

June 8, 2021

Dear United Parish Friends,

Adult Deepening is interested in your feedback on summer programming ideas for this July and August. Adult Bible Study takes a break in the summer, but we have some other programming in the works that may interest you.  We would appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to answer these questions:

**SACRED STROLLS & HIKES** were launched last summer, with a focus on being together COVID-safely. Strolls are more leisurely, on even ground in interesting natural or cultural places. The hikes are on trails in public woodlands around greater Boston, and require more physical effort and agility. Both involve some outdoor worship.

**Are you interested in Summer Sacred Strolls and Hikes, and do you have any suggestions for locations to walk or hike?**

**[  ] Hikes Yes       [  ] Strolls Yes          [  ]  No        [  ] Maybe**

**Suggested Locales: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**SUMMER BOOK GROUPS** were regularly a part of summer adult programming before the pandemic, usually with one book for July and another for August. One book typically focused on modern Christian writers addressing the Bible or their faith journeys; the second focused on social change and justice issues. This year, we plan to offer both online and in person opportunities to discuss each book. We will schedule once we get a sense of who's interested.

**For July**, Deb Hall and Mark Jones will engage us in discussion of [***Inspired – Slaying Giants, Walking on Water and Loving the Bible******Again***](https://rachelheldevans.com/inspired)by Rachel Held Evans. ***Inspired*** invites readers on a journey of rediscovery of the Bible in new ways that honor the past and enlighten the present. Drawing upon recent scholarship and literary analysis, Evans creatively retells our favorite Bible stories, explaining their contexts and possible interpretations, and then connects these ancient stories to our present-day ones. See more information on ***Inspired*** at the end of this page.

**For August,** there are several excellent books under consideration that address racial justice, with varying focus on the Church, the Bible and broader social & political context. We need your input so we can select a book that you would like to read and discuss in August. Some of these books are longer, and would benefit from several sessions, so we could start in August and extend into September. Summaries are at the end of this page.

[**Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents**](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/653196/caste-oprahs-book-club-by-isabel-wilkerson/)

by Isabel Wilkerson

[**Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope**](https://www.ivpress.com/reading-while-black)

by Esau McCaulley

[**The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline, and New Hope for Beloved Community**](https://www.churchpublishing.org/churchcrackedopen)

by Stephanie Spellers

**Are you interested in Summer Book Groups?**

**[  ] Yes July   [   ] Yes August    [  ]  No    [  ] Maybe**

**What books on the list interest you most for August?**

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**Are there other books you recommend instead?**

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I prefer:   [  ] online programming   [  ] in person programming consistent with United Parish guidelines.     [  ] Both work for me.

**MEDITATION, PRAYER, SPIRITUAL PRACTICES –** Adam Sutton’s Thursday 8 AM meditation group has had a solid following this year, and may continue part of the summer, but we’re also open to finding out what you need this summer from your United Parish family, and if you can offer to help organize or lead a group in prayer or other spiritual practices.

What I need

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What I can offer \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I prefer:   [  ] online programming   [  ] in person programming consistent with United Parish guidelines.     [  ] Both work for me.

Thank you so much for your ideas and preferences,

United Parish Adult Deepening Team – Debra Hall, Mark Jones, Adam Sutton

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**UNITED PARISH SUMMER READING GROUPS**

**POSSIBLE BOOKS FOR AUGUST**

***Books About Diversity and Inclusion and the Impacts of Racism***

[**Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents**](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/653196/caste-oprahs-book-club-by-isabel-wilkerson/)

by Isabel Wilkerson

377 pages, 2020

Isabel Wilkerson’s immersive, deeply researched narrative and stories about real people, examine how America today and throughout its history has been shaped by a hidden caste system, a rigid hierarchy of human rankings.

Beyond race, class, or other factors, there is a powerful caste system that influences people’s lives and behavior and the nation’s fate. Linking the caste systems of America, India, and Nazi Germany, Wilkerson explores eight pillars that underlie caste systems across civilizations, including divine will, bloodlines, stigma, and more. Using riveting stories about people—including Martin Luther King, Jr., baseball’s Satchel Paige, a single father and his toddler son, Wilkerson herself, and many others—she shows the ways that the insidious undertow of caste is experienced every day. She writes about the surprising health costs of caste, in depression and life expectancy, and the effects of this hierarchy on our culture and politics. Finally, she points forward to ways America can move beyond the artificial and destructive separations of human divisions, toward hope in our common humanity.

[**Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope**](https://www.ivpress.com/reading-while-black)

By Esau McCaulley

208 pages, 2020

Growing up in the American South, Esau McCaulley knew firsthand the ongoing struggle between despair and hope that marks the lives of some in the African American context. A key element in the fight for hope, he discovered, has long been the practice of Bible reading and interpretation that comes out of traditional Black churches.  *Reading While Black* is a personal and scholarly testament to the power and hope of Black biblical interpretation.

[**The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline, and New Hope for Beloved Community**](https://www.churchpublishing.org/churchcrackedopen)

by Stephanie Spellers

160 pages, 2021

Sometimes it takes disruption and loss to break us open and call us home to God. It's not surprising that a global pandemic and once-in-a-generation reckoning with white supremacy--on top of decades of systemic decline--have spurred Christians everywhere to ask who we are, why God placed us here and what difference that makes to the world. The author, a Black Episcopal bishop based in Boston explores the American story and the Episcopal story in order to find out how communities steeped in racism, establishment, and privilege can at last fall in love with Jesus, walk humbly with the most vulnerable and embody beloved community in our own broken but beautiful way.

**JULY BOOK SELECTION**

[**Inspired – Slaying Giants, Walking on Water and Loving the Bible** **Again**](https://rachelheldevans.com/inspired)

By Rachel Held Evans

225 pages, 2018

Rachel Held Evans invites readers on a journey of rediscovery as she explores the magic of the Bible, engaging the old, familiar stories in new ways that honor the past and enlighten the present. Drawing upon recent scholarship and literary analysis, Evans creatively retells our favorite Bible stories, explaining their contexts and possible interpretations, and then connects these ancient stories to our present-day ones. Drawing on her literary instincts and experience in both evangelical and mainline Protestant traditions, Evans discovers a way of understanding that avoids noncommittal liberalism on one hand and strident literalism on the other.

*Adult Deepening Notes: Evans explains the Bible in big-picture way, and addresses how she made the shift from an evangelical/ literalist/rules-based approach to an inspired/ story telling/meaning of life approach. This book would give UP folks a chance to share our own stories about how we shifted in our understanding of the Bible over time.*