



# Libraries Alive

Publication of National Church Library Association

*servicing church libraries since 1958*

## Inside this issue

- 1 Capturing the market
- 2 Letter from our President
- 3 Calendar
- 5 Site-seeing: popular Bible websites
- 7 Dewey or don't we?
- 8 Reviews
- 24 Upcoming promotional dates

Celebrating  
50 years  
of ministry!

*To Further  
the Gospel  
Through  
Church Libraries*



## Capturing the church library market

*by Dolores Klincky Walker*

Church librarians love books. We know what great books are on our shelves. Yet sometimes we're flummoxed that our treasure—our wonderful church library—seems to be the best kept secret in the church!

We worked hard to build a collection that included all the right categories and located it in a pleasant and accessible room. We cataloged, labeled, and publicized. We tried new and more

publicity, even hauled a book cart to the coffee hour. Yet our efforts have been relatively unrewarded. Why?

Some months ago I was recruited as a former librarian to help revive our moribund library. I nodded in approval as our committee members drastically weeded the collection and discussed publicity options.

Suddenly we found ourselves boxing up our collection to store as the library disappeared due to a major church renovation. While we waited, we tried to envision our new place in the church, wherever that would be. But it troubled me that our pastor didn't share our enthusiasm. It was as if he saw the church library as nice, but hardly necessary.

I began to wonder: Is our library necessary? What purpose does it serve? Who needs it? For what? Were people even reading any more?

I adjusted my antennae and listened. Yes, our people were reading. They were passing books around. I discovered we had at least four reading groups in our congregation! Yet the only connection to the church library was that one book discussion group met in that room.

People were reading, but not the church library books. Why not?

Personal conversations and a library survey were very instructive. In essence, we were offering good books, but not the books the readers wanted to read, so they went

continued on page 4

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*Letter from our President/* Chuck Mann

## How are you doing?

It's that time of year again. The busy winter and spring schedules at school and church have given

way to more relaxed summer schedules. It's a good time to look back and wonder, "How did we do this year?"

In searching through selection policies for church libraries (You do have one for your library, don't you?) I found a wonderful mission statement: "to provide resources and services" to the congregation through the following areas: 1. Spiritual growth; 2. Effective service; 3. Wholesome use of leisure time; 4. Living out our faith in the community and world today.

I would imagine most church libraries have very similar goals whether written or inferred. Taking time to reflect on the mission and purpose of your library is important for the continued growth and effectiveness of your ministry. You can use the sample mission statement to raise questions to think about.

Have you provided your church congregation support for spiritual growth through the materials in your collection? Have you offered support through programming opportunities in classes, book study groups, or other opportunities?

Does your library provide effective service to your members? Are library procedures clear, easy to understand and follow? Is your library available anytime the church is open or only during specific hours? Is the library "self serve," or does a library worker need to be

present before members can use the library and access its resources? (It would seem that in order to provide the most effective service to the church community, the more open the library can be, the better served the community will be). Also ask, are your library promotions effectively keeping your congregation aware of the resources available to them?

And, are you providing resources and programming to support the wholesome use of leisure time? Are the books and other media in the library high quality, interesting and compelling? Do they provide the user with a sense of hope and well being? The church library has the opportunity to provide a different set of resources to its members than those of the public or school library.

Last, having information available to the church members that helps them live out their faith in the community and world today should be an important part of your church library ministry. Are there books and resources in your library that encourage and challenge members to reach out and become involved in the world around them?

Periodically evaluating the mission and purpose of your library ministry and the role it plays in the church community is important for its continued growth and effectiveness. I encourage you to pause for a moment to ask yourself, "How are we doing?"

Chuck Mann  
*President, NCLA*

# Calendar

## Northeast

CT, DC, DE, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, VA, WV

### October 17, 2009 Church Library Workshop.

National Church Library Association DC/MD/VA Chapter. Oakton United Methodist Church, Oakton, VA. Contact Mary Bowen: bowenjm@verizon.net

## Southeast

AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN

### August 10-12, 2009 Church Library Ministry Workshop.

Lifeway. Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center, Leesburg FL. Contact Bill Carmichael: bcarmichael@flbaptist.org

### September 11-12, 2009 Church Library Seminar.

Lifeway. Blue Springs Baptist Conference Center, Marianna FL. Contact Bill Carmichael: bcarmichael@flbaptist.org

### September 12, 2009 Church Library Conference.

Lifeway. First Baptist Church, Cleveland TN. Contact Bev League: bleague@tnbaptist.org

### September 19, 2009 Church Library Conference.

Lifeway. Site TBA. Knoxville TN. Contact Bev League: bleague@tnbaptist.org

### October 2-3, 2009 Annual State Church Library Conference.

Lifeway. First Baptist Church, Corinth, MS. Contact Ian Richardson: irichardson@mcabc.org

## Midwest

IL, IA, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI

### July 26-28, 2009 Annual Conference.

Church and Synagogue Library Association. McKinley Grand Hotel, Canton OH. Contact Beth French: 440-884-7415, kaskyfrench@yahoo.com

### August 14-15, 2009 Church Library Conference.

Lifeway. Blue River Kansas City Mission Center, Lee's Summit MO. Contact Lois Ellis: loisvbelton@aol.com

### September 26, 2009 Church Library Workshop.

National Church Library Association Chicagoland Chapter. Trinity Lutheran Church, Lombard IL. Contact Grace Puls Gracielib@aol.com, 630-323-2137.

### September 26, 2009 Church Library Workshop.

National Church Library Association Siouxsland Chapter. Perkins Restaurant (5925 Gordon Dr.) Sioux City IA. Contact Nancy Jensen: 712-226-4141, jenbird1@cableone.net

### September 26, 2009 Church Library Conference.

Lifeway. First Baptist Church, Anna IL. Contact Debbie Muller: debbiemuller@ibsa.org

### October 3, 2009 Church Library Workshop.

National Church Library Association Fox Valley WI Chapter. Ascension Lutheran Church, Green Bay, WI. Contact Anne Ierien: 920-494-2871, wwavi@netnet.net

### October 24, 2009 Church Library Workshop.

National Church Library Association Twin Cities Area Chapter. Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church, St. Paul MN. Contact Sandra Johnson: 952-544-8117, sjj24@msn.com

### January 26, 2010 Church Library Workshop.

National Church Library Association Twin Cities Area Chapter. Calvary Lutheran Church, Golden Valley MN. Contact Sandra Johnson: 952-544-8117, sjj24@msn.com

## Northwest

AK, ID, OR, MT, WA, WY

### August 7-8, 2009 Church Library Conference.

Pacific Northwest Association of Church Libraries. The Firs Conference Center, Bellingham WA. Contact Judy Johnson: hojuj@comcast.net

## Southwest

AZ, CA, CO, HI, NV, NM, OK, TX, UT

### Fall 2009 (TBA) Church Library Workshop.

National Church Library Association Pikes Peak Area Chapter. First Congregational Church, Colorado Springs CO. Contact Suzann Alstrin: al.suzann@yahoo.com, 719-594-4248

### October 8-10, 2009 Church Library Conference.

Lifeway. MacArthur Baptist Church, Irving TX. Contact Rita Kirkland: RKirkland@firsteulless.com, 817-267-3313

## NCLA chapter news:

Learn what's happening at NCLA chapter events, view photos, and download newsletters and meeting registrations. Visit [www.churchlibraries.org](http://www.churchlibraries.org) and click on "Chapters" in the black bar at the bottom of the page to find the link to Chapter News.



## Calendar deadlines:

Submission deadline:	For events after:
Aug 1	Oct 1
Nov 1	Jan 1
Feb 1	Apr 1
May 1	July 1

## Capturing the church library market (continued from page 1)

### Support NCLA when you search the Internet

How? Each time you search the Internet, and use *Goodsearch*, a donation is made to our organization.

Simply go to the *Goodsearch* webpage at [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com), enter "National Church Library Association" as your charity, then search the Web just as you normally do.

Use the site's *GoodShop* link to find coupons and discounts at more than 1,000 stores. Up to 30% of every purchase will go to NCLA.

*"It's easy to follow once you're there. Last fall my niece told me about it, and I loved it!"* —NCLA member Melissa Taylor

Try it today! Thank you in advance for using *GoodSearch* to support church library ministry.

elsewhere—borrowing from the public library, from friends, joining a book club, or buying what appealed to them.

