

Florida United Church of Christ Women
Reading for Renewal
2016 – 2017

Throwing Starfish: Women Making a Difference”

This year’s list contains a selection of books that are examples of how women can make a difference. That difference may have an impact on individuals, families, friends, communities and/or internationally. Some are based on real events – factual or fictionalized, others are events/stories created by the writer.

My hope is that you will find a book or two that challenges you, entertains you, delights you, engages you and provides a common topic of conversation to share with others both in your home congregation as well as throughout the state of Florida.

~Terri Crawford, FL UCC Women/Reading for Renewal Chair

Any number of books from this list that are read during the year should be reported. Reports are due in April 2017 to your local church’s Reading for Renewal contact.

A **Qualified Reader** must read **six (6)** books from this list, **including** one (1) Mission Study book,

In addition to retail bookstores, the books on the list may be available from your local public libraries and from online booksellers. Most are available in more than one format including large print, compact disc and various kinds of electronic media.

If you have questions or comments about this list, please contact FL UCC Reading for Renewal Chair, Terri Crawford at terric57@yahoo.com or Barb Coons at kayebarb3344@aol.com. Please include “Reading for Renewal” in the email subject line.

You may also send titles of books to be considered for future lists*. In general books to be considered should be:

- No more than 3 years old – based on release date
- Not a best seller or book from a best-seller list
- Available in multiple formats
- Not an author that has been the list in the past 2 years.

*In most cases, books selected for the list must in some way tie to the selected annual conference theme. There are occasional exceptions.

Reading for Renewal List for 2016 – 2017

Books are listed alphabetically by title. F = Fiction, NF = Non-Fiction, B = Biography/Memoir

1. *The Art of Crash Landing: a novel* – Melissa DiCarlo (F) Mattie Wallace has really screwed up this time. Broke and knocked up, she's got all her worldly possessions crammed into six giant trash bags, and nowhere to go. Try as she might, Mattie can no longer deny that she really is turning into her mother, a broken alcoholic who never met a bad choice she didn't make. When Mattie gets news of a possible inheritance left by a grandmother she's never met, she jumps at this one last chance to turn things around. Leaving the Florida Panhandle, she drives eight hundred miles to her mother's birthplace—the tiny town of Gandy, Oklahoma.
2. *Balm: a novel* – Dolen Perkins-Valdez (F) A powerful story of love and healing about three people who struggle to overcome the pain of the past and define their own future. The Civil War has ended, and Madge, Sadie, and Hemp have each come to Chicago in search of a new life. Balm is a stirring novel of love, loss, hope, and reconciliation set during one of the most critical periods in American history.
3. *Georgia: a novel of Georgia O'Keeffe* – Dawn Tripp (F) Historical fiction which brings to life Georgia O'Keeffe, her love affair with photographer Alfred Stieglitz, and her quest to become an independent artist. O'Keeffe is quickly drawn into Stieglitz's sophisticated world, becoming his mistress, protégé, and muse, as their attraction deepens into an intense and tempestuous relationship and his photographs of her, both clothed and nude, create a sensation. Yet as her own creative force develops, Georgia begins to push back against what critics and others are saying about her and her art. And soon she must make difficult choices to live a life she believes in.
4. *Girl At War* – Sara Novic (F) In 1991 Ana Jurić, a carefree ten-year-old, lives with her family in a small apartment in Croatia's capital. But that year, civil war breaks out across Yugoslavia, splintering Ana's idyllic childhood and forcing her to find her way in dangerous world. In 2001 Ana is a college student in Manhattan. Though she's tried to move on from her past, she can't escape her memories of war—secrets she keeps even from those closest to her. Haunted by the events that forever changed her family, Ana returns to Croatia after a decade away, hoping to make peace with the place she once called home. As she faces her ghosts, she must come to terms with her country's difficult history and the events that interrupted her childhood years before.
5. *Girl Waits With Gun* – Amy Stewart (F) This story is based on the forgotten true story of one of the nation's first female deputy sheriffs. Constance Kopp doesn't quite fit the mold. She towers over most men, has no interest in marriage or domestic affairs, and has been isolated from the world since a family secret sent her and her sisters into hiding fifteen years ago. After her family experiences an altercation with a gang, the sheriff enlists her help in convicting the men. Constance is forced to

confront her past and defend her family — and she does it in a way that few women of 1914 would have dared.

