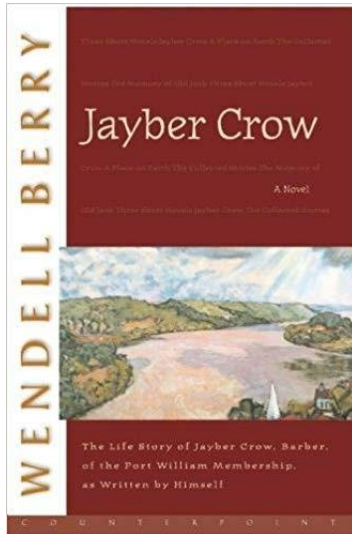


# St. Stephen's Book Club Selections for 2021-2022

## December 2021

Hosts: Dan and Laurie Morissette



***Jayber Crow*** by Wendell Berry, 384 pages

“This is a book about Heaven,” says Jayber Crow, “but I must say too that . . . I have wondered sometimes if it would not finally turn out to be a book about Hell.” It is 1932 and he has returned to his native Port William to become the town's barber.

Orphaned at age ten, Jayber Crow's acquaintance with loneliness and want have made him a patient observer of the human animal, in both its goodness and frailty.

He began his search as a "pre-ministerial student" at Pigeonville College. There, freedom met with new burdens and a young man needed more than a mirror to find himself. But the beginning of that finding was a short conversation with "Old Grit," his profound professor of New Testament Greek.

"You have been given questions to which you cannot be *given* answers. You will have to live them out—perhaps a little at a time."

"And how long is that going to take?"

"I don't know. As long as you live, perhaps."

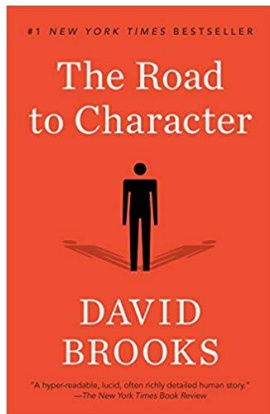
"That could be a long time."

"I will tell you a further mystery," he said. "It may take longer."

Wendell Berry's clear-sighted depiction of humanity's gifts—love and loss, joy and despair—is seen through his intimate knowledge of the Port William Membership.

## January

Hosts: Phil Moore and Gary Chafin



***The Road to Character*** by David Brooks, 320 pages

With the wisdom, humor, curiosity, and sharp insights that have brought millions of readers to his *New York Times* column and his previous bestsellers, David Brooks has consistently illuminated our daily lives in surprising and original ways. In *The Social Animal*, he explored the neuroscience of human connection and how we can flourish together. Now, in *The Road to Character*, he focuses on the deeper values that should inform our lives.

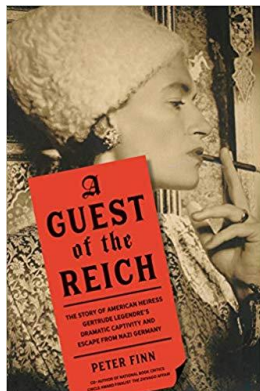
Looking to some of the world's greatest thinkers and inspiring leaders, Brooks explores how, through internal struggle and a sense of their own limitations, they have built a strong inner character. Labor activist Frances Perkins understood the need to suppress parts of herself so that she could be an instrument in a larger cause. Dwight Eisenhower organized his life not around impulsive self-expression but considered self-restraint. Dorothy Day, a devout Catholic convert and champion of the poor, learned as a young woman the vocabulary of simplicity and surrender. Civil rights pioneers A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin learned reticence and the logic of self-discipline, the need to distrust oneself even while waging a noble crusade.

Blending psychology, politics, spirituality, and confessional, *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.

“Joy,” David Brooks writes, “is a byproduct experienced by people who are aiming for something else. But it comes.”

## February

Hosts: Bill and Ellen Kirby



***A Guest of the Reich: The Story of American Heiress Gertrude Legendre's Dramatic Captivity and Escape from Nazi Germany*** by Peter Finn, 256 pages

Gertrude “Gertie” Legendre was a big-game hunter from a wealthy industrial family who lived a charmed life in Jazz Age America. Her adventurous spirit made her the inspiration for the Broadway play *Holiday*, which became a film starring Katharine Hepburn. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Legendre, by then married and a mother of two, joined the OSS, the wartime spy organization that preceded the CIA.

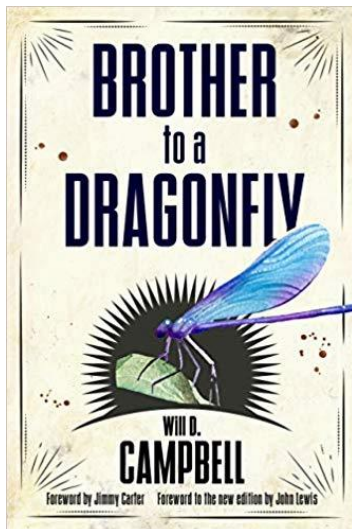
First in Washington and then in London, some of the most closely-held United States government secrets passed through her hands. In *A Guest of the Reich*, Peter Finn tells the gripping story of how in 1944, while on leave in liberated Paris, Legendre was captured by the Germans after accidentally crossing the front lines.

Subjected to repeated interrogations, including by the Gestapo, Legendre entered a daring game of lies with her captors. The Nazis treated her as a “special prisoner” of the SS and moved her from city to city throughout Germany, where she witnessed the collapse of Hitler’s Reich as no other American did. After six months in captivity, Legendre escaped into Switzerland.

