

St. Andrew's Book Club

All meetings take place in the church office area at 10:30 a.m.

October 9, 2017

The Year of Living Danishly by Helen Russell

When she was suddenly given the opportunity of a new life in rural Jutland, journalist and archetypal Londoner Helen Russell discovered a startling statistic: the happiest place on earth isn't Disneyland, but Denmark, a land often thought of by foreigners as consisting entirely of long dark winters, cured herring, Lego and pastries.

What is the secret to their success? Are happy Danes born, or made? Helen decides there is only one way to find out: she will give herself a year, trying to uncover the formula for Danish happiness.

From childcare, education, food and interior design to SAD, taxes, sexism and an unfortunate predilection for burning witches, *The Year of Living Danishly* is a funny, poignant record of a journey that shows us where the Danes get it right, where they get it wrong, and how we might just benefit from living a little more Danishly ourselves.

November 6, 2017

The Circle by David Eggers

When Mae Holland is hired to work for the Circle, the world's most powerful internet company, she feels she's been given the opportunity of a lifetime. The Circle, run out of a sprawling California campus, links users' personal emails, social media, banking, and purchasing with their universal operating system, resulting in one online

identity and a new age of civility and transparency. As Mae tours the open-plan office spaces, the towering glass dining facilities, the cozy dorms for those who spend nights at work, she is thrilled with the company's modernity and activity. There are parties that last through the night, there are famous musicians playing on the lawn, there are athletic activities and clubs and brunches, and even an aquarium of rare fish retrieved from the Marianas Trench by the CEO. Mae can't believe her luck, her great fortune to work for the most influential company in the world—even as life beyond the campus grows distant, even as a strange encounter with a colleague leaves her shaken, even as her role at the Circle becomes increasingly public. What begins as the captivating story of one woman's ambition and idealism soon becomes a heart-racing novel of suspense, raising questions about memory, history, privacy, democracy, and the limits of human knowledge.

December 4, 2017

Thank You For Being Late by Thomas Freidman

We all sense it—something big is going on. You feel it in your workplace. You feel it when you talk to your kids. You can't miss it when you read the newspapers or watch the news. Our lives are being transformed in so many realms all at once—and it is dizzying.

In *Thank You for Being Late*, a work unlike anything he has attempted before, Thomas L. Friedman exposes the tectonic movements that are reshaping the world today and explains how to get the most out of them and cushion their worst impacts.

You will never look at the world the same way again after you read this book: how you understand the news, the work you do, the education your kids need, the investments your employer has to make, and the moral and geopolitical choices our country has to navigate will all be refashioned by Friedman's original analysis.

Friedman begins by taking us into his own way of looking at the world—how he writes a column. After a quick tutorial, he proceeds to write what could only be called a giant column about the twenty-first century. His thesis: to understand the twenty-first century, you need to understand that the planet's three largest forces—Moore's law (technology), the Market (globalization), and Mother Nature (climate change and biodiversity loss)—are accelerating all at once. These accelerations are transforming five key realms: the workplace, politics, geopolitics, ethics, and community.

Why is this happening? As Friedman shows, the exponential increase in computing power defined by Moore's law has a lot to do with it. The year 2007 was a major inflection point: the release of the iPhone, together with advances in silicon chips, software, storage, sensors, and networking, created a new technology platform. Friedman calls this platform "the supernova"—for it is an extraordinary release of energy that is reshaping everything from how we hail a taxi to the fate of nations to our most intimate relationships. It is creating vast new opportunities for individuals and small groups to save the world—or to destroy it. *Thank You for Being Late* is a work of contemporary history that serves as a field manual for how to write and think about this era of accelerations. It's also an argument for "being late"—for pausing to appreciate this amazing historical epoch we're passing through and to reflect on its possibilities and dangers. To amplify this point, Friedman revisits his Minnesota hometown in his

moving concluding chapters; there, he explores how communities can create a "topsoil of trust" to anchor their increasingly diverse and digital populations.

