

OFF THE SHELF



Mission Statement: To energize church library ministry through education, resource sharing, spiritual encouragement and fellowship.

Summer 2021

A Letter from Your TCACLA Co-Presidents

Dear Fellow Members of TCACLA,

At our virtual spring meeting in April, COVID trends looked like they were definitely moving in the right direction, and we optimistically predicted we could finally have an in-person meeting this fall with our long-promised and much anticipated speaker, forensic pathologist Janis Amatuzio. Although the latest information on the delta variant has now injected some uncertainty into whether the fall meeting will be in-person, by Zoom or some combination (final determination to be made in September), we are very pleased to announce that Dr. Amatuzio will be our speaker on the **morning of October 16**. Please spread the word because this is a rare opportunity to hear her unique insights into life, death, and immortality—and somehow this seems even more timely now after more than a year and a half of pandemic.



If your library does not have her two books (see p. 3), now would be a great time to acquire them. They are also available at all public libraries, including an audio version of her first book in her own voice—an especially meaningful way to absorb such a heart-felt, personal memoir. This is a doctor who really listens to her patients and their families as they deal with death. Consider promoting her books and this chance to hear her to your congregation as a whole.

We will also be having a very important business meeting in the fall. Two board positions are up for election: Vice President and Treasurer. Serving on the board is a wonderful opportunity to plan future meetings and guide the future of TCACLA. Terms are for two years and typically involve about 4 meetings a year (by Zoom during the pandemic) and email communication in between. No board member can serve more than two terms in any position, and it is particularly important to the vitality of the organization to continually inject new ideas by rotating participation. This is not onerous or time-consuming. Some of us would even say it's the most fun board we've ever served on! **Please consider volunteering to run for one of these positions.** Contact any board member to let us know of your interest or to answer any questions you may have.

You will receive detailed information about the meeting format, along with registration instructions, by mid-September. In the meantime, stay safe and well—and keep on reading!

Sincerely,

Grace Kurtz and Jeanne Schleh
Co-Presidents

General Information

The **Twin Cities Area Church Library Association (TCACLA)** is a non-profit support organization serving church librarians. Membership is open to individuals and churches of all denominations that desire to network with others on church library development and enrichment.

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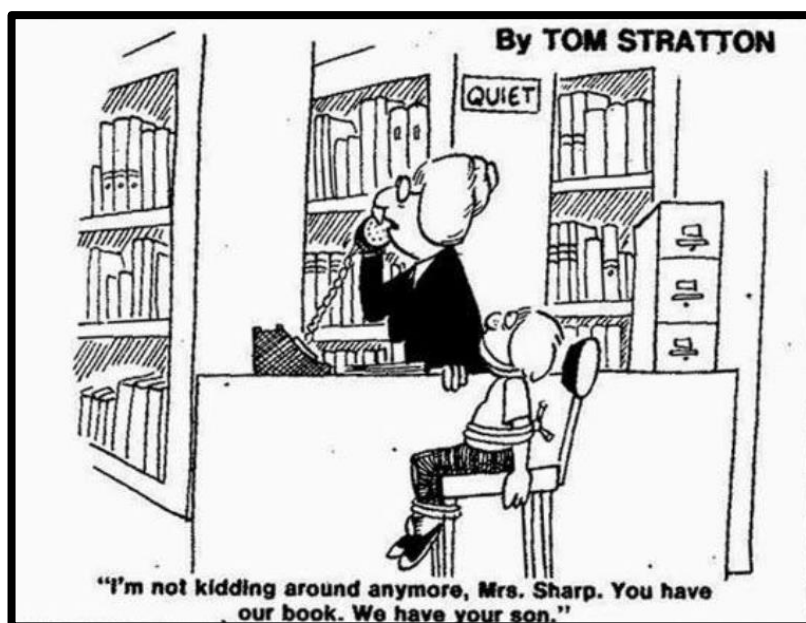
TREASURER'S REPORT

Members: 23 churches, 2 individuals

01/01/2021 \$2,936.50 **Beginning Balance**

-\$119.40 *Off the Shelf* Printing & Postage
-\$31.17 Website

07/31/2021 \$2,785.93 **Ending Balance**



OVERDUE MATERIALS

Per the church librarian's handbook that the National Church Library Association issued in 2006, most church libraries don't charge fines for overdue books. In recent years, public libraries have adopted a similar policy.

We'd still like to get the books back, though. How do you handle this in your library? This is a particularly challenging issue in 2021 when books may have been checked out since March 2020!