*A Guest of the Reich* is a propulsive account of a little-known chapter in the history of World War II, as well as a fascinating portrait of an extraordinary woman.

## March

**Hosts: Jim and Dianna Russell**



*Brother to a Dragonfly* by Will Campbell, 250 pages

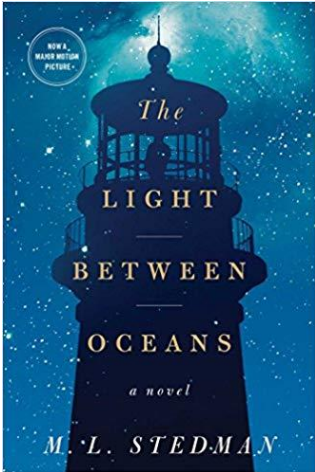
In *Brother to a Dragonfly*, Will D. Campbell writes about his life growing up poor in Amite County, Mississippi, during the 1930s alongside his older brother, Joe. Though they grew up in a close-knit family and cared for each other, the two went on to lead very different lives. After serving together in World War II, Will became a highly educated Baptist minister who later became a major figure in the early years of the civil rights movement, and Joe became a pharmacist who developed a substance abuse problem that ultimately took his life.

*Brother to a Dragonfly* also serves as a historical record. Though Will's love and dedication to his brother are the primary story, interwoven throughout the narrative is the story of the Jim Crow South and the civil rights movement. Will is present through many of the most pivotal moments in history--he was one of four people who escorted black students integrating the Little Rock public schools; he was the only white person present at the founding of the SCLC; he helped CORE and SNCC Freedom Riders integrate interstate bus travel; he joined Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s campaign of boycotts, sit-ins, and marches in Birmingham; and he was at the Lorraine Motel the night Dr. King was assassinated.

Will's accomplishments, however, never take the spotlight from his brother, and as his relationship with Joe evolves, so does Will's faith. Featuring a new foreword by Congressman John Lewis, this book brings back to print the combined lives of Will Campbell--Will the brother and Will the preacher.

## April

Hosts: David and Sandy Kirkpatrick



*The Light Between Oceans* by M. L. Stedman

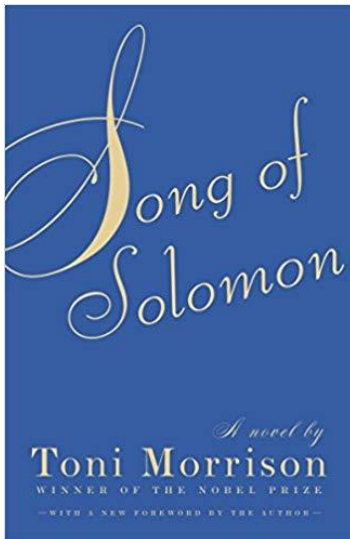
After four harrowing years on the Western Front, Tom Sherbourne returns to Australia and takes a job as the lighthouse keeper on Janus Rock, nearly half a day's journey from the coast. To this isolated island, where the supply boat comes once a season, Tom brings a young, bold, and loving wife, Isabel. Years later, after two miscarriages and one stillbirth, the grieving Isabel hears a baby's cries on the wind. A boat has washed up onshore carrying a dead man and a living baby.

Tom, who keeps meticulous records and whose moral principles have withstood a horrific war, wants to report the man and infant immediately. But Isabel insists the baby is a "gift from God," and against Tom's

judgment, they claim her as their own and name her Lucy. When she is two, Tom and Isabel return to the mainland and are reminded that there are other people in the world. Their choice has devastated one of them.

## May

Hosts: TBD

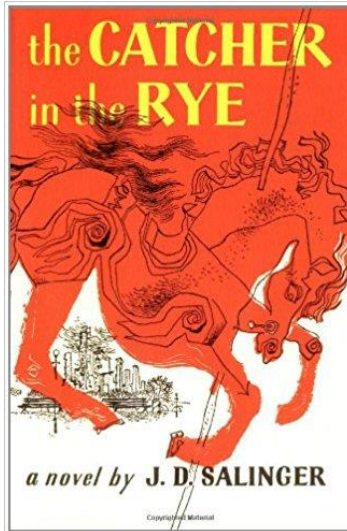


*Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison

Milkman Dead was born shortly after a neighborhood eccentric hurled himself off a rooftop in a vain attempt at flight. For the rest of his life he, too, will be trying to fly. With this brilliantly imagined novel, Toni Morrison transfigures the coming-of-age story as audaciously as Saul Bellow or Gabriel García Márquez. As she follows Milkman from his rustbelt city to the place of his family's origins, Morrison introduces an entire cast of strivers and seeresses, liars and assassins, the inhabitants of a fully realized black world.

## June

Hosts: TBD



### *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger

Anyone who has read J.D. Salinger's *New Yorker* stories - particularly *A Perfect Day for Bananafish*, *Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut*, *The Laughing Man*, and *For Esme With Love and Squalor*--will not be surprised by the fact that his first novel is full of children. The hero-narrator of *The Catcher in the Rye* is an ancient child of sixteen, a native New Yorker named Holden Caulfield.

Through circumstances that tend to preclude adult, secondhand description, he leaves his prep school in Pennsylvania and goes underground in New York City for three days. The boy himself is at once too simple and too complex for us to make any final comment about him or his story. Perhaps the safest thing we can say about

Holden is that he was born in the world not just strongly attracted to beauty but, almost, hopelessly impaled on it.