With his trademark vitality, wit, and optimism, Friedman shows that we can overcome the multiple stresses of an age of accelerations—if we slow down, if we dare to be late and use the time to reimagine work, politics, and community. *Thank You for Being Late* is Friedman's most ambitious book—and an essential guide to the present and the future.

January 8, 2018

Echo Burning by Lee Child

Thumbing across the scorched Texas desert, Jack Reacher has nowhere to go and all the time in the world to get there. Cruising the same stretch of two-lane blacktop is Carmen Greer. For Reacher, the lift comes with a hitch. Carmen's got a wild story to tell—all about her husband, her family secrets, and a hometown that's purely gothic. She's also got a plan. Reacher's part of it. And before the sun sets, this ride could cost them both their lives.

February 5, 2018

Elephant Company by Vicki Croke

Billy Williams came to colonial Burma in 1920, fresh from service in World War I, to a job as a "forest man" for a British teak company. Mesmerized by the intelligence, character, and even humor of the great animals who hauled logs through the remote jungles, he became a gifted "elephant wallah." Increasingly skilled at treating their illnesses and injuries, he also championed more humane treatment for them, even establishing an elephant "school" and "hospital." In return, he said, the elephants

made him a better man. The friendship of one magnificent tusker in particular, Bandoola, would be revelatory. In *Elephant Company*, Vicki Constantine Croke chronicles Williams's growing love for elephants as the animals provide him lessons in courage, trust, and gratitude.

But *Elephant Company* is also a tale of war and daring. When Imperial Japanese forces invaded Burma in 1942, Williams joined the elite Force 136, the British dirty tricks department, operating behind enemy lines. His war elephants would carry supplies, build bridges, and transport the sick and elderly over treacherous mountain terrain. Now well versed in the ways of the jungle, an older, wiser Williams even added to his stable by smuggling more elephants out of Japanese-held territory. As the occupying authorities put a price on his head, Williams and his elephants faced his most perilous test. In a Hollywood-worthy climax, *Elephant Company*, cornered by the enemy, attempted a desperate escape: a risky trek over the mountainous border to India, with a bedraggled group of refugees in tow. Elephant Bill's exploits would earn him top military honors and the praise of famed Field Marshal Sir William Slim.

March 5, 2018

The Other Einstein: A Novel by Marie Benedict (paperback comes out in Aug.)

In the tradition of *The Paris Wife* and *Mrs. Poe*, *The Other Einstein* offers us a window into a brilliant, fascinating woman whose light was lost in Einstein's enormous shadow. It is the story of Einstein's wife, a brilliant physicist in her own right, whose contribution to the special theory of relativity is hotly debated and may have been inspired by her own profound and very personal insight.

Mitza Maric has always been a little different from other girls. Most twenty-year-olds are wives by now, not studying physics at an elite Zurich university with only male students trying to outdo her clever calculations. But Mitza is smart enough to know that, for her, math is an easier path than marriage. And then fellow student Albert Einstein takes an interest in her, and the world turns sideways. Theirs becomes a partnership of the mind and of the heart, but there might not be room for more than one genius in a marriage.

April 2, 2018

When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi

At the age of thirty-six, on the verge of completing a decade's worth of training as a neurosurgeon, Paul Kalanithi was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. One day he was a doctor treating the dying, and the next he was a patient struggling to live. And just like that, the future he and his wife had imagined evaporated. *When Breath Becomes Air* chronicles Kalanithi's transformation from a naïve medical student "possessed," as he wrote, "by the question of what, given that all organisms die, makes a virtuous and meaningful life" into a neurosurgeon at Stanford working in the brain, the most critical place for human identity, and finally into a patient and new father confronting his own mortality.

Other great reading suggestions are:

Abused by Wayne Hoover

Owlstones by Philip Solem

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by
Rebecca Skloot

Mountain Beyond Mountains by Tracy
Kidder

*For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of
Expert Advice to Women* by Barbara
Ehrenreich

Leaving Time by Jodi Piccoult

Orphan #8 by Kim VanAlkemade

A Man Called Ove: A Novel by Fredrik
Backman

Emma: A Modern Retelling by Alexander
McCall Smith