Times have changed. Have we changed with them? Yes, many libraries now have DVDs as well as books on the shelves. But my research awakened me to growing hurdles church libraries face. Though many people say they don't read, new and used books abound—at the grocery check-out and airport shops, as well as traditional settings like bookstores. Many people prefer to buy their own books so they can mark them up. They're more likely to search the Internet than turn to a reference book. Some prefer to hear a book on CD or tape. Like it or not, church libraries are competing for readers.

If your circulation is feeble, take a serious look at your library. My survey confirmed that easy access to the library and ease of use are important, and that rows of old books are a definite turn-off. Publicity can enlighten those in the congregation who don't know that the church even has a library and those to whom it never occurred to use it.

Your library may need a tune-up. Ponder the questions suggested above, especially pinpointing the needs that your library meets that are otherwise unmet. Once you determine what members of your congregation actually need, and want, you can customize your collection to "capture the market."

Is your church library an echo of the past? Or an entry gate to the future?

Use Dolores' simple *Church Library Use Survey* to learn more about your own church library market. Dolores recommends, "Give it to everyone in your congregation that you know reads."

*Former church librarian, long-time book reviewer and freelance writer, Dolores Walker*

*is active in her church, Pioneer United Methodist in Walla Walla, WA, as well as at other "God-assigned tasks." Once, asked if she was afraid of anything, she replied, "Oh yes! Of finding myself with no reading material!" Dolores has contributed articles and reviews to Libraries Alive or its forerunner, Lutheran Libraries for more than 40 years, starting in 1965.*

### Church Library Use Survey

1. Does your church have a library?  
 Yes  No  Don't know  
If YES, please continue this survey.  
If NO, please return the survey.
2. How much do you use the library?  
 Never  Rarely  
 Occasionally  Frequently  
 Used to/Intend to
3. What use do you make of it?  
 Reference  Fiction  
 Non-fiction  Children's books  
 Videos/Recorded works
4. If you do not use your church library, or use it very little, please check any of the following reasons that apply to you:  
 I prefer to buy the books I read.  
 It doesn't have the specific books I want to read.  
 It doesn't stock the type of books I read.  
 It's not easy to use (e.g. location or hours)  
 The collection is old/unappealing.  
 It never occurred to me to use it.  
 Other:

Do you have any suggestions for increasing the use of your church library?

Please return this survey to [name/instructions] by [date].  
THANK YOU!

# Site-seeing: Popular Bible websites

Recommended by Carol B. Anderson, Spring Creek Baptist Church, Rome, GA, and Barbara B. Houston, Tallowood Baptist Church, Houston, TX

## Bible Gateway

<http://www.biblegateway.com/> Search the Bible in more than 80 languages plus 20 different versions in English. Many versions are also available in audio format. Includes links to *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*.

## Bible Words

<http://netministries.org/bbasics/bbwords.htm> Select from an alphabetical list of Bible names to hear correct pronunciation and find links to other related resources.

## Biblos

<http://biblos.com/> Study the Bible using this virtual library including atlas, thesaurus, commentaries, concordance, dictionary and the Bible in 40 languages. This site also offers devotions and graphics.

## Blue Letter Bible

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/> Listen to passages from the Bible while searching commentary and images. Examine Hebrew and Greek texts. Search by chapter and verse or use the Daily Bible Readings.

## E Bible Teacher

[www.ebibleteacher.com](http://www.ebibleteacher.com) Use these free graphics and backgrounds for PowerPoint presentations in Bible teaching and worship.

After you have checked out these popular Bible websites, the next question you are likely to ask is, "How can I make these available to our library users?" The answer really depends upon your level of technological expertise. Here are some ideas, from simple to sophisticated:

- Create printed bookmarks listing websites with brief descriptions. Distribute them to patrons. As you develop other lists of useful and

appropriate websites keep them, by subject, in a notebook labeled "Webliographies."

- If you have Internet access from the library, add these sites to your web browser "Favorites" or "Bookmarks" list. Invite patrons to take a "site-seeing" tour during a visit to the library. Or make your webliographies with their links directly available from the computer desktop screen.
- Use a free online bookmark service such as, [www.ikeepbookmarks.com](http://www.ikeepbookmarks.com). These sites allow you to organize lists of bookmarked websites in folders you can label by topic. In addition to "Bible Study" you may want to add categories for "Missions" or denominational contacts or journals. You could even create folders for special audiences or workshops. (Check out our bookmarks at [www.ikeepbookmarks.com/ChurchLibraries](http://www.ikeepbookmarks.com/ChurchLibraries).) Set up your own lists of bookmarks using your church or library name in the address or you are welcome to share ours. Online bookmarks have the advantage of being available from any computer, wherever you access the Internet.
- Create a library web page and include lists of links to Bible websites and other topics. Services like [www.ourchurch.com](http://www.ourchurch.com) provide a web building service that is easy to use, and it is free. If your library or church already has a website simply add these links at the appropriate spot. (Or give them to your webmaster.)
- Conduct a "site-seeing" tour for larger audiences, using a computer connected to the Internet, with web pages projected on a large screen.

continued on page 6

## Free Resources!

Visit the Member Resources section of NCLA's Website to access a host of FREE resources including:

- Book & media lists on every imaginable topic
- Guidelines and tip sheets on book care, budget planning, collection development, library automation, policies, program ideas, promotion, weeding, and more!
- Back issues of *Libraries Alive* and *Branches*
- Book & media reviews with purchasing and cataloging links

Resources are always being added so be sure to check back if you have not visited the Member Resources section lately.

To find the Member Resources section, go to [www.churchlibraries.org](http://www.churchlibraries.org), and click on "Member Log In."

Contact NCLA if you need assistance accessing Member Resources. Email [info@churchlibraries.org](mailto:info@churchlibraries.org) or call 651-430-0770.

## Board of Directors Opening

Are you excited about church library ministry? Do you have time and a desire to become more involved and give back to your association? We invite you to serve as a member of NCLA's board of directors.

What's involved? Board members commit to a two-year term, participating in a variety of fun activities throughout the year. Cross-country travel is not required. The board meets quarterly via conference call, and communicates between meetings by email.

Each board member also serves on one of three strategic teams: Membership, Finance, or Technology. New this year is an effort to strengthen chapter and national organization relationships. Through this initiative, board members will each "adopt" a chapter.

Board members provide invaluable guidance, actively participate in supporting the organization, research new opportunities for growth and set direction for the future.

We want you! For more information, contact Sue Benish: [suebenish@churchlibraries.org](mailto:suebenish@churchlibraries.org) or 651-430-0770.



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Volunteers easily work from church or home. To expand your library ministry, you can even offer your congregation Internet access to the catalog.

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Read more about the convenience and security of hosting at:

[www.SurpassSoftware.com/Surpass\\_CL\\_hosting.htm](http://www.SurpassSoftware.com/Surpass_CL_hosting.htm)

Surpass Software is a corporate member of NCLA.

## Site-seeing: Popular Bible websites (continued from page 5)

Be prepared for feedback. The digital generation feels that everyone has a right to their opinion, so they express it freely. Comments may include other suggested websites to be added to your list of links. Be sure to have a set of criteria in place by which to evaluate proposed additions to your list. Other patrons may tell you about how they use the databases—comments you may want to share. Include an e-mail address for comments wherever you publish your webliography. You may want to set up a separate e-mail account just for receiving comments from patrons. Google, Hotmail, and Yahoo are just a few of the many vendors offering free e-mail accounts. You may also want to consider adding a blog or other type of public comment section to your website.

Should you add websites to your library catalog? That is entirely up to you. The Library of Congress has no guidelines as yet on how to catalog websites using the standard MARC record. Libraries that do include websites in their catalog create their own guidelines. See The University of Michigan guidelines at [http://library.umac.mo/services/catalog/internal\\_cat/Guideline\\_for\\_Cataloging\\_Websites.pdf](http://library.umac.mo/services/catalog/internal_cat/Guideline_for_Cataloging_Websites.pdf).

Be prepared to take on other assignments. Every ministry of the church will want its own set of links. What a marvelous opportunity for collaboration! The expertise of each ministry leader, combined with the judgment and discernment you use to select appropriate print resources, topped off with technological know-how . . . WOW!

