

OFF THE SHELF



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

Summer 2026

SPRING MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Inside This Issue	
Treasurer's Report Election of Officers for 2027-28	2
What Churches Are Reading	3-4
More About the Spring Meeting Demco – Book Protection	5-7
TCACLA Member Churches 2025 Most Challenged Books	8
Fall Meeting Information	9

Crystal Larson welcomed us to St. Michael's Lutheran Church and invited everyone to visit the library.



Browsers at the book swap tables were surrounded by amazing murals.

Author Colleen Baldrica talked about her book, **Tree Spirited Woman**. It was originally published 20 years ago and is still in print today. She also talked about her life experience, the importance of words and tone, the gift of being heard, and listening to our gut feeling. If something keeps recurring, listen to do. We all have our own stories and we don't always know how we impact others.



There was a lively discussion about topics that all of us encounter in our libraries. See pages 5-7.



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.



Janet Howard, President

Plymouth Congregational Church
651-276-5918
Janethoward797@gmail.com

Evie Severyn, Vice President

Messiah United Methodist Church
763-568-0272
eseveryn@yahoo.com

Wayne Albertson, Secretary

Richfield United Methodist Church
612-214-4521
wfallbertson@gmail.com

Bethany Hyde, Treasurer

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church
612-226-7056
bethany.hyde@gmail.com

Advisory Board

Laura Dirks, *Off the Shelf* Editor

Henn. Ave. United Methodist Church
612-378-3026
otseditor@gmail.com

Jeanne Schleh, Past President

St. Peder's Evan. Lutheran Church
612-729-6041
jerebob@aol.com

WEBSITE: www.tcaccla.com

FACEBOOK: Twin Cities Area Church
Library Association 

TREASURER'S REPORT

Members: 22 Churches

01/01/2026	\$1,060.26	Beginning Balance
	\$410.00	Membership Renewals
	<u>\$510.00</u>	Meeting Registration
	\$920.00	
	-\$185.87	Off the Shelf Expenses
	-\$364.06	Meeting Expenses
	<u>-\$35.19</u>	Website Fees
	-\$585.12	Total Expenses
07/11/2026	\$1,395.14	Ending Balance



During the annual business meeting on October 31, we will elect a President and a Secretary for the 2027-2028 term. The board is generally involved in planning our spring and fall events; most meetings are online. Serving on the board is a great way to work collaboratively with other TCACLA members.

If you, perhaps along with a friend, are interested in filling one of these positions, please contact any of the board members listed on this page. We need your talent and good ideas!

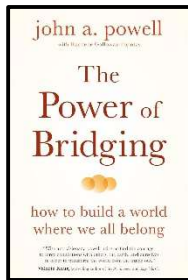


WHAT CHURCHES ARE READING

Everyone is encouraged to contribute to this section. Please send book titles and authors to otseditor@gmail.com.

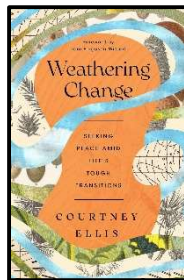
"Reading is the sole means by which we slip, involuntarily, often helplessly, into another's skin, another's voice, another's soul." - Joyce Carol Oates

THE POWER OF BRIDGING; How to Build a World Where We All Belong by john.a.powell, St. Martin's Essentials, 2024.



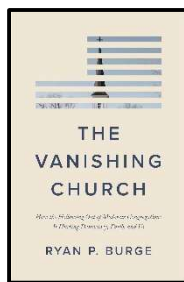
We don't want to live in a society of turmoil. In fact, 93% of the people in the US want to reduce divisiveness, and 86% believe it's possible to disagree in a healthy way. Yet with increasing political and social fragmentation, many of us don't know how to move past our differences. A civil rights scholar presents an actionable path through "bridging" that helps us communicate, coexist, and imagine a new story for our shared future where we all belong.

WEATHERING THE CHANGE; Seeking Peace Amid Life's Tough Transitions by Courtney Ellis, IVP, 2026.



