

# **2025-2026 Book Summaries Faith Lutheran Church Book Club**

**September 16, 2025**

**Gentleman from Moscow** by Amor Towles

A beautifully transporting novel about a man who is ordered to spend the rest of his life inside a luxury hotel.

In 1922, Count Alexander Rostov is deemed an unrepentant aristocrat by a Bolshevik tribunal, and is sentenced to house arrest in the Metropol, a grand hotel across the street from the Kremlin. Rostov, an indomitable man of erudition and wit, has never worked a day in his life, and must now live in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history are unfolding outside the hotel's doors. Unexpectedly, his reduced circumstances provide him entry into a much larger world of emotional discovery.

**October 21, 2025**

**The Last Castle: The Epic Story of Love, Loss, and American Royal in the Nation's Largest Home** by Denise Kiernan

The story of Biltmore spans World Wars, the Jazz Age, the Depression, and generations of the famous Vanderbilt family, and features a captivating cast of real-life characters including F. Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Wolfe, Teddy Roosevelt, John Singer Sargent, James Whistler, Henry James, and Edith Wharton.

Orphaned at a young age, Edith Stuyvesant Dresser claimed lineage from one of New York's best known families. She grew up in Newport and Paris, and her engagement and marriage to George Vanderbilt was one of the most watched events of Gilded Age society. But none of this prepared her to be mistress of Biltmore House.

Before their marriage, the wealthy and bookish Vanderbilt had dedicated his life to creating a spectacular European-style estate on 125,000 acres of North

Carolina wilderness. He summoned the famous landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted to tame the grounds, collaborated with celebrated architect Richard Morris Hunt to build a 175,000-square-foot chateau, filled it with priceless art and antiques, and erected a charming village beyond the gates. Newlywed Edith was now mistress of an estate nearly three times the size of Washington, DC and benefactress of the village and surrounding rural area. When fortunes shifted and changing times threatened her family, her home, and her community, it was up to Edith to save Biltmore—and secure the future of the region and her husband’s legacy.

This is the fascinating, “soaring and gorgeous” (Karen Abbott) story of how the largest house in America flourished, faltered, and ultimately endured to this day.

## **November 18, 2025**

### **We Were the Lucky Ones: A Novel** by Georgia Hunter

Inspired by the incredible true story of one Jewish family separated at the start of World War II, determined to survive—and to reunite—*We Were the Lucky Ones* is a tribute to the triumph of hope and love against all odds.

It is the spring of 1939 and three generations of the Kurc family are doing their best to live normal lives, even as the shadow of war grows closer. The talk around the family Seder table is of new babies and budding romance, not of the increasing hardships threatening Jews in their hometown of Radom, Poland. But soon the horrors overtaking Europe will become inescapable and the Kurcs will be flung to the far corners of the world, each desperately trying to navigate his or her own path to safety.

As one sibling is forced into exile, another attempts to flee the continent, while others struggle to escape certain death, either by working grueling hours on empty stomachs in the factories of the ghetto or by hiding as gentiles in plain sight. Driven by an unwavering will to survive and by the fear that they may never see one another again, the Kurcs must rely on hope, ingenuity, and inner strength to persevere.

An extraordinary, propulsive novel, *We Were the Lucky Ones* demonstrates how in the face of the twentieth century's darkest moment, the human spirit can endure and even thrive.

## **January 20, 2026**

### **The Summons** by John Grisham

A pillar of the community who towered over local law and politics for forty years, Judge Atlee is now a shadow of his former self--a sick, lonely old man who has withdrawn to his sprawling ancestral home in Clanton, Mississippi. Knowing that the end is near, Judge Atlee has issued a summons for his two sons to return to Clanton to discuss his estate. Ray Atlee is the elder, a Virginia law professor, newly single, still enduring the aftershocks of a surprise divorce. Forrest is Ray's younger brother, the family's black sheep. The summons is typed by the Judge himself, on his handsome old stationery, and gives the date and time for Ray and Forrest to appear in his study. Ray reluctantly heads south to his hometown, to the place he now prefers to avoid. But the family meeting does not take place. The Judge dies too soon, and in doing so leaves behind a shocking secret known only to Ray . . . and perhaps to someone else.

## **February 17, 2026**

### **Anxious People** by Fredrik Backman

From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *A Man Called Ove*.

Looking at real estate isn't usually a life-or-death situation, but an apartment open house becomes just that when a failed bank robber bursts in and takes a group of strangers hostage. The captives include a recently retired couple who relentlessly hunt down fixer-uppers to avoid the painful truth that they can't fix their own marriage. There's a wealthy bank director who has been too busy to care about anyone else and a young couple who are about to have their first child but can't seem to agree on anything, from where they want to live to how they met in the first place. Add to the mix an eighty-seven-year-old woman who has lived long enough not to be afraid of someone waving a gun in her face, a flustered but still-ready-to-make-a-deal real estate agent, and a mystery man

who has locked himself in the apartment's only bathroom, and you've got the worst group of hostages in the world.

Each of them carries a lifetime of grievances, hurts, secrets, and passions that are ready to boil over. None of them is entirely who they appear to be. And all of them--the bank robber included--desperately crave some sort of rescue. As the authorities and the media surround the premises, these reluctant allies will reveal surprising truths about themselves and set in motion a chain of events so unexpected that even they can hardly explain what happens next.

## **March 17, 2026**

### **The Other Einstein** by Marie Benedict

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. This 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 20-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 21, 2026**

### **The Dutch House** by Anne Patchett

A richly moving story that explores the indelible bond between two siblings, the house of their childhood, and a past that will not let them go.

At the end of the Second World War, Cyril Conroy combines luck and a single canny investment to begin an enormous real estate empire, propelling his family from poverty to enormous wealth. His first order of business is to buy the Dutch

House, a lavish estate in the suburbs outside of Philadelphia. Meant as a surprise for his wife, the house sets in motion the undoing of everyone he loves.

The story is told by Cyril's son Danny, as he and his older sister, the brilliantly acerbic and self-assured Maeve, are exiled from the house where they grew up by their stepmother. The two wealthy siblings are thrown back into the poverty their parents had escaped from and find that all they have to count on is one another. It is this unshakeable bond between them that both saves their lives and thwarts their futures.

Set over the course of five decades, *The Dutch House* is a dark fairy tale about two smart people who cannot overcome their past. Despite every outward sign of success, Danny and Maeve are only truly comfortable when they're together. Throughout their lives they return to the well-worn story of what they've lost with humor and rage. But when at last they're forced to confront the people who left them behind, the relationship between an indulged brother and his ever-protective sister is finally tested.