# Dewey or don't we? That is the question!

by Vernita Kennen

That is truly the question that besets most church librarians, even those who are trained professional librarians and come to church library work from other library jobs in schools, colleges, businesses or public libraries. It is also a question whose answer has a long life in any library—changing classification systems is very difficult and not undertaken lightly.

I will begin by telling you that my preference is to use the Dewey Decimal System for classification. Hopefully, once you hear my reasons, you will find it the most useful for your library situation, too. I also recommend it for any size church library; even if a church library is now small and just beginning since the hope is that a collection will grow and expand. Dewey is really a “one size fits most” answer.

Dewey is used in most schools (especially elementary, middle and high schools) and many public libraries. That means that it is familiar to most people who will be using a church library as well as persons who will be working as volunteers there. Familiarity cannot be discounted, especially in church libraries which are self-service and which are not always staffed with volunteers. Shelves can always include subject labels such as “Devotional Materials” as well as the Dewey numbers.

Dewey is easy to use and understand; the ten broad categories help define all

acquisitions and yet are expandable enough to make the 200s (the religion section) very specific. You may decide to use one, or at most two, places after the decimal in all categories except the religion section and be more expansive there. Also classification and cataloging is simplified by using Dewey, since most books include the needed information on the reverse (verso) of the title page.

Libraries which use other, or self-determined subject categories, for materials often find that the subject headings are rather arbitrary. Just what is the difference between “Christian Life” and “Spiritual Journey,” for example? If the classification system is going to serve a growing library for a long time, more than one person will be doing the classification of materials. Will they all understand the subject categories?

Plan ahead, think larger, to provide more materials for library ministry, and consider how to make the task for yourself and the other library volunteers an enjoyable one. Dewey or don't we? I recommend that you Dew-ey. That is my answer.

*Vernita Kennen is the Library Coordinator at Incarnation Lutheran Church Library in Shoreview, Minnesota.*

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*Familiarity cannot be discounted, especially in church libraries which are self-service and which are not always staffed with volunteers.*

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## Discounts stretch more than just library dollars

NCLA members are eligible for special discounts not only to help stretch library dollars, but to help congregations stretch their dollars too. The next time a book club at your church needs books or your Sunday School leaders need materials or equipment for promotional displays, be sure to let them know about our discounts.

Here's how: simply refer them to the NCLA discount flyer to find the special information and exclusive member codes needed to receive our discounts when making purchases.

The NCLA discount flyer also includes up to date information about standard discounts that are available to church libraries.

The 2009 Discount Flyer can be found in the Member Resources section of the NCLA Web site at [www.churchlibraries.org](http://www.churchlibraries.org), or contact the NCLA office to have the flyer emailed or mailed to you.

## Topical index

- 12 Bible & Theology
- 14 Children
- 16 Christian Life
- 17 Church & Ministry
- 17 Ethics & Social Justice
- 18 Fiction
- 20 Prayer & Devotional
- 22 Religious Experience
- 23 Social Issues
- 23 INDEX by title

## Rating system for reviews:

4
Highly Recommended
3
Recommended
2
Recommended with reservations
1
Not recommended

# Reviews

## NON-FICTION

### BIBLE & THEOLOGY

**ABOUT THE BIBLE:** Short Answers to Big Questions. Revised and Expanded Edition. Fretheim, Terence E. Augsburg 2009, 180p, paper, 9780806657677, \$12.99 [220.6]



This new edition of a 1999 book is about twice the size of the original. As such, I believe it will be twice as informative and twice as valued by those who use it. The Big Questions this book addresses are vital to any responsible interpretation of the Bible. The first question “What is the Bible?” shows us that the Bible is more like a library than a single volume. The second concern is “How the Bible came to be” — who wrote these various books? When? Why? In what languages? And how were they translated and collected? Many people try to interpret the Bible’s message without taking questions like these seriously. That doesn’t work very well. Fretheim, Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary, also discusses major themes of the Bible, the authority of the Bible, the meaning of inspiration, the relationship of Old and New Testaments, contradictions in the Bible and much more. The final chapter, “Key Affirmations to Remember in Reading the Bible,” presents 13 points that every Bible student should continually keep in mind. Finally, Fretheim provides a brief list of the best in Study Bibles, Bible Dictionaries, commentaries and study guides. Use this list to guide your library purchases, but above all add *About the Bible* to your collection. Rating: 4 —RO

### THE CONSOLATIONS OF

THEOLOGY. Rosner, Brian, ed.

Eerdmans 2008, 160p, paper, 9780802860408, \$16.00 [230]



How does theology impact our daily problems? The answers of six Christian theologians are

explored in this work: Lactantius on anger, Augustine on obsession, Luther on despair, Kierkegaard on anxiety, Bonhoeffer on disappointment, and C.S. Lewis on pain. To put their ideas in perspective, a brief biography of each theologian is given including his experiences regarding the particular problem under discussion. The theologian’s writings on the topics are summarized by the authors and practical applications are included. Rating: 3 —MS

### HOW CAN A GOOD GOD LET BAD THINGS HAPPEN?

Tabb, Mark. Navpress 2008, 221p, paper, 978160006268, \$14.99 [231.8]



Throughout the ages Christians have struggled with the question of why God allows suffering to happen. Mark Tabb uses the book of Job as a reference point to remind the reader that God never promised us an easy life, but instead that, “Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows” (John 16:33). Living a good and faithful life, as Job did, does not ensure one of peace and prosperity. Christians suffer the same types of things as nonbelievers. Tabb presents examples of individuals facing the agonies of divorce, death of a loved one, illness, job loss etc. as well as catastrophic human events such as the bubonic plague, AID’s, the Holocaust and 9/11 in his frank discussion of suffering. Woven through the book is the promise that God made to His people, which was not a pain free life on earth, but the inheritance of eternal life in heaven with Jesus Christ. This book is not only thought-provoking, but it also provides comfort for those facing tribulations. Rating 4 —AL

TELL IT SLANT: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers. Peterson, Eugene. Eerdmans 2008, 287p, 978-0-8028-2954-2, \$24.00 [226.06]



This is the fourth volume in Eugene Peterson's spiritual theology series. Cumulatively, the series resembles a systematic theology, but Peterson places his unique stamp on the genre, offering a *spiritual* theology grounded in the close reading of biblical texts, and practiced in prayer. Like all of Peterson's work, it is beautifully written, winsome, and precise. This book has two parts. The first part, *Jesus in His Stories*, examines ten stories in Luke 9:51 — 19:27 that are unique to the gospel of Luke. Although Jesus was a preacher and a teacher, Peterson believes Jesus spent much of his time (as do we) in conversation, addressing his disciples and others in the quiet dignity of everyday speech. So these ten stories of Jesus offer an opportunity to learn from the conversational Jesus. Peterson devotes the second half of the book to six prayers of Jesus. Peterson believes story and prayer are the core languages of humanity, and he wants to get the prayers of Scripture, especially these prayers of Jesus, onto our lips and into our hearts. Peterson begins, appropriately, with the Lord's Prayer, but then moves on to identify five other Jesus prayers that collectively remind us that it is Jesus who first prays *for us*—then our prayers are prayers prayed in a language that is "answeringly attentive to God" (159). As always, it is a joy to keep company with Eugene Peterson, and the book is highly recommended.

Rating: 4 —CS

THIRSTY: Meeting Jesus at Your Deepest Need. Nappa, Amy. Navpress 2008, 221p, 97816000060939, \$13.99 [266.506]



In *Thirsty*, Amy Nappa uses the Biblical account of the Samaritan Woman at the Well in *John 4:4-49*

to comment on the relationship between humankind and Jesus Christ. Each chapter begins with a few verses of the scripture and is subdivided into sections headed with eternal truths. Using examples from her life, her friends, and her reading, the author connects the reader and the woman at the well by making her a living, breathing person. The strength of this book is that readers begin to find parallel examples in their own lives while engaged in the numerous stories Ms. Nappa weaves and intersects with the Samaritan woman, making it an excellent book for group discussion. The book is aimed at women. Discussion questions for each chapter, further scripture references, and a short biography are included. Rating: 4 —AMB

#### CHILDREN

ALICE'S WORLD RECORD.

