic older brother, has always been the star of the family, receiving the lion's share of their parents' attention and - lately - concern. When Peyton's increasingly reckless behavior culminates in an accident, a drunk driving conviction, and a jail sentence, Sydney is cast adrift, searching for her place in the family and the world. When everyone else is so worried about Peyton, is she the only one concerned about the victim of the accident? Enter the Chathams, a warm, chaotic family who run a pizza parlor, play bluegrass on weekends and pitch in to care for their mother, who has multiple sclerosis. Here Sydney experiences unquestioning acceptance. And here she meets Mac: gentle, watchful, and protective, who makes Sydney feel seen, really seen, for the first time.

### November 28, 2022

#### **Under Jerusalem : The Buried History of the World's Most Contested City : Andrew Lawler. 2021. 464p.**

In 1863, a French senator arrived in Jerusalem hoping to unearth relics dating to biblical times. Digging deep underground, he discovered an ancient grave that, he claimed, belonged to an Old Testament queen. News of his find ricocheted around the world, evoking awe and envy alike, and with clarity and verve, acclaimed journalist Andrew Lawler reveals how their pursuit has not only defined the conflict over modern Jerusalem, but could provide a map for two peoples and three faiths to peacefully coexist.

### December 19, 2022

#### **Leonard and Hungry Paul : Ronan Hession. 2020. 256p.**

In this charming and truly unique debut, popular Irish musician Ronan Hession tells the story of two single, thirty-something men who still live with their parents and who are ... nice. They take care of their parents and play board games together. They like to read. They take satisfaction from their work. They are resolutely kind. And they realize that none of this is considered ... normal. Leonard and Hungry Paul is the story of two friends struggling to protect their understanding of what's meaningful in life. It is about the uncelebrated people of this world — the gentle, the meek, the humble.

And as they struggle to persevere, the book asks a surprisingly enthralling question: Is it really them against the world, or are they on to something?

### **January 23, 2023**

#### **A Gentleman in Moscow : Amor Towles. 2016. 480p.**

In 1922, Count Alexander Rostov is deemed an unrepentant aristocrat by a Bolshevik tribunal, and is sentenced to house arrest in the Metropol, a grand hotel across the street from the Kremlin. Rostov, an indomitable man of erudition and wit, has never worked a day in his life, and must now live in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history are unfolding outside the hotel's doors. Unexpectedly, his reduced circumstances provide him entry into a much larger world of emotional discovery. Brimming with humor, a glittering cast of characters, and one beautifully rendered scene after another, this singular novel casts a spell as it relates the count's endeavor to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be a man of purpose.

### **February 27, 2023**

#### **Storm Front : Jim Butcher. 2007. 320p.**

As a professional wizard, Harry Dresden knows firsthand that the "everyday" world is actually full of strange and magical things—and most of them don't play well with humans. And those that do enjoy playing with humans far too much. He also knows he's the best at what he does. Technically, he's the only at what he does. But even though Harry is the only game in town, business—to put it mildly—stinks. So when the Chicago P.D. brings him in to consult on a double homicide committed with black magic, Harry's seeing dollar signs. But where there's black magic, there's a black mage behind it. And now that mage knows Harry's name.

### **March 27, 2023**

#### **The Last Green Valley : Mark Sullivan. 2021. 458p.**

In late March 1944, as Stalin's forces push into Ukraine, young Emil and Adeline Martel must make a terrible decision: Do they wait for the Soviet bear's intrusion and risk being sent to Siberia? Or do they reluctantly follow the wolves—murderous Nazi officers who have pledged to protect "pure-blood" Germans? The Martels are one of many families of German heritage whose ancestors have farmed in Ukraine for more than a century. But after already living under Stalin's horrifying regime, Emil and Adeline decide they must run in retreat from their land with the wolves they despise to escape the Soviets and go in search of freedom.

### **April 24, 2023**

#### **Lightning Strike : William Kent Krueger. 2021. 400p.**

Aurora is a small town nestled in the ancient forest alongside the shores of Minnesota's Iron Lake. In the summer of 1963, it is the whole world to twelve-year-old Cork O'Connor, its rhythms as familiar as his own heartbeat. But when Cork stumbles upon the body of a man he revered hanging from a tree in an abandoned logging camp, it is the first in a series of events that will cause him to question everything he took for granted about his hometown, his family, and himself. Cork's father, Liam O'Connor, is Aurora's sheriff and it is his job to confirm that the man's death was the result of suicide, as all the evidence suggests. In the shadow of his father's official investigation, Cork begins to look for answers on his own. Together, father and son face the ultimate test of choosing between what their heads tell them is true and what their hearts know is right.

### **May 22, 2023**

#### **Black Cloud Rising : David Wright Falade. 2022. 304p.**

By fall of 1863, Union forces had taken control of Tidewater Virginia, and established a toehold in eastern North Carolina, including along the Outer Banks. Thousands of freed slaves and runaways flooded the

Union lines, but Confederate irregulars still roamed the region. In December, the newly formed African Brigade, a unit of these former slaves led by General Edward Augustus Wild—a one-armed, impassioned Abolitionist—set out from Portsmouth to hunt down the rebel guerillas and extinguish the threat. From this little-known historical episode comes *Black Cloud Rising*, a dramatic, moving account of these soldiers—men who only weeks earlier had been enslaved, but were now Union infantrymen setting out to fight their former owners.