

**Christ Episcopal Church's
Not Necessarily Religious Book Discussion Group**

List of Books Discussed (not in chronological order)

NOTE: CEC Library has a copy of many of these books.

1. Scarlet Music/Hildegard of Bingen/A Novel by Joan Ohanneson

Well-received, particularly by the healing group. There are CDs available to listen to her music. Unfortunately, they are not sung by Hildegard herself.

2. A Corner of the Veil by Laurence Cosse'

Well-received book. Tale about the Catholic Church's and French government's reaction to proof about the existence of God. It is not necessarily a religious book. Can be reread many times.

3. Founding Brothers by Joseph J. Ellis

More than you ever wanted to know about early American history.

4. It's Not About The Bike by Lance Armstrong

Autobiography of cancer-survivor and Tour de France winner.

5. Anger by Thich Nhat Hanh

A book for doing rather than just reading, written by well-known Vietnamese Buddhist monk.

6. Ishmael/An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit by Daniel Quinn

Thought-provoking. Led us to select Walden.

7. Walden by Henry David Thoreau

A true classic.

8. Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor E. Frankel

Frankel is a Holocaust survivor. His existential take on how to survive. He uses it in his practice.

9. The Lost Son/A Life in Pursuit of Justice by Bernard B. Kerik

Autobiography of police officer who was the New York City Police Chief at the time of the 9/11/01 World Trade Center tragedy.

10. A Prayer For Owen Meany by John Irving

Long. Some enjoyed it and others couldn't finish it.

11. Murder in The Cathedral by T.S. Eliot

This book is in play format and is about the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket. Watched the movie "Becket" afterward.

12. Seabiscuit/An American Legend by Laura Hillenbrand

Story about a racehorse from the '30s and the people connected to him. Some felt it was not well-written, but the story was engaging. Contains interesting facts about jockeys. Movie was released in mid-2003.

13. The Bonesetter's Daughter by Amy Tan

This story is about Chinese culture and a daughter dealing with her mother who has Alzheimer's.

14. The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison

Awareness of what white advertising does to poor black culture. Many felt the author was overly descriptive, while others enjoyed it. Morrison books tend to have no hope. Enjoyed more by women than men.

15. Personal History by Katharine Graham

Long. Lots of name-dropping. Reflections on Watergate and other points of history interesting. Story proves that being rich does not necessarily make one happy.

16. River Town/Two Years on the Yangtze by Peter Hessler

Story of an American who goes to China as a Peace Corps volunteer to teach literature at a Chinese teachers' college.

17. Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America by Barbara Ehrenreich

Reporter went to three locations to see if she could "make it" on a minimum wage.

18. Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix by J. K. Rowling

Latest (and longest) of the Harry Potter series. Not only for children, this book follows Harry through his fifth year at Hogwarts' School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

19. Don't Let's Go To The Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood by Alexandra Fuller

A sobering look at life in Africa through the eyes of a white child.

20. Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days by Tim Lahaye and Jerry B. Jenkins (and the Book of Revelation by John)

The first book in a series interpreting The Book of Revelation from a literal/fundamentalist viewpoint. Opinions ranged across the board.

21. The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown

Exciting and thought-provoking "fiction" about the attempts of the Catholic Church to hide Christ's alleged marriage to Mary Magdalene and the rightful place of the "sacred feminine." Much has been written about this book and its factual inaccuracies and we reviewed some of the articles.

22. Joshua by Dan Girzone

Interesting book about Jesus living in our midst. Although most people agreed with the principles espoused, opinions varied about the story and the way the principles were presented. Led to discussion of the pros and cons of organized religion as well as the application of some of the principles to our everyday lives.

23. The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd

A very well-written and thought-provoking "chick book" that was enjoyed by all, male and female. Interesting story about a 14-year old girl growing up in the Deep South at the time of the Civil Rights Act. Led to much discussion about the role of race and gender in the United States in the 60s, relationships between parents and children and the concept of forgiveness.

24. The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of The Oxford English Dictionary by Simon Winchester

Interesting story although some people did not like the author's writing style.

25. This Far by Grace: A Bishop's Journey Through Questions About Homosexuality by J. Neil Alexander

A thought-provoking book about one bishop's on-going struggle with questions about homosexuality. The book was quite even-handed and not judgmental. A recommended read for anyone interested in different views about homosexuality.

26. Godric: A Novel by Frederick Buechner

Discussed on Wednesday, July 21, 2004.

27. Life of Pi by Yann Martel

The story of a young boy stranded on a lifeboat in the Indian Ocean with a Bengal tiger (or not, depending on your interpretation of the ending). An easy read with very short chapters (100 of them) but hard to put down. The ending will make you question much of what you read earlier in the book.

28. Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follett

A long (972 pages) but enjoyable book about the building of cathedrals in 12th century England. Very good character development with much intrigue, conspiracies, violence, sex and war. An eye-opening look at life and living conditions in the 1100s as well as the role of the Catholic Church and the nobility.

29. A Sideways Look at Time by Jay Griffiths

A look at time from a decidedly feminist perspective. Most of the author's points and opinions can be gleaned from the first chapter, which is as far as many of the readers got.

30. Middlesex: A Novel by Jeffrey Eugenides

A very interesting book about a hermaphrodite who begins life as a girl but decides, for a variety of reasons, to become a boy at age 13. The narrator describes his personal journey but also provides an engaging history lesson from Smyrna to Detroit in the 20th century. Detroiters will enjoy revisiting Detroit's past, from the early days of Henry Ford to the riots in 1967 and beyond.

31. The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

Well-written, engaging and thought-provoking, this tale of two friends in Afghanistan during the late 70's was enjoyed by everyone. The author took us on an emotional roller coaster ride, alternating between happiness and sadness, but one that we didn't want to get off. Highly recommended.

32. A Love Divine by Alexandra Ripley.

The story of Joseph of Aramitheia, the wealthy man who supplied the tomb for Jesus' body after the crucifixion. An interesting discussion of the Middle East and Mediterranean around the time of Christ. Some felt that the book was lacking in substance and was more like a cheap romance novel. Others enjoyed the quasi-historical nature of the book and Joseph's many adventures during his travels.

33. Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince by J. K. Rowling

The sixth of a promised seven books proved to be an interesting but somewhat easier read than some of the previous books. The ending provided much food for thought and discussion, particularly on the question of whether he (we won't tell you who in case you haven't read it) is really dead and, if so, what does dead mean in the world of witchcraft and wizardry. One of our members said that for the first time she doesn't want to wait two years for the final book since she is very interested in seeing how the author attempts to tie up many of the loose ends.

34. The Agony and the Ecstasy: A Biographical Novel of Michelangelo by Irving Stone

A long and overly detailed, yet enjoyable, book about the life and times of Michelangelo. The book was well-liked by the group and led to discussion of many related and unrelated topics,

including the role of women and minorities in society (then and now), the history of the Roman Catholic Church, including the current requirement for celibacy and the apparent absence of a religious or spiritual basis for the election of Popes in Michelangelo's time, the incredible skill of Michelangelo as a painter, sculptor and architect, and the tragedy of the destruction of so many great works of art through the ages. An art history book would be a good complement to this book, although probably better consulted after having read it than during the reading so as not to spoil some of the surprises toward the end of the book.

35. To Ride Pegasus by Anne McCaffrey

To be discussed on Wednesday, December 7, 2005 at 7:30 PM.