Kennemore, Tim. Eerdmans 2008, 76p, 9780802853363, \$12.00 [JUV FIC]



Oliver is the smart one who always wins every game he plays, and Rosie is the youngest, who blames her monumental messes on a stuffed penguin. Alice is the middle child - quiet, well-behaved and unremarkable - until one day, when she finally beats Oliver at the Alphabet Game. Oliver's poor sportsmanship sets the entire family on edge, and the problems follow them on their visit to their grandparents' house. The reader tracks Alice's realistic struggles to understand her brother and sister, while she tries to maintain her own footing in the family. Tim Kennemore cleverly shields Alice from the lectures that Oliver no doubt receives, so the narrative does not get bogged down in mini-sermons. Seven to ten year-old readers will enjoy the short chapters, lively drawings, and realistic dialog, while adults will appreciate the valuable lesson on fair play. Rating: 3 —KET

## Librarians helping librarians

Have a library story to tell? We'd love to hear it! Had a successful fundraiser recently? Is your library "more than a room"? Stumbled across a great Web resource lately? Have a book you can't keep on the shelf? Recently remodeled, newly automated, or celebrating a milestone? We are looking forward to hearing all the details, and getting to know you better too.

From cataloging solutions to everyday procedures, from shortcuts to examples of tried and true advice, we know you have much wisdom to share.

Make a difference in your association. Share your experiences with your fellow church librarians and be an active participant in NCLA's network of support.

Send submissions to the editor by email [news@churchlibraries.org](mailto:news@churchlibraries.org), or by mail c/o NCLA at the address on the back cover of *Libraries Alive*.

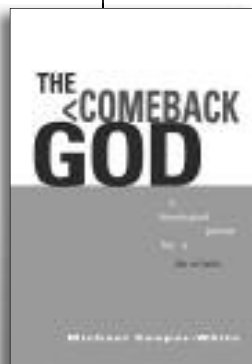
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Nominations are open for the second annual *Erwin John Award*. This award recognizes a librarian who has demonstrated faithful and excellent service to church library ministry over 5 years, has been active in NCLA, and works to build relationships with other church libraries.

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To nominate a librarian, write a one-page letter describing why the nominee deserves the award and mail or email it to NCLA by August 1, 2009.



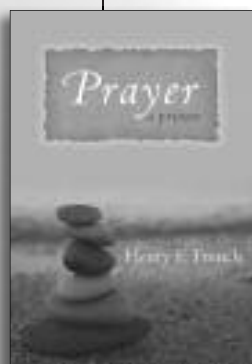
### The Comeback God

A Theological Primer for a Life of Faith

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Although Yahweh of Israel and the God who raised Jesus, often appear to be “down for the count,” *The Comeback God* provides a pathway using contemporary images and language to rediscover the truth and traditions of faith.

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A Primer

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This resourceful tool clears up myths about prayer that often stand in the way of actually praying. French offers the reader “a way in” to a life grounded in, and enriched by daily prayer. He clearly describes forms of verbal prayer, meditation, and contemplation with the needs and questions of beginners at prayer in mind.

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THE BEDTIME RHYME. Wangerin Jr., Walter. Paraclete 2008, 30p, 9781557256472, \$16.95 [EASY]



Using only rhymes, a mother reassures her young child that she will protect him from robbers, falling things, animals, and monsters, and in each case goes on to tell, playfully, how she would do away with the things that frighten her little boy, especially at bedtime. She then says she would write big signs on their home saying, “Hands off my Baby Brown.” She tells her son he can always call upon her for help, and then goes on to explain that he can also ask God for protection, and God loves her child even more than, and is even stronger than, the mother. The pictures are delightful, and at the end is a glorious illustration of the hand of God holding the bed with the child sleeping peacefully. Rating: 4 —*MW*

BELIEVING IN NARNIA: A Kid’s Guide to Unlocking Secret Symbols of Faith in C.S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Gillespie, Natalie. Thomas Nelson 2008, 183p, paper, 978-1-4003-1282-5, \$12.99 [C 823.9]



With the popularity of recent movies based on C.S. Lewis’ books, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*, there is a proliferation of books available to guide one through Narnia. Gillespie states that her book “isn’t a picture book for little kids, and it wasn’t written for parents. It was written for you—children ages 7-11.” *The Chronicles of Narnia* is a popular series with children and adults. This book is an adequate guide for children. All seven books of the series are briefly retold, the characters are analyzed and the “secrets” are explained. The emphasis, however, is on Jesus and to “help you learn more

about your relationship with Jesus.” If this book is a guide for children through Narnia, why is the author’s emphasis on the reader’s personal relationship to Jesus Christ? This approach takes all the fun out of reading the Narnia Chronicles. There are other suggested resources listed at the end of the book to further explore the Narnia Chronicles. Paul Ford’s *Companion to Narnia* is considered the classic reference. Rating: 2 —BS

**HEART IN THE POCKET.** Bourguignon, Laurence. Eerdmans 2008, 24p, 9780802853431, \$16.50 [EASY]



Mama Kangaroo loves her little Jo-Jo very much, but it’s time for him to grow up and leave the safety of her pocket. But Jo-Jo is very comfortable, and despite Mama’s gentle questions to prompt him to explore, the young kangaroo is quite content to remain at home. Mama points out all the amazing things Jo-Jo could see and do if he would only take the chance. After he uses up all his reasons not to explore, she finally gets him to leave her pocket and see for himself. This story illustrates the fear of leaving home as well as the strong bond between mother and child. And while it’s a lovely story about children’s fears, it could also serve as an allegory for older children who might be reluctant to strike out on their own in the real world. Rating: 4 —NSK

**STARFISH COVE: Never Trust a Krum!; Da’Codfather (DVD).** Grand Design Productions 2008, 40 min, color, 9780740316791, \$14.99 [C DVD 248.8]



This DVD presents the first two episodes in the Starfish Cove series. Though there are some cute songs and vibrant colors in the production, it comes off as a pale imitation of a well-known children’s TV series. Much of the humor is too adult for the intended children’s audience. *Never Trust a Krum!* teaches children about identifying and avoiding predators and presents some good personal safety ideas. *Da’Codfather* tells a

good deeds tale, but it seems to say that the reason for doing good is so that you’ll get something back, rather than doing good because it is the Christian thing to do. I had a family with grade school children watch this DVD, and none of them cared for it. This reinforced my reservations about its viability for the intended audience. Ages 5-10. Rating: 1 —AL

## CHRISTIAN LIFE

**ALL I NEED IS JESUS & A GOOD PAIR OF JEANS: The Tired Supergirl’s Search for Grace.** Aughtman, Susanna Foth. Revell 2009, 90p, paper, 97808007031724, \$12.99 [248.8]



Written primarily for women, the author uses anecdotal characters (Worry Man, Condemno Boy, Little Miss No Fair, etc.) to identify common human struggles and then follows with biblical references to illustrate how modern “tired supergirls” can triumph over those challenges with Christ. The attempt at humor is tedious and overdone. The best and most interesting feature of this book is the final collection of Study Questions which are challenging and encourage examination of self and one’s relationship to God and Jesus.

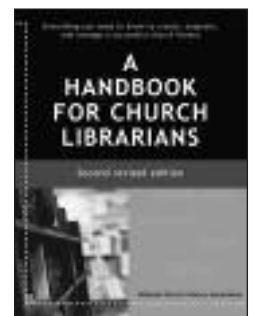
Rating: 1 —MN

**BE THE SURPRISE: Experiments in Spontaneous Faith.** Esau, Terry. Navpress 2008, 169p, paper, 9781600061967, \$12.99 [248.4]



Daily, for 30 days, Terry Esau prayed, “Surprise me, Lord.” He published the results in a book of that name. It then occurred to him that receiving was only half the process, so he prayed to “be the surprise.” The tales of what ensued, of how God used him in often astonishing ways, make this a very uplifting book. Esau used to write jingles for commercials—which may explain his zany approach to life. At first I thought this was just a lightweight casual read, but in insights that impacted him along the way, I discovered wisdom that

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enriches me as well. Although few people have Esau's charisma and boldness, nor his particular calling. This book teaches us to be more aware of the people we encounter, and to assume that God is at work in our lives. If we are willing, we may be used as tools in God's projects—and could end up with astonishing tales of our own. A good addition, but not a "must have" for libraries. Rating: 3 —*DKW*

