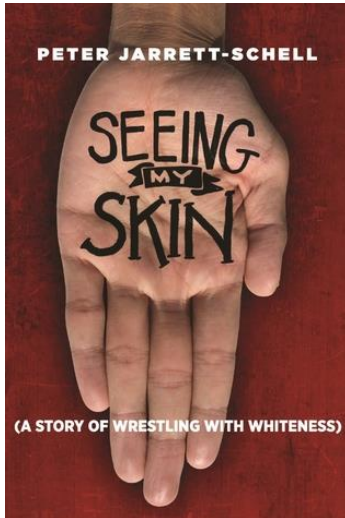


LIFT* Summer Reading Recommendations

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”
(Leviticus 19:33-34)



Hearing other people’s stories across cultures is a cornerstone of building Beloved Community. Sharing stories can enable understanding, empathy, trust, and belief from the heart that we are all God’s children. In that spirit many of LIFT’s 2020 Summer Reading Recommendations provide a window into immigrant experiences in America. The recommendations offer compelling, inspiring, challenging, and enjoyable stories in fiction and non-fiction, and they include books that teach ways of opening our ears and hearts to hear others more deeply.

The primary book we recommend for everyone to read is [Seeing My Skin](#) by Father Peter Jarrett-Schell. “A personal journey of a priest’s understanding of his Whiteness widens into an invitation to wrestle with larger cultural issues of race and belonging. With humor, and a sharp, easily-readable style, Peter Jarrett-Schell delves deeply into how Whiteness has shaped his life.” (Amazon

review). It is an intimate reflection on how we are all attuned to hear, overhear, and sometimes to be deaf to the stories around us every day.

We hope that wherever you are sheltering this summer you will add [Seeing My Skin](#) and perhaps one or more of the other selections to your leisure plans. Questions for reflection are included at the bottom of the list. In the fall we will gather (hopefully back together again in the North Room of our church!) to reap the harvest of our summer thoughts, learning, and reflections in a book discussion. Happy Reading!

*Brought to you by LIFT (Loving Intentionally and Faithfully Together). LIFT is a laity-led Grace Church ministry that creates parish opportunities for discernment and action following the Episcopal Church initiative on race, “Becoming Beloved Community”.

I. American Stories

Fiction

1. [Native Speaker](#), Chang-rae Lee.

“Henry Park has spent his entire life trying to become a true American—a native speaker... Park’s harsh Korean upbringing has taught him to hide his emotions, to remember everything he learns, and most of all to feel an overwhelming sense of alienation. In other words, it has shaped him as a natural spy... When he is assigned to spy on a rising Korean-American politician, his very identity is tested, and he must figure out who he is amid not only the conflicts within himself but also within the ethnic and political tensions of the New York City streets.” (Amazon) Winner of

PEN/Hemingway Award for Best First Novel, Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Award, American Book Award.

2. [Interpreter of Maladies](#), **Jhumpa Lahiri**,

“Navigating between the Indian traditions they've inherited and the baffling new world, the characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's elegant, touching stories seek love beyond the barriers of culture and generations.” (Goodreads). Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, PEN/Hemingway Award

3. [The Book of Unknown Americans: A Novel](#), **Cristina Henríquez**

“Henríquez seamlessly interweaves the story of these star-crossed lovers, and of the Rivera and Toro families, with the testimonials of men and women who have come to the United States from all over Latin America. The Book of Unknown Americans is a stunning novel of hopes and dreams, guilt and love—a book that offers a resonant new definition of what it means to be American.” (Amazon) New York Times and Washington Post Notable Book, an NPR Great Read, The Daily Beast's Novel of the Year, and a Mother Jones and Oprah.com Best Book of the Year

4. [At Home in Mitford](#), **Jan Karon**

“Father Tim, the bachelor rector, wants something more. Enter a dog the size of a sofa who moves in and won't go away... and a secret that's sixty years old. Suddenly, Father Tim gets more than he bargained for. And readers get a rich comedy about ordinary people and their ordinary lives.” (Amazon)

5. [The Underground Railroad](#), **Colson Whitehead**

“In Colson Whitehead's ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor: engineers and conductors operate a secret network of actual tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil... As Whitehead brilliantly re-creates the terrors of the antebellum era, he weaves in the saga of our nation, from the brutal abduction of Africans to the unfulfilled promises of the present day. The Underground Railroad is both the gripping tale of one woman's will to escape the horrors of bondage—and a powerful meditation on the history we all share.” (Amazon) Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, and the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction

6. [A Place for Us](#), **Fatima Farheen Mirza**

“As an Indian wedding gathers a family back together, parents Rafiq and Layla must reckon with the choices their children have made. A Place for Us is a book for our times: an astonishingly tender-hearted novel of identity and belonging, and a resonant portrait of what it means to be an American family today.” (Amazon), New York's “One Book, One New York” Pick. Named One of the Best Books of 2018 by The Washington Post, NPR, People, Refinery29, Parade, and BuzzFeed