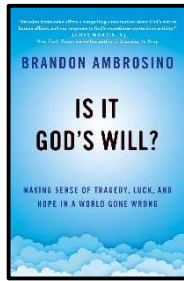
Why is change so hard? And where is God amid these changes? Though change is often painful, it is also ripe with possibilities for newness, growth, and transformation. Pastor Ellis invites readers to discover how God equips us to navigate life's inevitable changes. She offers rich spiritual reflections from God's created world and from Scripture that help us prepare for change and show us how to journey through it with curiosity, adaptability, and resilience.

THE VANISHING CHURCH; How the Hollowing Out of Moderate Congregations is Hurting Democracy, Faith, and Us by Ryan Burge, Brazos, 2026.



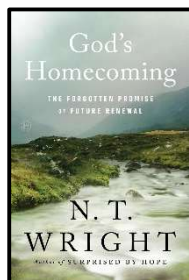
Political polarization has transformed American Christianity over the past 50 years. Burge, a data scientist, makes a case that America needs churches now more than ever - not as political battlegrounds but as spaces where people of different backgrounds and beliefs can come together. Blending personal stories with rigorous, up-to-date research, he offers hope that faith communities can help heal our divisions and restore the common ground essential for democracy to thrive.

IS IT GOD'S WILL? Making Sense of Tragedy, Luck, and Hope in a World Gone Wrong by Brandon Ambrosino, Morehouse Publishing, 2025.



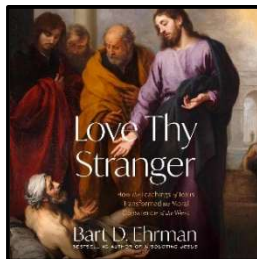
A provocative book about human and divine agency in an era of political extremism, climate catastrophe, and rising violence. Exploring the daily tragedies that so many of us must contend with, Ambrosino, an award-winning journalist and theologian, provides readers with tools to understand and process grief but also presents a portrait of less a God of power, and more of one of persuasion, who can still provide a residue of hope in a world that seems to be slipping into chaos.

GOD'S HOMECOMING; The Forgotten Promise of Future Renewal by N. T. Wright, HarperOne, 2026.



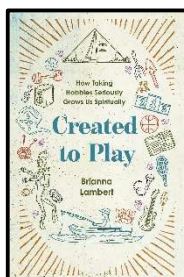
A leading Biblical scholar provides a panoramic pilgrimage tracing God's homecoming promise from Genesis through Revelation. Wright excavates the forgotten story of God's original purpose to dwell with us and make his home - and ours - in this new creation. When we read the Bible as a whole, he argues, we do not find a narrative of souls ascending a spiritual ladder to heaven, but of God coming down to dwell with us.

LOVE THY STRANGER; How the Teachings of Jesus Transformed the Moral Conscience of the West by Bart D. Ehrman, Simon & Schuster, 2026.



For centuries, moral philosophers prioritized generosity towards friends and family. Jesus changed all of this, introducing a revolutionary new ethical obligation to love those you don't even know - unconditionally - and to demonstrate that love through acts of care. New Testament historian Ehrman charts the causes and consequences of this ethical revolution with sly humor and verve. For in this moment of renewed debate over the limitations of Christian love, Jesus' most demanding commandment remains a provocative one.

CREATED TO PLAY; How Taking Hobbies Seriously Grows Us Spiritually by Brianna Lambert, IVP, 2026.



The same God who formed our muscles and nervous system also formed the specific ways we love to play. He understands the delight we feel in our garden or our excitement as we open a new board game. *And he calls it good.* Lambert reveals the ways God blesses hobbies and uses them to form and pull us into worship. She explores 10 different titles we may inhabit in our play: Beholder, Curator, Maker, Herald, Restorer, Connector, Nourisher, Mover, Caretaker, and Historian.

INFORMATION FROM THE WHITE BOARDS IN THE Q&A SESSION – BETHANY HYDE

Does your library formally report to a board, council or committee?

4-5 people raised their hand, yes

- One generates an annual informal report
 - How many checked out
 - Top 5 checked out
- Councilmember as liaison to the library
- One page in annual church meeting report
- Board of Spiritual Formation – monthly reports to this board
- Articles for church newsletter, including statistics
- Librarian as part of Adult Education committee
- Librarian reports to pastor



Have you relocated your library?