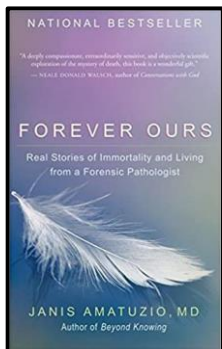
FALL MEETING – OCTOBER 16

MEET OUR SPEAKER



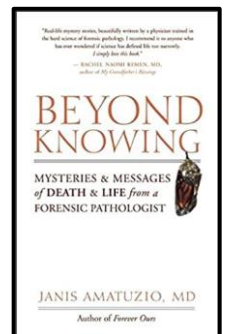
Dr. Janis Amatuzio MD is certified by the American Board of Pathology in Anatomic, Clinical, and Forensic Pathology. She trained at the University of Minnesota and the Hennepin County Medical Center. As Chief Medical Examiner in Anoka County, she served as coroner in a number of counties in Minnesota and Wisconsin until 2009. She has spent over 30 years in practice, primarily in forensic pathology. As a result, she has set up and directed many death investigation systems, trained death investigators and law enforcement, performed numerous autopsies, and testified in state and federal court. You may have seen her appearances on the crime TV series *Deadly Women* and *Forensic Files*.

Dr. Amatuzio chose her line of work in part because it allowed her to help unravel the mystery of each person's death. She found that by listening and talking to the loved ones of the deceased, she could offer them some sense of closure. In the course of her work, she has heard extraordinary stories from grieving loved ones, patients near death, police officers, clergy members, and colleagues — stories of spiritual and otherworldly occurrences concerning the transition between life and death.



She wrote her first book, ***FOREVER OURS: Real Stories of Immortality and Living from a Forensic Pathologist***, to share some of those stories. They include the experience of one of her first patients who, on the day of his death, told of being “visited” by a friend who had been dead 40 years and the incredible coincidence of two daughters thousands of miles apart experiencing unexplained sensations at the precise moment their father passed away. Dr. Amatuzio presents these heartfelt accounts and honors the mystery of life and death, exploring the realms of visions, synchronicities, and communications on death's threshold. Her own narration of the audiobook is particularly compelling. You can listen to a sample on the page where the book is sold on Amazon.

Dr. Amatuzio's second book is ***BEYOND KNOWING: Mysteries and Messages of Death and Life from a Forensic Pathologist***. She once again presents the amazing, heartfelt accounts told to her by others, but also shares her own story — reflecting on the course of her career, the bonds she has formed over the years, and the lessons she has learned. Her exploration of the wisdom the living might find in these accounts leads to her conclusion that “Everything *truly* is all right.”



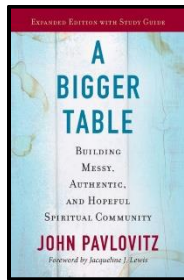
Dr. Amatuzio's presentation in October is titled
Trace Evidence of Eternity.

WHAT CHURCHES ARE READING

The following books have caught my eye in recent months. You are encouraged to share what your church is reading at any time. Please e-mail book titles and authors to otseditor@gmail.com.

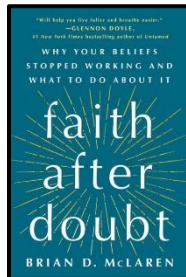
“If you only read the books that everyone else is reading, you can only think what everyone else is thinking.” - Haruki Murakami

A BIGGER TABLE: Building Messy, Authentic, and Hopeful Spiritual Community by John Pavlovitz, Westminster John Knox, 2020.



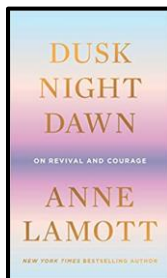
Pavlovitz invites readers to envision a church that is big enough for everyone, by holding up a mirror to the modern church and speaking clearly on issues at the heart of the Christian community: LGBT inclusion, gender equality, racial tensions, global concerns, and theological shifts. He shares moving personal stories, his careful observations as a pastor, and his understanding of the ancient stories of Jesus to set the table for a positive, more loving conversation on matters of faith. This new edition includes a small-group study guide.

FAITH AFTER DOUBT: Why Your Beliefs Stopped Working and What to Do About It by Brian D. McLaren, St. Martin's, 2021.



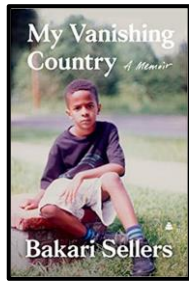
Using his own story along with stories of a diverse group of struggling believers, McLaren, a former pastor, shows how old assumptions are being challenged in nearly every area of human life, not just theology and spirituality. He proposes a four-stage model of faith development in which questions and doubt are not the enemy of faith, but rather a portal to a more mature and fruitful kind of faith. The four stages—Simplicity, Complexity, Perplexity, and Harmony—offer a path forward that can help sincere and thoughtful people leave behind unnecessary baggage and intensify their commitment to what matters most.