**BOOMERS ON THE EDGE: Three Realities That Will Change Your Life Forever.** Hargrave, Terry. Zondervan 2008, 268p, paper, 9780310276593, \$14.99 [248.8]



Baby Boomers are finding that their lives are not turning out the way they anticipated. Some have found the retirement they imagined. Many have not. Plans drastically change when aging parents need special care and adult children must return home. Boomers find they cannot retire. What is God's plan for the boomer generation? They have become the caregivers of the world. Never expecting this role, many are caught off guard. This book gives insight into these problems and lets Boomers know they are not alone facing these issues. This book is a good eye opener for people who have not had to deal with these issues, as well as for those who already are. Rating 3 —*NP*

**ENOUGH: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity.** Hamilton, Adam. Abingdon 2009, 110p, paper, 9781426702334, \$10.00 [248.8]



In light of today's financial crisis, *Enough* could not be more timely. A back-to-basics, scripturally based guide to living a life the way God intended it to be lived. This book identifies some areas that have brought us to the financial and spiritual condition we are living in at this present time. It offers practical and scriptural guidelines as to how to make adjustments in our lives that will aid the reader to live a meaningful life

with purpose. Content of the book calls the reader to define their life purpose and challenges them to set goals in order to find joy and contentment in living a life of simplicity and generosity. Excellent reading for adults of all ages who are interested in making a change in their own lives as well as in the lives of others by their generosity. Rating: 4 —*ARG*

**JESUS BRAND SPIRITUALITY: He Wants His Religion Back.** Wilson, Ken. Thomas Nelson 2008, 220p, 97808849920530, \$19.99 [248.4]



Despite the confrontational tone of the subtitle, the author is not attacking anyone on Jesus' behalf. Rather, "Jesus brand spirituality"—according to Wilson—is the way of living that Jesus modeled. Christians are pilgrims trying to follow Jesus down his path. We are faithful when we take one step at a time in the light we are given and focus on our own spiritual state rather than that of others. Wilson sees following Jesus less as an act of obedience than as a response to the pull of Jesus. His non-judgmental spirit and respect for individuals make this a good book for seekers and believers who are re-examining the essence of Christianity. He speaks easily of traditional and non-traditional theology and leading-edge scientific thought, as well as boots-on-the-ground discipleship. Through personal anecdotes Wilson lets us know himself as a fellow pilgrim, but the book is not built around his experiences. Its warmth and air of discovery captivate the reader. This pastor/author snaps up the window shades when we didn't even realize the room was dark. Rating: 4 —*DKW*

**JUST COURAGE: God's Great Expedition for the Restless Christian.** Haugen, Gary A. Intervarsity 2008, 148p, 9780830834945, \$18.00 [248.4]



Are you "traveling with Jesus but missing the adventure?" If so, why? Is that the way you really want it to be? The adventure starts when you begin to live as if you really believe the things Jesus taught—things like becoming as little children, say, or loving an enemy. Gary Haugen's equivalent of a demanding mountain climb is his involvement with International Justice Missions. As one of 300 Christian lawyers, investigators, and other advocates, Haugen helps rescue victims of slavery, violence, and oppression in many countries. Though his own calling to service is through IJM, and the book is filled with inspiring stories from his experience, his point is that any Christian's life can be

adventurous. We need only be willing to take Jesus' teaching seriously enough that our actions embody our beliefs. Early Christians turned the world upside down because Jesus taught them a new way to live. Haugen challenges modern Christians to do the same. This well-written book is a great choice for a church library.

Rating: 4 —DKW

**200 POMEGRANATES AND AN AUDIENCE OF ONE: Creating a Life of Meaning and Influence.** Wood, Shawn. Abingdon 2008, 125p, paper, 9780687654925, \$16.00 [248.4]



I was totally fascinated by the author's intertwining of Old Testament character Hiram into each chapter of this book along with many present day life illustrations. In the story of Hiram and his 200 pomegranates (I Kings 7) are five



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~ Douglas William Jerrold

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components of life-artistry that author Shawn Wood profiles in five individuals in the five chapters of this book. Most of us do not think of ourselves as artists unless we have had formal training in painting or music. But after reading *200 Pomegranates* the reader will have no doubt that having been created by God the Creator gives each of us the potential to be a great artist in the truest sense of the word . . . even if it is only seen or heard by an audience of One. This would be a great book to add to your church library's collection or to use in a group book study. Rating: 4 —ARG

### CHURCH & MINISTRY

**FREE TO BE BOUND:** Church Beyond the Color Line. Wilson-Hartgrove, Jonathan. Navpress 2008, 206p, 9781600061905, \$12.99 [277.3]



Since the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, we have seen progress toward integrated schools, workplaces, and now the presidency. Yet the Christian church today remains the most segregated institution in our society. *Free to Be Bound* chronicles twenty-something Pastor Wilson-Hartgrove's pilgrimage from his childhood in North Carolina clan country, across the color line, to an all black church. He and his young wife moved into "the hood" in Durham, joined a movement call New Monasticism, and began to minister at a historically black church. Reaching out to their neighbors, they invited homeless people to live with them. They mentored neighborhood kids, provided summer camp and work experiences for teens, and organized community celebrations. His hospitality, peacemaking, and reconciliation efforts provide us with inspiration to address racism and segregation in our own churches. Pastor Wilson-Hartgrove's book is a call for true unity within the church. Some of his ideas for sharing of resources and redistribution of wealth will be challenged by many readers, but because of the hopeful aspects of his young ministry, I do recommend this book for

group discussions on how to integrate and transform the body of Christ.

Rating: 3 —BM

**ON THE WAY WITH JESUS:** A Passion for Mission. Showalter, Richard. Herald Press 2008, 149p, paper, 9780836194159 [266]



This book threads the history of over 500 hundred years of western missionary effort, from sixteenth century European radicals through to today's missionary efforts, not just from the west, but from east and west, north and south. The Anabaptist author, when asked is there hope for the traditional church, responds "Is there hope anywhere else?" He views today's non-traditional movements—missional, renewal, emerging—as growing-edge expressions of the traditional church itself. Regarding the post-Christendom world, the author reminds us that Jesus told us the world would reject his followers. "Lord, we are unworthy, we are weak, we are not excellent, but we want to go." How? "By my Spirit," says the Lord. Where? "To places where the church is not—yet." Rating: 3 —MS

**SACRAMENTAL LIFE:** Spiritual Formation through the Book of Common Prayer. DeSilva, David A. Intervarsity 2008, 266 p, paper, 9780830835188, \$18.00 [264.03]



There seem to be two kinds of people: those who find repeated words boring and meaningless and those who find them comforting and a way to delve into deeper meanings. The *Book of Common Prayer* is for the latter. Also, the best way to learn about something is to learn about all aspects of it—those one likes as well as those one does not. The *Book of Common Prayer* takes this approach. In this book, the author addresses four of the sacraments contained in the *Book of Common Prayer*—Baptism, the Eucharist, Marriage and Burial—and explores the meaning behind the words

used in each. Following each short chapter are exercises for “Putting it into Practice.” This book is not for everyone, but for those who appreciate this approach, it is a marvelous resource. Rating: 3 —*JC*

### DRAMA, POETRY & LITERATURE

**THE EMMAUS READERS:** Listening For God in Contemporary Fiction. Felch, Susan M. and Gary D. Schmidt, eds. Paraclete Press 2008, 208p, 9781557255433, \$17.95 [823]



Where can God be found in modern life? According to *The Emmaus Readers*, the answer is in contemporary fiction. The twelve novels considered in this book span a variety of genres: historical fiction, mystery, fantasy, science fiction, and graphic novels. The authors are: Ron Hansen, P.D. James, Mary Doria Russell, David Guterson, Nichole Mazarella, Max Allan Collins and Richard Piers Rayner, Leif Enger, Yann Martel, Ian McEwan, Frederick Buechner, Oscar Hijuelos, and Olga Grushin. The reader will find a synopsis of the novel, biographical information about the author, a discussion of the main themes, questions for discussion, and a bibliography of other similar books. Integrative discussion questions about the novels and a bibliography are at the end. The book is designed primarily for reading groups, book clubs, and librarians, but individual readers looking for spiritual issues relevant to daily life will also find it a useful tool. Rating: 4 —*AMB*