- Yes for childcare – smaller but better space
 - Contemporary reads in a high-traffic area outside the sanctuary
- Yes for childcare – needs volunteers from whole church to move books
- Yes for space – committee resigned en masse, no longer members of TCACLA
- Under consideration to maximize leasable space, moving the library to an open parlor

Does your library have a budget?

- \$1K: \$600 for software; \$400 for books
- \$750/year
- Gifts from estate planning
- \$300 from dedicated fund
- \$400
- \$250/year (cuts after COVID)
- \$2K/year
- Two librarians reported having no budget but raising money with book sales



Library Software:



- LibraryWorld – wonderful – ~\$600
- Surpass – ~\$650/year
- Library Thing is free
- TinyCat is the paid version of Library Thing

What do you do with donated books that you don't want?

- Ask to see titles (take a picture of the stacked spines) – decide before accepting donations
- Free table with giveaways
- Half Price Books
- Salvation Army
- Bibles – give away during community service or prison ministry
- “Book ‘Em” community book sale
- Legacy in Crystal
- Little Free Library outside the building – fiction, children’s
- Have donors look at inventory (online on TinyCat) to ensure no duplication
- Books for Africa (15 years old or less)
- Global Gospel Books (formerly International Christian Literature Distributors (limited hours for donation drop off but accepts all ages of books)



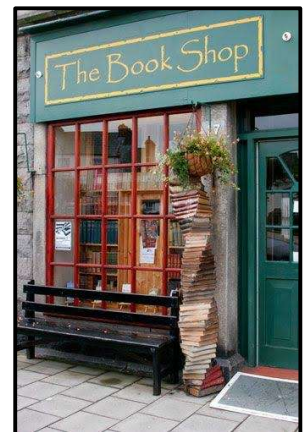
How to pick a new system:

- LibraryThing → TinyCat (~\$72/year)
 - Better user experience
 - Same system
 - Both are very popular



Where do you get books?

- ThriftBooks
- Amazon
- Barnes & Noble
- St. Vincent de Paul thrift stores (St. Paul & Minneapolis)
 - Religions Articles Ministry - they take their unsold books there
- Goodwill
- Moon Palace Books
 - Discount
 - They subtract taxes
- Northfield Hospital Auxiliary Book Sale
- Next Chapter Booksellers (St. Paul)
 - Discount for church libraries
 - Snelling & Grand Ave



Does your library include general fiction (not Christian fiction)?

- About 70% do
- Ideas for contemporary fiction:
 - City Reads
 - Follow popular book clubs (MIA for example)

Book Withdrawals

- Yes – theologically “off”
- Not withdrawn, but a patron expressed general disapproval of racial justice
- *Left Behind* – requested removal, books disappeared, nobody asked questions
- Other reasons for withdrawing: to maximize limited space
- Items not checked out in last 15 years



Non-Book Items

- DVDs – some libraries just got rid of them
- DVDs – shelved alongside books to increase circulation
- Art library
- Puzzles*

Changes since COVID

- Drops in circulation
- Drops in budget, less financial support from the church
- More donations – people cleaning out
- Increased demand for puzzles*

Bookstores

- Some churches are switching from libraries to bookstores
- No members reported this



*If you have puzzles in your library or are thinking about adding them, see an interesting discussion on this topic at <https://churchlibrarians.ning.com/QandA/jigsaw-puzzles>.

Protecting Your Books

While it seems like the pages of books are turning yellow faster than ever these days, there's not much we can do about that. There are steps we can take to protect our books in other ways though.



Demco, a provider of library and school supplies, offers a free webinar on its website: “Book Processing with Demco Book Doctor Kimberly Young.” In the hour-long video, she discusses how to protect various types of books before adding them to circulation and the best materials for book processing needs. There is also a link to Demco’s 17 page “Book Care & Repair Guide” on the website.