7. [A Woman Is No Man](#), **Etaf Rum**

“In her debut novel Etaf Rum tells the story of three generations of Palestinian-American women struggling to express their individual desires within the confines of their Arab culture in the wake of shocking intimate violence in their community... Set in an America at once foreign to many and staggeringly close at hand, A Woman Is No Man is an intimate glimpse into a controlling and closed cultural world, and a universal tale about family and the ways silence and shame can destroy those we have sworn to protect.” (Amazon) A New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice, Washington Post 10 Books to Read in March, A Newsweek Best Book of the Summer, A Washington Book Review Difficult-To-Put-Down Novel

8. [Americanah](#), **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

“The story of two Nigerians making their way in the U.S. and the UK, raising universal questions

of race and belonging, the overseas experience for the African diaspora, and the search for identity and a home.” (Amazon) “Witheringly trenchant and hugely empathetic . . . a novel that holds the discomfiting realities of our times fearlessly before us. . . . A steady-handed dissection of the universal human experience.” (The New York Times Book Review) Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction. One of the Best Books of the Year by The New York Times, NPR, Chicago Tribune, The Washington Post, and The Seattle Times.

Non-Fiction

9. **[The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts](#), Maxine Hong Kingston**

“An exhilarating blend of autobiography and mythology, of world and self, of hot rage and cool analysis... First published in 1976, it has become a classic in its innovative portrayal of multiple and intersecting identities—immigrant, female, Chinese, American. As a girl, Kingston lives in two confounding worlds: the California to which her parents have immigrated and the China of her mother’s “talk stories.” ...Kingston’s sense of self emerges in the mystifying gaps in these stories, which she learns to fill with stories of her own.” (Amazon) Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction

10. **[Ghosts of Gold Mountain: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad](#), Gordon H. Chang**

“In this groundbreaking account, award-winning scholar Gordon H. Chang draws on unprecedented research to recover the Chinese railroad workers’ stories and celebrate their role in remaking America. An invaluable correction of a great historical injustice, *The Ghosts of Gold Mountain* returns these “silent spikes” to their rightful place in our national saga.” (Amazon)

11. **[My Beloved World](#), Sonia Sotomayor**

“The first Hispanic and third woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court, Sonia Sotomayor has become an instant American icon. Now, with a candor and intimacy never undertaken by a sitting Justice, she recounts her life from a Bronx housing project to the federal bench, a journey that offers an inspiring testament to her own extraordinary determination and the power of believing in oneself.” (Amazon)

12. **[Retablos: Stories From a Life Lived Along the Border](#), Octavio Solis**

“The New York Times directs readers to *Retablos* if you want to know “what’s life really like on the Mexican border.” “Solis grew up just a mile from the Rio Grande in El Paso, Texas, and he tells stories about his childhood and coming of age, including his parents migration to the United States from Mexico, his first encounter with racism and finding a Mexican migrant girl hiding in the cotton fields.”—Concepción de León, *New York Times*”

13. **[American Like Me: Reflections on Life Between Cultures](#), America Ferrera**

“From award-winning actress and political activist America Ferrera comes a vibrant and varied collection of first-person accounts from prominent figures about the experience of growing up between cultures.” (Amazon)

14. **[Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis](#), J. D. Vance**

Hillbilly Elegy is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis—that of white working-class Americans... A deeply moving memoir, with its share of humor and vividly colorful figures,

Hillbilly Elegy is the story of how upward mobility really feels. And it is an urgent and troubling meditation on the loss of the American dream for a large segment of this country.” (Amazon)

15. [The Glass Castle: A Memoir](#), Jeannette Walls

“The Glass Castle is a remarkable memoir of resilience and redemption, and a revelatory look into a family at once deeply dysfunctional and uniquely vibrant.” (Amazon) More than seven years on the New York Times Bestseller List.

16. [Heavy: An American Memoir](#), Kiese Laym

“Heavy is a ‘gorgeous, gutting...generous’ (The New York Times) memoir that combines personal stories with piercing intellect to reflect both on the strife of American society and on Laymon’s experiences with abuse. By attempting to name secrets and lies he and his mother spent a lifetime avoiding, he asks us to confront the terrifying possibility that few in this nation actually know how to responsibly love, and even fewer want to live under the weight of actually becoming free.” (Amazon) Winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal and finalist for the Kirkus Prize, a Best Book of 2018 by the New York Times, Publishers Weekly, NPR, Broadly, BuzzFeed (Nonfiction), The Undeclared, Library Journal (Biography/Memoirs), The Washington Post (Nonfiction),

17. [The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates](#), Wes Moore

“Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? Wes Moore, the author of this fascinating book, sets out to answer this profound question.” Amazon)