### ETHICS & SOCIAL JUSTICE

**HEALING FOR A BROKEN WORLD:** Christian Perspectives on Public Policy (DVD). Calvin Media Foundation 2008, color, ASIN:1433504960, \$29.99 [DVD 261.8]



This thought provoking video series consists of 12 ten-minute segments that are based on Steve Monsma’s book, *Healing for a Broken World:*

*Christian Perspectives on Public Policy.* The video can be used alone or in conjunction with the book. It features Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, and other Christian scholars and public policy experts. A study guide is included to explain each segment and gives the central theme and the outline for that segment. The questions at the end of each segment stimulate discussion and reflection. I was impressed with the broad coverage of topics all Christians deal with today; for example, Justice, Life Issues, Poverty, Africa, Violations of Human Rights. This would make an excellent basis for small group Bible Studies. Rating: 4 —*RE*

**LOVING ENEMIES:** A Manual for Ordinary People. Klassen, Randy and Joyce Klassen. Cascadia 2008, 147p, paper, 9781931038539, \$13.95 [241.4]



Loving enemies is one of the harder commands of Jesus, commonly shuffled aside, especially in times when our country is in conflict with very real enemies. Many Christians see warfare as realistic and inevitable and therefore necessary. Few people are aware of the successes of peacemakers, the power of non-violent resistance. The Klassens present a strong case for rethinking the relative merits of warfare vs. peacemaking. In addition to studying the solid biblical foundation for peacemaking, the authors relate their own struggles with responding to bullies, mugging, and family abuse. They also display a wide acquaintance with peacemaking efforts—and successes—throughout history and all over the globe. In a non-threatening style, they encourage ordinary people to follow Jesus, step by step, down the “loving enemies” path. Rating: 4 —*DKW*

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*Branches* is NCLA’s email newsletter, created to bring you even more information and support for your church library ministry.

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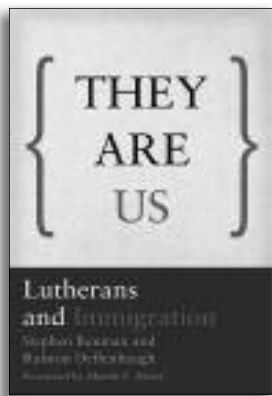
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## NO ATHEISTS IN FOXHOLES:

Prayers and Reflections from the Front.

McLaughlin, Chaplain Patrick J., CDR, USN. Thomas Nelson 2008, 252p, 9780849919985, \$19.99 [956.7]



Chaplain McLaughlin, "Chaps", cares for warriors and peacemakers. He has walked and talked with our troops who may

one day be blown up by an explosive device, and the next day have to discern who is a bad guy and who isn't. Who on another day are part of a medical mission to bring treatment to local villages, soccer nets to a bare field, or school supplies to an Iraqi elementary school. His prayers and stories cover two tours of duty in Iraq in 2005 and 2007. In very short concise chapters, this book brings the reader into the lives of men and women in the midst of war as they experience strength, grief, separation from families, courage, fear,

sorrow, joy, thanksgiving, and compassion. Chaps is an ELCA Pastor who, since 1992, has served with all five branches of the U.S. military sharing God's love and peace. He urges everyone to pray, and keep praying for all who go in harm's way as they suffer and sacrifice so much to protect freedom. Rating: 4 —BE

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

### FINDING HOPE IN RECOVERY:

Families Living With Addiction (DVD) 44 min, color, Mennonite Media/Faith & Values Media, B001NOE8X2, \$24.99 [DVD 362.29]



This documentary on addiction and recovery suggests that America is not paying attention to its #1 health problem which results in billions of dollars in lost production and health care, is a component in a majority of the 2.1 million adults incarcerated, and

factors into the lives of 65% of children in families on welfare. It addresses the social stigma of drug and alcohol addiction, identifies addiction as a brain disease and explores some of the programs and potential for recovery. Effectively using vignettes of recovering addicts, family members and professionals and their experiences in the field of addiction and recovery, it provides much information and encouragement for those affected by addiction. Rating: 4 —MN

**HOPE FOR WHOLENESS: The Spiritual Path to Freedom From Depression.** Fawcett, Sharon L. Navpress 2008, 230p, paper, 1600062156, \$9.74 [248.8]



The author didn't just write this book; she experienced it. Clearly written from her heart and her desire to help others suffering from depression, this book is beautifully on target. She suffered for nine suicidal years, trying medication and therapy without success. They helped, but it wasn't until she turned to God that the clouds began to lift. She tells of her journey, unashamedly sharing the pain and feelings of worthlessness. She tells us that depression involves body, soul and spirit and that all three must be addressed to find wholeness. She writes that consistent spiritual sustenance is crucial towards wholeness. Each chapter concludes with self-reflection exercises and a meditation. Lists of references and sources of help abound. Three appendices are provided for further study. It's a deeply inspiring book for all. It definitely deserves a place in every church library. Rating: 4 —EB

**PILOT YOUR HEALTH CARE JOURNEY: A Good Patient Could Be a Dead Patient.** Duffy, Jean. Authorhouse 2008, 161p, paper, 9781434343185, \$11.99 [362.1]



This health and wellness book encourages all of us to go from being patients to being PILOTS

in our health care journey. The acronym PILOT represents Persistent, Inquisitive, Learning, Organized and Tenacious. The author gives very practical advice and examples of how to accept responsibility for our own health care. It reminds us that health care professionals need us as patients to help them so they don't miss valuable clues as to what is going on in our bodies. Other chapters give detailed explanations of various tests and scans and their results. The information is detailed, yet easy to read. Throughout the book we are inspired to ask specific questions and be informed, making sure to discuss each phase with an advocate whom we have chosen to be with us as our ears during a challenging time. The final chapter discusses quality of life and how to adjust. Rating: 4 —BE

**PLAIN TALK ABOUT ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE: Alzheimer's Related Dementia and Wandering (DVD).** Gateway Films 2008, 61 min, color, 727985012957, \$24.99 [DVD 616.8]



This DVD can be a useful addition to your Church library. Although hampered by a "talking head" style of presentation, and some terminology I found overly technical at times, there is much valuable information here. Divided into two segments — "Alzheimer's & Related Dementia" (38min) and "Wandering" (23 min) — this DVD provides a helpful introduction to this devastating disease which affects, to some degree or another, one in eight of everyone 65 years or older, and one in two of everyone over 85 years of age. Not intended for purposes of either diagnosis or treatment, this DVD is instead a presentation which can help to identify and to explain some symptoms of Alzheimer's. This can be a valuable tool for use in an Adult Forum (easily spread over two sessions), or for viewing by individuals in the privacy of their homes. Rating: 3 —WS

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70 WAYS TO BEAT 70. Biebel, David, James and Bobbie Dill. Revell 2008, 255p, paper, 9780800732905, \$12.99 [613.2]



A physician, a nurse and a minister have joined together to produce this easy to read book.

The message is presented in 70 short topics all geared to help the reader reach seventy years of age. Much of the information is not new, such as "exercise" or "eat a balanced diet," but there is current research referenced. Chapter notes at the end of the book include specific websites or journals for further information. And such reminders as "forgive," "cry more," "practice generosity," for example, prod us gently in areas that we all too often overlook. This is a delightful book that encourages reading and then re-reading; let the words sink in and then, hopefully, the actions will take place. With 70 ways spelled out to become healthier, our work is cut out for us!

Rating: 3 —JD

### PRAYER & DEVOTIONAL

GLIMPSES OF GOD'S GRACE: More Stories of Faith, Hope and Love. Hummel, Rev. Dr. Cynthia Huling. Authorhouse 2008, 269p, paper, 9781434350381, \$15.49 [242.64]



This engaging and delightful book is a sequel to the author's first book, "The Lice Lady: Holy and Hilarious Moments in Ministry."