<https://ideas.demco.com/webinar/book-processing-with-demco-book-doctor-kimberly-young/>

Current Members of the Twin Cities Area Church Library Association

First Lutheran Church - Duluth

Glen Cary Lutheran Church - Ham Lake

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church - St. Paul

Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church - St. Paul

Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church - Minneapolis

Highview Christiana Lutheran Church - Farmington

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church - Minneapolis

House of Hope Presbyterian Church - St. Paul

Lord of Life Lutheran Church - Ramsey

Maternity of Mary Catholic Church - St. Paul

Messiah United Methodist Church - Plymouth

Newport Lutheran Church - Newport

Plymouth Congregational Church - Minneapolis

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church - Brooklyn Park



Richfield United Methodist Church - Minneapolis

St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral - Minneapolis

St. Michael's Lutheran Church - Bloomington

St. Peder's Lutheran Church - Minneapolis

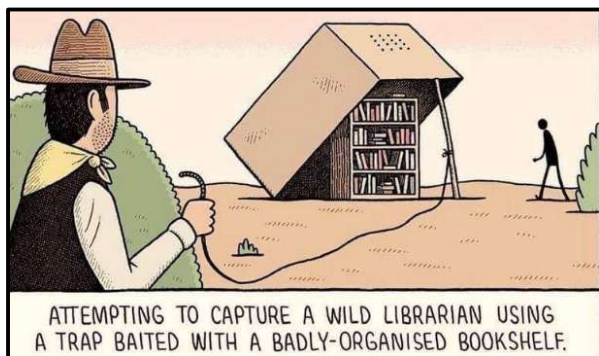
St. Philip's Lutheran Church - Fridley

Trinity Lutheran Church - Stillwater

Westminster Presbyterian Church - Minneapolis

Westwood Lutheran Church - Minneapolis

Per the American Library Association ⇨



MOST CHALLENGED BOOKS OF 2025

1. **"Sold"** by Patricia McCormick
2. **"The Perks of Being a Wallflower"** by Stephen Chbosky
3. **"Gender Queer: A Memoir"** by Maia Kobabe
4. **"Empire of Storms"** by Sarah J. Maas
5. (tie) **"Last Night at the Telegraph Club"** by Malinda Lo
5. (tie) **"Tricks"** by Ellen Hopkins
7. **"A Court of Thorns and Roses"** by Sarah J. Maas
8. (tie) **"A Clockwork Orange"** by Anthony Burgess
8. (tie) **"Identical"** by Ellen Hopkins
8. (tie) **"Looking for Alaska"** by John Green
8. (tie) **"Storm and Fury"** by Jennifer L. Armentrout



THE FALL MEETING IS ON OCTOBER 31

We will be meeting at Westminster Presbyterian Church.

At its founding in 1857, the congregation consisted of eight people of Scottish, Irish, and Welsh heritage. They raised \$2,000 and built a church on 4th Street in Minneapolis. The Westminster congregation grew rapidly, prompting the construction of a new, larger church on 7th Street and Nicollet Avenue, which opened its doors in March 1883. Some 12 years later, the building was heavily damaged by fire, forcing the congregation to move. Ground was broken in 1896 on the new site at the corner of 12th Street and Nicollet Avenue – Westminster's current site – and the congregation began meeting for services at the present church in 1897. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



The *Question-and-Answer Session with Your Peers* will continue, with questions we didn't get to in April and more! Think about these:

Marketing Your Library: How do you promote your library? How do you attract new readers, especially teens? What about youth who only want to read graphic novels?

Circulation Management: How long can a book be checked out? How soon do you follow up on overdue books? Privacy issues – e.g., someone who doesn't want the library staff to know that they are interested in a topic like divorce, addiction, dealing with a serious illness, etc. How often do you do a complete inventory and weed out older books? Do you replace the missing ones? If your library is open whenever the church is open, how do you handle people checking out books on their own – or not - when a library team member isn't there?

Other: Does the library subscribe to any magazines? Is your collection in multiple places in the church instead of just one room? If so, how do you manage that?

If you have other questions, send them to otseditor@gmail.com.

Many thanks to Wayne Albertson for taking most of the pictures from the spring meeting that appear here.