6. *Grounded: Finding God in the World: a spiritual revolution* – Diana Butler Bass (NF) The headlines are clear: religion is on the decline in America as many people leave behind traditional religious practices. The distant God of conventional religion has given way to a more intimate sense of the sacred that is with us in the world. This shift, from a vertical understanding of God to a God found on the horizons of nature and human community, is at the heart of a spiritual revolution that surrounds us – and that is challenging not only religious institutions but political and social ones as well.
7. *I'll See You in Paris: a novel* – Michelle Gable (F) This story is based on the real life of Gladys Spencer-Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough. Nearly a century after Gladys's heyday, a young woman's quest to understand the legendary Duchess takes her from a charming hamlet in the English countryside, to a dilapidated manse kept behind barbed wire, and ultimately, to Paris, where answers will be found at last. In the end, she not only solves the riddle of the Duchess but also uncovers the missing pieces in her own life.
8. *The Impossible Lives of Greta Wells* – Andrew Greer (F) After the death of her beloved twin brother and the abandonment of her long-time lover, Greta Wells undergoes electroshock therapy. Over the course of the treatment, Greta finds herself repeatedly sent to 1918, 1941, and back to the present. She is fascinated by her alter egos: in 1941, she is a devoted mother; in 1918, she is a bohemian adulteress. Each reality has its own losses, its own rewards; each extracts a different price. Which life will she choose as she wrestles with the unpredictability of love and the consequences of even her most carefully considered choices?
9. *Life Reimagined: the science, art and opportunity of midlife* – Barbara Bradley Hagerty (NF) Hagerty explains that midlife is about renewal: It's the time to renegotiate your purpose, refocus your relationships, and transform the way you think about the world and yourself. Drawing from emerging information in neurology, psychology, biology, genetics, and sociology—as well as her own story of midlife transformation—Hagerty redraws the map for people in midlife and plots a new course forward in understanding our health, our relationships, even our futures.
10. *Lights Out: a cyberattack: a nation unprepared; surviving the aftermath* – Ted Koppel (NF) Ted Koppel reveals that a major cyberattack on America's power grid is not only possible but likely, that it would be devastating, and that the United States is shockingly unprepared. In the absence of a government plan, some individuals and communities have taken matters into their own hands. But how, Koppel asks, will ordinary civilians survive? With urgency and authority, one of our most renowned journalists examines a threat unique to our time and evaluates potential ways to prepare for a catastrophe that is all but inevitable.