God's grace is an allusive thing. When looking for it, we often can't see it. The author illustrates that grace abounds in everyday things, in everyday gestures and occurrences; we need only to open our eyes to see it. Filled with moments of her ministry and interaction with people and events in their lives, she shows us with humor, candor and much compassion how God is in the small things. I have been using this as a devotional book since I received it and have found it to be enlightening and inspiring each time I pick it up. Suitable for small group discussion, and valuable as a devotional tool for individuals. Rating: 5 —CP

PRAY BIG FOR YOUR CHILD: The Power of Praying God's Promises for Your Child's Life. Davis Jr., Will. Revell 2009, 186p, paper, 9780800732462, \$12.99 [248.3]



This book continues Will Davis' series of *Pray Big* books, a series inspired by Jim Collins' discussion of Big, Hair,

Audacious Goals (BHAGs). Davis reworks BHAGs as BHAPs, Big Hairy Audacious Prayers. The book helps the reader think of what biblically inspired and faithful big prayers for our children might be. The book is highly recommended, for the following reasons: 1) It helps the reader design biblical, specific and bold prayers, what Davis terms "pinpoint" prayers, 2) It functions as a primer of catechism in the Christian faith for readers who are parents and might not otherwise read such a book, 3) It tells lots of good stories, but also offers examples of prayers that are short, but profoundly biblically based. The book even includes an appendix of 31 pinpoint prayers for children and a month's worth of training in praying pinpoint prayers. Highly recommended as a resource for libraries, Sunday school programs, and all parents. Rating: 4 —CS

SPILT MILK: Devotions for Moms. Vujnov, Linda. Zondervan 2008, 224p, paper, 9780310285113, \$12.99 [242.6]



Caught off-guard by the author's sassiness in the beginning of some of the devotions, I found it hard to get into the scriptures and grasp her point. Some introductions have a real quirkiness about them that was almost offensive. This I found not to be only a generational opinion after asking my twenty-five year old daughter who is a mother to also read it. She had the same opinion. This could be just a personal preference in devotion material for us. The author was interim Junior High pastor at Saddleback Church in Orange County, CA. Rating: 1 —ARG

## SCIENCE & RELIGION

**THE CELL'S DESIGN: How Chemistry Reveals the Creator's Artistry.** Rana, Fazale. Baker 2008, 331p, paper, 9780801068270, \$16.99 [215.7]



This is the book I have been waiting to find. It links religion with the great mysteries of art, mathematics, and science. In order to understand author Fazale Rana, it would be best to have a background in chemistry and biology, but even without this, it is unmistakable that the facts ring true to the novice as well. Rana, for example, reviews the organization, complexity and elegant design of a single cell, linking it to the case for biochemical Intelligent Design. Working up from the simplest of cells to the most complex, scientists direct their attention back to the simplest life forms, the prokaryotes to see the intricate details. An international team of scientists determined in 1999 that "the minimal number of genes for life to be about 246." This discovery along with the discovery of the genetic code represents the most potent evidences supporting Intelligent Design. Correlating these facts to the Divine Artist's studio, biochemists relate that much like art, cellular design requires a series of complex steps. Origins of life researcher David Deamer states, "Looking down this list of steps, one is struck by the complexity of even the simplest form of life." A product of abductive reasoning leaves us with the truth (belief) that life at its most fundamental level stems from a Creator's handiwork. This treasure is accompanied by an extensive collection of drawings, notes, a glossary and an index. This is most certainly a monograph to be treasured by all educated and intelligent Christians. Rating: 4 —*MMW*

## TEEN

**DO HARD THINGS: A Teenage Rebellion Against Low Expectations.** Harris, Alex & Brett, 241p, cloth, Multnomah 2008, ISBN 13: 978-1-60142-112-8, \$16.99 [YA 248.8]



Written by 19-year-old twin brothers, this book challenges teenagers to stop thinking of adolescence as the last bastion of childhood and use the period to attempt hard things that will shape their character for meaningful adulthood. As the brothers illustrate from their own and others' experiences, "hard things" aren't necessarily unpleasant things. Rather, they are vehicles for growth, stretching yourself by voluntarily taking on responsibilities that are usually reserved for adults. For example, they applied for internships to Alabama's Supreme Court (successful), though they were only 16 and had never been away from home. Later, they set up an immensely popular blog to encourage other teens to join the "rebellion" against low expectations. The book is packed with inspiring stories of teens who responded. Although the authors agree that doing the hard thing will pay off for anyone, they are obviously evangelical Christians. My one reservation about the book is that teens unaccustomed to the language of conservative Christians may not give its message a hearing. Rating: 3 —*DKW*

**JUST ANOTHER GIRL.** Carlson, Melody. Revell 2009, 221p, paper, 9780800732578, \$9.99 [YA FIC]



Astor Flynn's life at seventeen seems hopeless. She has few friends and fewer dates because her mother has designated her to be the primary caretaker of her younger sister, Lily, who was born mentally disabled. After her parents' marriage fails, her dad moves out and her mother withdraws from her responsibilities to Lily and buries herself in work. Astor has that special touch and understanding that is needed to handle her sister, but she also

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realizes that if she continues with things as they are, she will have no life of her own. Astor shows maturity and fortitude as she devises a plan to save her family.

Rating: 4 —*MMW*

**A NOT SO SIMPLE LIFE:** Diary of a Teenage Girl. Carlson, Melody. Multnomah 2008, 246p, paper, 97816011421173, \$12.99 [YA FIC]



Author Melody Carlson is a seasoned, award winning author of over 200 books. Her talent as an author is apparent in this one

of several titles in the series: Diary of a Teenage Girl. Maya Stark is only fifteen, but is much older than her years. She tries to cope in a dysfunctional family. Her parents are divorced, absorbed with themselves, and not the needs of Maya, who is self-taught and home schooled. Maya's father was an 80's rock star who is trying to revive his career. Her mother is addicted to drugs and depends on Maya for many of the things parents would do for their child. When Maya finds out that her mother's sister, whom she did not know existed, has passed away, she discovers another side of her family that is caring and loving. Even as they grieve, Uncle Allen offers his home to Maya. Maya wonders if she can adjust to a new uncle and cousin who have different values and live in a Christian home. Rating: 4 —*MMW*

## FICTION

**A CONSTANT HEART.** Mitchell, Siri. Bethany House 2008, 381p, paper, 9780764204319, \$13.99 [FIC]



The 1590's come to life as Marget, the daughter of a knight, is to be married to the Earl of Lytham. Lytham whose first marriage had been annulled, is a courtier in the court of Queen Elizabeth I, where beauty is a curse, friendship is bought and sold, and true love is the unpardonable sin. Marget is presented to the queen, who is jealous of Marget's beauty and ridicules her. Marget

just wants to fit in, but is ignored by all the other countesses. Lady de Winter comes to her aid and teaches a maid how to paint Marget's face with white ceruse (lead paint) and wear orange hair like the others to imitate the queen. Lytham's first loyalty must be to the queen. He marries for the dowry, and at first doesn't trust Marget because she is beautiful like his first wife. There are many trials and misunderstandings, but in the end love wins out because of a constant heart.

Rating: 4 —*VJ*

**DAISY CHAIN** (Defiance Texas, Book 1). DeMuth, Mary E. Zondervan 2008, 355p, paper, 9780310278368, \$14.99 [FIC]



Mary DeMuth poses two major questions in this novel: What happened to Daisy Marie Chance when the vivacious thirteen-year-old disappeared on her way home one summer evening? and Which of the Bible-quoting characters correctly understands God? Daisy's best friend, Jed, spends approximately 350 gripping pages wrestling with those questions. Who can Jed believe? His fire-and-brimstone preacher father is a blatant hypocrite, but doesn't he still speak for God? Despite all the sincere Christianity, family dysfunction permeates the characters' entwined lives. DeMuth presents great characterization and a good plot. However, at the end the author dodges our eager "at last!" with an unsatisfying partial answer and actually writes, "The mystery of who took Daisy and why unfolded in a most excruciating way." Presumably it "unfolds" in the next volume—or the next? By the time a sequel appears, who will care what happened to Daisy or why? That's a shame, since the other question is an important one, but will also go unanswered. This first book of a trilogy cannot stand alone. I feel cheated. Rating: 2 —*DKW*

THE EDGE OF LIGHT (At Home in Beldon Grove, Book 1). Shorey, Ann. Revell 2009, 316p, paper, 9780800733308, \$13.99 [FIC]



Molly McGarvie is a woman living in 1830s Missouri. After her husband dies from cholera, she is determined to take care of herself and her children. Her brother-in-law takes over the family business and forces her to fend for herself. She decides to leave town and along the way another family tragedy strikes. Molly must go on and find a way to make a living and restore her family. She settles in a new town and begins weaving blankets for an income. With many setbacks, Molly continues to struggle to survive. Surprises at the end make you anxious for the next book in the series. Ann Shorey has been writing for over fifteen years but this is her first novel. I enjoyed it very much and will be looking for the sequel. Rating: 4 —PD

FAKING GRACE. Leigh, Tamara.

