

SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY TEAM - READING LIST

Contact Kelly Olson at russalka1985@gmail.com for more information on titles in the LM library.

POVERTY IN THE PROMISED LAND, WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

A good companion book to Matthew Desmond's **Poverty, by America** (below). In just 100 pages Brueggemann addresses the points in Desmond's book, providing biblical evidence of the structural and systemic factors that have long been part of the story of poverty. The people of God have often denied such structural claims in favor of the belief that individuals are poor because of personal choice, absolving the social institutions of society from responsibility to address these structural forces. Jesus said, "The poor will always be with you." While this has proven true, this book supports the biblical mandate of neighborliness as both a personal and a corporate response to systemic poverty, a mandate that is the second of the two great commandments.

POVERTY, BY AMERICA, MATTHEW DESMOND

Reimagining the debate on poverty, making a new and bracing argument about why it persists in America: because the rest of us benefit from it. The United States, the richest country on earth, has more poverty than any other advanced democracy. Why? In this landmark book, acclaimed sociologist Matthew Desmond draws on history, research, and original reporting to show how affluent Americans knowingly and unknowingly keep poor people poor.

JESUS AND THE DISINHERITED, HOWARD THURMAN

Published in 1949 the African-American minister, theologian, and civil rights leader interprets the teachings of Jesus through the experience of the oppressed and discusses nonviolent responses to oppression. In a world marked by division, fear, and prejudice, he looked back at Jesus of Nazareth and saw something revolutionary: a man who lived on the margins yet carried within Him the power to transform hearts, societies, and systems. He invites every believer, especially those who have felt unseen, to discover that Jesus' faith was not one of privilege but of profound spiritual strength.

MY GRANDMOTHER'S HANDS, RESMAA MENAKEM

In this groundbreaking book, therapist Resmaa Menakem examines the damage caused by racism in America from the perspective of trauma and body-centered psychology. The body is where our instincts reside and where we fight, flee, or freeze, and it endures the trauma inflicted by the ills that plague society.

THE SECRET WAR AGAINST HATE, STEVEN J. ROSS

The definitive story of the intrepid activists and spies who fought against a resurgent movement of hate in America after World War II. Violence broke out in cities across the country, and the number of organized hate groups more than doubled from 1940 to 1946. Tracing the extraordinary work of these unsung heroes, this provides a groundbreaking reconsideration of the legacy of the "Good War," and essential reading on how America today can beat hate once again and build a just and united nation.

THE CROSS AND THE LYNCHING TREE, REV. DR. JAMES H. CONE

The cross and the lynching tree are the two most emotionally charged symbols in the history of the African American community. Theologian James H. Cone explores these symbols and their interconnection in the history and souls of black folk. Both symbols represent the worst in human beings and at the same time a thirst for life that refuses to let the worst determine our final meaning. For African Americans, the image of Jesus, hung on a tree to die powerfully grounded their faith that God was with them, even in the suffering of the lynching era.

A BLACK THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION, REV. DR. JAMES H. CONE

A book that reviews the principles of modern Black Theology, its roots and contributions to the Christian world, and discusses what challenges Black theologians face in their minister and their religious communities. A searing indictment of white theology and society, while offering a radical reappraisal of Christianity from the perspective of an oppressed black North American community.

THE UNDOCUMENTED AMERICANS, KARLA CORNEJO VILLAVINCENCIO

In a cross-country trip the author explored the lives of the undocumented, finding them often reduced in the media to political pawns or nameless laborers. The stories she tells are not deferential or naively inspirational but show the love, magic, heartbreak, insanity, and vulgarity that infuse the day-to-day lives of her subjects. She combines sensitive reporting and powerful personal narratives to bring to light remarkable stories of resilience, madness, and death. Through these stories we come to understand what it truly means to be a stray. An expendable. A hero. An American.

WHITE POVERTY: HOW EXPOSING MYTHS ABOUT RACE AND CLASS CAN RECONSTRUCT AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, REVEREND DR. WILLIAM BARBER II

One of the most pernicious and persistent myths in the United States is the association of Black skin with poverty. Though there are forty million more poor white people than Black people, most Americans, both Republicans and Democrats, continue to think of poverty—along with issues like welfare, unemployment, and food stamps—as solely a Black problem. Why is this so? What are the historical causes? And what are the political consequences that result?

PLUNDERED: HOW RACIST POLICIES UNDERMINE BLACK HOMEOWNERSHIP IN AMERICA, BERNADETTE ATUAHENE. A property law scholar uses the stories of two grandfathers—one white, one Black—who arrived in Detroit at the turn of the twentieth century to reveal how racist policies weaken Black families, widen the racial wealth gap, and derive profit from pain up to the present day.

UNDIVIDED: THE QUEST FOR RACIAL SOLIDARITY IN AN AMERICAN CHURCH, HAHRIE HAN. The inspiring story of evangelicals in Cincinnati struggling to bridge racial divides in their own church, their community, and across the nation. Undivided is a faith-based program inside a megachurch in Cincinnati Ohio, designed to foster antiracism and systemic change. In Undivided, Han chronicles the story of four participants—two men, one Black and one white, and two women, one Black and one white—whose lives were fundamentally altered by the program.

JESUS AND JOHN WAYNE: HOW WHITE EVANGELICALS CORRUPTED A FAITH AND FRACTURED A NATION KRISTIN KOBES DU MEZ. Pastor John led a fascinating adult forum on this book. A scholar of American Christianity presents a seventy-five-year history of evangelicalism that identifies the forces that have turned Donald Trump into a hero of the Religious Right. *Jesus and John Wayne* explains why evangelicals have rallied behind the least-Christian president in American history and how they have transformed their faith in the process, with enduring consequences for all of us.

THE WARMTH OF OTHER SUNS, ISABEL WILKERSON.

Pulitzer prize-winning investigative reporter, author Isabel Wilkerson, interviewed more than 1,200 people to tell the story of the great migration of African-Americans from World War I to the 1970's. The book focuses on the personal stories of three African-Americans who uprooted their lives in the South to move to other parts of the United States. This historical account of the great migration, written in a storytelling style, is captivating and well worth the read.

THE SUM OF US: WHAT RACISM COSTS EVERYONE AND HOW WE CAN PROSPER TOGETHER, HEATHER MCGHEE. This book explores how racism shapes American Politics and contributes to the U.S. lagging behind other developed countries in areas like healthcare, education, pollution and voting rights. It delves into the self-destructive bargain of white supremacy and its impact on all people, including white people.

THE HATE U GIVE, ANGIE THOMAS (Young Adult fiction)

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when she witnesses the fatal police shooting of her childhood best friend, who was unarmed. The book explores how she navigates these worlds as she struggles for justice following the death of her friend.