18. [Becoming](#), Michelle Obama

“In her memoir, a work of deep reflection and mesmerizing storytelling, Michelle Obama invites readers into her world, chronicling the experiences that have shaped her—from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood and work, to her time spent at the world’s most famous address... Warm, wise, and revelatory, Becoming is the deeply personal reckoning of a woman of soul and substance who has steadily defied expectations—and whose story inspires us to do the same.” (Amazon)

19. [Seeing My Skin: A Story of Wrestling with Whiteness](#), Peter Jarrett-Schell

“A personal journey of a priest’s understanding of his Whiteness widens into an invitation to wrestle with larger cultural issues of race and belonging. With humor, and a sharp, easily-readable style, Peter Jarrett-Schell delves deeply into how Whiteness has shaped his life. By examining how Whiteness has distorted his own perceptions, relationships, and sense of self, Jarrett-Schell argues for the personal stakes that white people have in dismantling racism, and offers the creative possibilities that emerge when we begin to do the work.” (Amazon)

20. [The Road to Character](#), David Brooks

“Looking to some of the world’s greatest thinkers and inspiring leaders, Brooks explores how, through internal struggle and a sense of their own limitations, they have built a strong inner character... Blending psychology, politics, spirituality, and confessionals, The Road to Character provides an opportunity for us to rethink our priorities, and strive to build rich inner lives marked by humility and moral depth.” (Amazon)

II. Learning to hear the stories of others

21. [Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know about the People We Don't Know](#), **Malcolm Gladwell**

“Malcolm Gladwell, host of the podcast Revisionist History and author of the #1 New York Times bestseller *Outliers*, offers a powerful examination of our interactions with strangers -- and why they often go wrong... Something is very wrong, Gladwell argues, with the tools and strategies we use to make sense of people we don't know. And because we don't know how to talk to strangers, we are inviting conflict and misunderstanding in ways that have a profound effect on our lives and our world.” (Amazon) A Best Book of the Year: The Financial Times, Bloomberg, Chicago Tribune, and Detroit Free Press.

22. [Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life](#), **Tish Harrison Warren**

In the overlooked moments and routines of our day, we can become aware of God's presence in surprising ways... Framed around one ordinary day, this book explores daily life through the lens of liturgy, small practices, and habits that form us. Drawing from the diversity of her life as a campus minister, Anglican priest, friend, wife, and mother, Tish Harrison Warren opens up a practical theology of the everyday.” (Amazon) Winner Christianity Today's 2018 Book of the Year- Spiritual Formation and Christianity Today's 2018 Book of the Year - Beautiful Orthodoxy

23. [Crazy Christians: A Call to Follow Jesus](#), **Bishop Michael B. Curry**

“Filled with inspiring sermons, including Bishop Curry’s acclaimed 2012 General Convention address, this inspiring book takes a provocative look at what it really takes to make a difference. Bishop Curry encourages all of us to let go of conventions and embrace the craziness of believing we can change the world for the better.” (Amazon)

24. [White Kids: Growing Up with Privilege in a Racially Divided America](#), **Margaret A. Hagerman**

“Riveting stories of how affluent white children learn about race: American kids are living in a world of ongoing public debates about race, daily displays of racial injustice, and for some, an increased awareness surrounding diversity and inclusion. In this heated context, sociologist Margaret A. Hagerman zeroes in on affluent white kids to observe how they make sense of privilege, unequal educational opportunities, and police violence. In fascinating detail, Hagerman considers the role that they and their families play in the reproduction of racism and racial inequality in America... And by observing families in their everyday lives, this book explores the extent to which white families, even those with anti-racist intentions, reproduce and reinforce the forms of inequality they say they reject.” (Amazon)

III. Questions for reflection as you read

1. What are the main ideas the author was trying to get across? How would you briefly summarize the book to a friend?
2. What do you think the author’s purpose was in writing this book? Why do you think the author chose to tell this story?

3. Did you find anything in the book surprising or new?
4. How did questions of outsider status or inclusion arise in the book? What emotions did they trigger?
5. What does the book convey about language or about being a “native speaker”? Do you agree with this point of view?
6. What personal values or motivating beliefs does the storyteller describe or imply? How are they similar to your own? How are they different?
7. What obstacles did the storyteller face? Were the obstacles overcome? What strategies for achieving success does the storyteller use or describe in others?
8. How do you define what it means to be an American? How is it explicitly or implicitly defined in the book? How similar or different are your definitions?
9. Share a favorite or memorable quote from the book. Why did this quote stand out?
10. The United States is often called a melting pot, salad bowl, tapestry, or mosaic. What metaphor would you use to describe the way cultures in America should inter-relate as God’s people? Why?
11. What ideas for action or new behaviors does the book inspire for you, as we welcome all to Grace Church and strive to become Beloved Community?