Multnomah 2008, 380p, paper, 9781590529294, \$14.99 [FIC]



Maizy Grace is the enjoyable main character in this romantic comedy that delivers a message about forgiveness and what it means to be an "authentic Christian." Tamara Leigh has written a novel filled with interesting characters and laugh-out-loud humor while reminding the reader that Christians have the same problems as other people. The difference between them is found in the ways they deal with their suffering and help others to cope in tough times. Although the plot is very predictable and some of the characters stereotypical, it is a fun and fast read. There is a study guide included that could be used for a book group. This book would especially have appeal for a younger, possibly teen-age, audience. Rating 3 —AL

FATAL DEDUCTION. Roper, Gayle. Multnomah 2008, 332p, paper, 9781601420138, \$12.99 [FIC]



Littered with crossword puzzles and secret mysteries, this novel will keep readers hooked until the end. Libby thought she was going to her great Aunt's house to fulfill the last words of her will and earn an inheritance with her sister. But when she trips over someone, things get complicated. Libby thought she knew her sister, but hidden words in crossword puzzles start to convince her otherwise. What had her sister gotten herself into? Would she even listen if Libby tried to help her? To do so, Libby would need help, and that help was right across the street. Rating: 4 —SM

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THE LONGING: (The Courtship of Nellie Fisher, Book 3). Lewis, Beverly. Bethany House 2008, 347p, paper, 9780764203121, \$13.99 [FIC]



This final book in the series wove all the threads of Nellie Fisher's tangled life together in a most satisfying way. The series revolves around the impact Christianity had on an Amish community. In *The Longing*, family splits, shunning, separation of lovers, grief and forgiveness, all come into play in this saga of extended family. Keeping track of all the characters presents a challenge, and some of the situations portrayed seem far-fetched, but somehow the reader's desire for a happy ending for Nellie keeps the pages turning. It is delightful to immerse oneself in the Amish community and its ways of doing things. I hated to leave these pleasant simple people behind when I turned the last page. I suggest the three books be read in sequence, but *The Longing* can be enjoyed on its own. *The Parting* and *The Forbidden* preceded *The Longing*. Rating: 3 —EB

RAIN SONG. Wisler, Alice J. Bethany House 2008, 295p, paper, 9780764204777, \$13.99 [FIC]



Nicole Michelin was born in Japan where her parents were missionaries. Something terrible happened when she was very young, and her mother died. She and her father returned to North Carolina and never spoke about it again. Through her website where she gives information about the care of fish, Nicole meets Harrison Michaels. She discovers he lives in Japan and knew her family when they lived there. He knows more about her childhood than she does, and provides answers to many of Nicole's questions. Nicole must overcome her fear of flying before she can go to Japan and come to terms with her past so she can welcome her future. This is Alice Wisler's first novel, and she has done an excellent job. I look forward to reading more from this new author. This would be

a very good book for a book club. There are questions for discussion in the back of the book. Rating: 4 —PD

SKID (Occupational Hazards, Book 3). Gutteridge, Rene. Waterbrook 2008, 325p, paper, 9781400071593, \$12.99 [FIC]



Hank Hazard is still trying to find his true calling after his parents died in a freak hot tub accident years earlier. A former homeschooler who worked as a mime in the family's clown troupe, he lands a job as an airline customer service evaluator posing as a passenger. On Flight 1945 to Amsterdam, he begins a zany journey filled with outrageous characters—a pig with an attitude, a menopausal flight attendant, a jewel thief and an imposter posing as a federal agent. Along the way Hank takes the opportunity to evangelize a passenger having boyfriend issues. The adventure leaves you laughing throughout the book. When it appears they will be forced to crash land, some of the characters take a realistic look at their broken lives. In this third installment of the Occupational Hazard series, Gutteridge skillfully weaves several story lines into one terrific book with a gentle Christian message. Highly Recommended Rating: 4 —NSK

THE SUMMER THE WIND WHISPERED MY NAME. Locke, Don. Navpress 2008, 349p, paper, 9781600061530, \$12.99 [FIC]



Remember the “good ole days”? Journey back to the 1960's and experience small town life through the eyes of pre-teen, Dave Connors. You will be taken back in time and walk the streets with Dave and his friends as they go about their summertime adventures. Meet the quirky neighbors and laugh until you cry at the antics of Dave and his friends. But be prepared to reminisce about how it used to be when the kids were free to run from house to house and enjoy the elderly neighbors' company. You'll also get a

glimpse of the goings on behind closed doors in Dave's home. Will this pleasant, close-knit neighborhood be destroyed if a black family actually buys the house on the block? An enlightening, delightful story! Rating: 4 —*PL*

**WHERE THE HEART LEADS.** Sawyer, Kim Vogel. Bethany House 2008, 347p, paper, 9780764202636, \$13.99 [FIC]



Thomas, a young Mennonite man from Kansas who has just completed college in Boston, has made friends with some

prestigious people with backgrounds very different from his. His best friend's sister dotes on Thomas and makes it clear she would like to marry him. But Daphne is not a Christian, and Thomas has been warned about being unequally yoked. And he has a girl back in Kansas waiting for him. He is torn between remaining in Boston, where he has promised Harry and Daphne he would work for a presidential candidate, and returning to Kansas, where his family anxiously awaits his return. He goes to Kansas for a few weeks, much to the delight of his father, who has plans for him to open a business there. He enjoys spending time with his parents and younger sisters, but eventually returns to Boston to keep his promise. Working for the election turns sour when he learns things about his candidate's background that conflict with everything Thomas has been taught. He turns to God for help in making these important, life-altering decisions, but God seems strangely silent. Should he follow the lead of his heart?

Rating: 4 —*MW*

**WIND RIVER.** Morrissey, Tom. Bethany House 2008, 302 p, paper, 9780764203473, \$13.99 [FIC]



Tyler Perkins, back from Iraq, returns to Wyoming for two reasons. One is to forget what happened during his tour of

duty. The other reason is to fulfill a promise to his 86-year old friend, Soren Andeman. As the hiking trip evolves, we

see that both men have wrongs they want to make right and consciences to heal.

Tyler has to heal in order to have a fruitful future, and Soren to prepare for meeting his Maker. Both discover that their sins of the past are not that much different, and they must forgive themselves before they can be ready for the future. The book's

end left me wanting to read more from Tom Morrissey. An easy read for lazy summer days. Rating: 4 —*SV*

#### INDEX

About The Bible.....	8
Alice's World Record.....	9
All I Need Is Jesus & A Good Pair of Jeans.....	11
Be the Surprise .....	11
Bedtime Rhyme, The.....	10
Believing In Narnia.....	10
Boomers on the Edge .....	12
Cell's Design, The .....	19
Consolations of Theology, The.....	8
Constant Heart, A .....	20
Daisy Chain .....	20
Do Hard Things .....	19
Edge of Light, The .....	21
Emmaus Readers, The.....	15
Enough.....	12
Faking Grace .....	21
Fatal Deduction.....	21
Finding Hope in Recovery .....	16
Free To Be Bound .....	14
Glimpses of God's Grace .....	18
Healing For a Broken World .....	15
Heart in the Pocket .....	11
Hope for Wholeness.....	17
How Can A Good God Let Bad Things Happen? ...	8
Jesus Brand Spirituality .....	12
Just Another Girl.....	19
Just Courage.....	13
Longing, The.....	22
Loving Enemies .....	15
No Atheists in Foxholes .....	16
Not So Simple Life, A .....	20
On the Way with Jesus.....	14
Pilot Your Health Care Journey.....	17
Plain Talk about Alzheimer's Disease.....	17
Pray Big for Your Child .....	18
Rain Song .....	22
Sacramental Life.....	14
70 Ways to Beat 70.....	18
Skid.....	22
Spilt Milk .....	18
Starfish Cove.....	11
Summer the Wind Whispered My Name, The.....	22
Tell it Slant.....	9
Thirsty .....	9
200 Pomegranates and an Audience of One .....	13
Where the Heart Leads .....	23
Wind River .....	23

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