DUSK, NIGHT, DAWN: On Revival and Courage by Anne Lamott, Penguin, 2021.



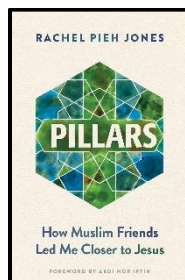
Once again Lamott explores the thorny issues of life and faith. How can we recapture the confidence we once had as we stumble through the dark times that seem increasingly bleak? As bad news piles up—from climate crises to daily assaults on civility—how can we cope? Drawing from her own experiences, she shows readers the intimate and human ways we can adopt to move through life's dark places and toward the light of hope that still burns ahead for all of us. Thoughtful and comic, warm and wise.

MY VANISHING COUNTRY; a Memoir by Bakari Sellers, HarperCollins, 2020.



An eye-opening journey through the South's past, present, and future. Sellers uses his personal story to illuminate the pride and pain in South Carolina, one of the poorest states in the nation. He humanizes the struggles that shape the lives of his family members, neighbors and friends: to gain access to healthcare as rural hospitals disappear; to make ends meet as the factories they have relied on shut down and move overseas; to hold on to precious traditions as their towns erode; and to forge a path forward without succumbing to despair.

PILLARS: How Muslim Friends Led Me Closer to Jesus by Rachel Pieh Jones, Plough Publishing, 2021.



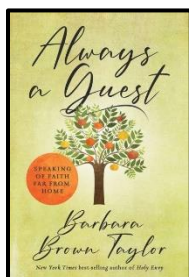
When Jones moved from Minnesota to rural Somalia with her husband and twin toddlers 18 years ago, she was secure in a faith that defined who was right and who was wrong, who was saved and who needed saving. She had been taught that Islam was evil, full of lies and darkness, and that the world would be better without it. Over time, her personal encounters and growing friendships dismantled her fears and prejudices and deepened her appreciation for Islam. She also gained a far richer understanding of her own Christian faith.

WHITE TOO LONG: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity by Robert P. Jones, Simon & Schuster, 2020.



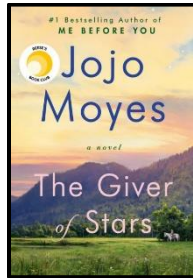
Drawing on history, public opinion surveys, and personal experience, Jones delivers a groundbreaking analysis of the repressed history of the symbiotic relationship between Christianity and white supremacy. He calls for an honest reckoning with a complicated, painful, and even shameful past and challenges white Christians to acknowledge that public apologies are not enough. Accepting responsibility for the past requires work toward repair in the present.

ALWAYS A GUEST: Speaking of Faith Far from Home by Barbara Brown Taylor, Westminster John Knox, 2020.



A new collection of stories and sermons on faith, grace, and hope from a best-selling author and renowned preacher. Taylor finds that when she is the invited guest speaking of faith to people she doesn't know, she must seek common ground when exploring the central human experience. Full of her astute observations on the Spirit and the state of the world along with her gentle wit, this collection will inspire Taylor's fans and preachers alike as she explores faith in all its beauty and complexity.

THE GIVER OF STARS: A Novel by Jojo Moyes, Penguin, 2019.



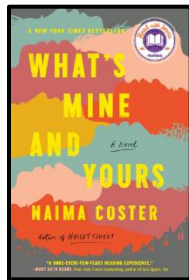
When a call goes out for a team of women to deliver books as part of Eleanor Roosevelt's new traveling library, Alice Wright signs on enthusiastically. The leader is Margery, a smart-talking, self-sufficient woman. They will be joined by three other singular women who become known as the Packhorse Librarians of Kentucky. They refuse to be cowed by men or by convention while bringing books to people who have never had any, arming them with facts that will change their lives. Based on a true story.

MIRIAM'S SONG by Jill Eileen Smith, Revell, 2021.



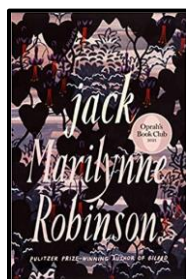
Prophetess, songstress, sister to one of Israel's greatest heroes, Miriam's story is often overshadowed by Moses' own. In this retelling of her life, Smith, a best-selling author of biblical fiction, reimagines how Miriam navigated the challenges of building a family in the midst of incredible hardship, served as a leader of a difficult people, and learned that what God promises he provides—in his own perfect timing.

WHAT'S MINE AND YOURS; a Novel by Naima Coster, Grand Central Publishing, 2021.



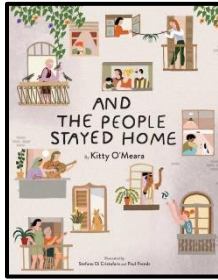
A community in the Piedmont of North Carolina rises in outrage as a county initiative draws students from the largely Black east side of town into predominantly white high schools on the west. For two students, Gee and Noelle, the integration sets off a chain of events that will tie their two families together in unexpected ways over the years. And their mothers—each determined to see her child inherit a better life—will make choices that will haunt them for decades. Moves back and forth between perspectives and time.

JACK; a Novel by Marilynne Robinson, Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2020.



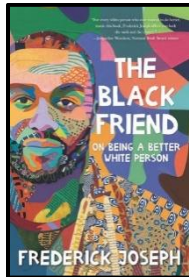
The 4th book in a now-classic award-winning series. This time Robinson tells the story of John Ames Boughton, the prodigal son of Gilead's Presbyterian minister, and his romance with Della Miles, a high school teacher who is also the child of a preacher. Their deeply felt, tormented, star-crossed interracial romance resonates with all the paradoxes of American life, then and now. "It is not accurate to call it a sequel or a prequel. Rather, this book and the others - *Gilead*, *Home*, and *Lila* - are more like the Gospels, telling the same story four different ways." Casey Cep, *The New Yorker*

AND THE PEOPLE STAYED HOME by Kitty O'Meara, Tra Publishing, 2020.



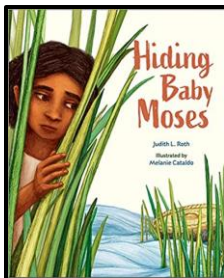
O'Meara's poem has been beautifully illustrated by Stefano Di Cristofaro and Paul Pereda. "Images of nature healing show the author's vision of hope for the future...The accessible prose and beautiful images make this a natural selection for young readers, but older ones may appreciate the work's deeper meaning."— *Kirkus Reviews*. "A stunning and peaceful offering of introspection and hope."— *The Children's Book Review*. Ages 4-8.

THE BLACK FRIEND: On Being a Better White Person by Frederick Joseph, Candlewick, 2020.



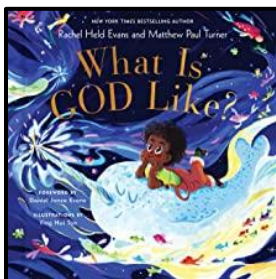
"We don't see color." "I didn't know Black people liked *Star Wars*!" "What hood are you from?" For Joseph, life as a transfer student in a largely white high school was full of wince-worthy moments that he often simply let go. As he grew older, he saw these as missed opportunities not only to stand up for himself, but to spread awareness to those white people who didn't see the negative impact they were having. In this book aimed at young adults, he calls up race-related anecdotes from his past, weaving in his thoughts on why they were hurtful and how he might handle things differently now.

HIDING BABY MOSES by Judith Roth, Flyaway Books, 2021.



A baby boy is hidden in a basket floating on the Nile. A fearful mother sings a song of protection. And a brave big sister seeks a chance to save her brother. Meet the family of baby Moses in this lyrical picture book and see how God's faithfulness can be revealed through one small person who takes a big risk for someone she loves. Ages 3-7.

WHAT IS GOD LIKE? by Rachel Held Evans and Matthew Paul Turner, Convergent, 2021.



Children often have a lot of questions, including this ever popular one: "What is God like?" The late Rachel Held Evans loved the Bible and loved showing God's love through the words and pictures found in that ancient text. In this beautifully illustrated book, children of all colors, as well as some in wheelchairs, see that God is like a shepherd, God is like a star, God is like a gardener, God is like the wind, and more. And whenever children are unsure, *What Is God Like?* encourages them to "think about what makes you feel safe, what makes you feel loved, and what makes you feel brave. That's what God is like." Ages 3-7.

Laura Kelley Fanucci, who lives in Minnetonka, is an award-winning columnist for Catholic News Service and the author of several books. Her nationally syndicated “Faith at Home” column runs monthly in Catholic newspapers across the U.S. She has been featured on NPR’s *Morning Edition*, *On Being*, and the *Christian Century*, and in popular outlets including *People Magazine* and *The Kelly Clarkson Show*.

Sadly, her lovely poem, which appeared previously in the Fall 2020 issue of *Off the Shelf*, is still relevant today.

When this is over,
may we never again
take for granted
A handshake with a stranger
Full shelves at the store
Conversations with neighbors
A crowded theater
Friday night out
The taste of communion
A routine checkup
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.

When this ends,
may we find
that we have become
more like the people
we wanted to be
we hoped to be
and may we stay that way –

Better for each other
because of the worst.