11. *Lila: a novel* – Marilynne Robinson (F) Lila, homeless and alone after years of roaming the countryside, steps inside a small-town Iowa church-the only available shelter from the rain-and ignites a romance and a debate that will reshape her life. She becomes the wife of a minister, John Ames, and begins a new existence while trying to make sense of the life that preceded her newfound security.
12. *The Little Bookstore of Big Stone Gap: a memoir of friendship, community, and the uncommon pleasure of a good book* – Wendy Welch (NF) The story of the little bookstore that could: how two people, two cats, two dogs, and thirty-eight thousand books helped a small town find its heart. It is a story about people and books, and how together they create community.
13. *Mrs Sinclair's Suitcase* – Louise Walters (F) Roberta, a lonely thirty-four-year-old bibliophile, works at The Old and New Bookshop in England. When she finds a letter inside her centenarian grandmother's battered old suitcase that hints at a dark secret, her understanding of her family's history is completely upturned. Running alongside Roberta's narrative is that of her grandmother, Dorothy, as a forty-year-old childless woman desperate for motherhood during the early years of World War II. The parallel stories of Roberta and Dorothy unravel over the course of eighty years as they both make their own ways through secrets, lies, sacrifices, and love.
14. *My Sunshine Away* – M.O. Walsh (F) The story unfolds in a Baton Rouge neighborhood best known for cookouts on sweltering summer afternoons, cauldrons of spicy crawfish, and passionate football fandom. But in the summer of 1989, when fifteen-year-old Lindy Simpson experiences a horrible crime late one evening near her home, it becomes apparent that this idyllic stretch of Southern suburbia has a dark side, too. The enchantment of a charmed childhood is juxtaposed with the gripping story of a violent crime, unraveling families, and consuming adolescent love.
15. *Raising Ryland: our story of parenting a transgender child* – Hillary Whittington (NF) This powerful, moving story is a mother's first-hand account of her emotional choice to embrace her transgender child. In telling her family's story, she hopes she can assist the world in accepting that even children as young as five, can have profound and impactful things to say and share. What emerges is a powerful story of unconditional love, accepting others for who they are, and doing what's right, regardless of whether those around you understand it.
16. *A Remarkable Kindness: a novel* – Diana Bletter (F) It's 2006 in a seaside village in Israel, where a war is brewing. Four women forge a friendship that sustains them as they come to terms with love and loss, and the outbreak of war. Their intimate bond is strengthened by their participation in a traditional ritual that closes the circle of life.
17. *Rise of the Rocket Girls: the women who propelled us from missiles to the moon to Mars* – Nathalie Holt (NF) In the 1940s and 50s, when the newly minted Jet Propulsion Laboratory needed quick-thinking mathematicians to calculate velocities and plot trajectories, they didn't turn to male graduates. Rather, they recruited an elite group of young women who, with only pencil, paper, and mathematical

prowess, transformed rocket design, helped bring about the first American satellites, and made the exploration of the solar system possible. For the first time, *Rise of the Rocket Girls* tells the stories of these women--known as "human computers"--who broke the boundaries of both gender and science.

18. *Season of the Dragonflies: a novel* – Sarah Creech (F) For generations, the Lenore women have manufactured a perfume unlike any other, and guarded the unique and mysterious ingredients. Their perfumery, hidden in the quiet rolling hills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, creates one special elixir that secretly sells for millions of dollars to the world's most powerful. The Lenore's signature perfume is actually the key to their success. Now trouble is brewing: the family matriarch is experiencing strange spells of forgetfulness, her daughter is plotting a coup, a client is threatening blackmail and most ominously, the unique flowers used in their perfume are dying.
19. *The Secrets of Midwives* – Sally Hepworth (F) A captivating tale of life, loss, and love...Neva Bradley, a third-generation midwife, is determined to keep the details surrounding her own pregnancy—including the identity of the baby's father— hidden from her family and co-workers for as long as possible. As Neva's pregnancy progresses and speculation makes it harder and harder to conceal the truth, other women in her family (with their own secrets) wonder if hiding the truth is ultimately more harmful than telling it. Will these women reveal their secrets and deal with the inevitable consequences? Or are some secrets best kept hidden?
20. *The Sunken Cathedral: a novel* – Kate Walbert (F) Marie and Simone, friends for decades, were once immigrants to the city, survivors of World War II in Europe. Now widows living alone in Chelsea, they remain robust, engaged, and adventurous, even as the vistas from their past interrupt their present. The story explores the growing disconnect between the world of action the friends inhabit and the longings, desires, and doubts they experience.
21. *The Sunrise: a novel* – Victoria Hislop (F) A saga of survival set during the 1974 Cypriot coup d'état that tells the intersecting stories of three families whose lives are decimated when brewing ethnic tensions erupt into conflict. The fallout sends the island's inhabitants spiraling into fear and chaos We follow the story of one family who joins the exodus of people who must abandon their idyllic lives in Famagusta and flee to refugee camps, and two others who remain in the decimated city. One is Turkish Cypriot, the other Greek Cypriot and the tension between them is palpable. But with resources scarce and the Turkish militia looming large, both families must take shelter in the deserted hotel as they battle illness, hunger, fear, and their own prejudices while struggling to stay alive.
22. *When Spiritual but Not Religious Is Not Enough: Seeing God in Surprising Places, Even the Church* – Lillian Daniel (NF) The phrase "I'm spiritual but not religious" has become a cliché. It's easy to find God amid the convenience of self-styled spirituality--but is it possible (and more worthwhile) to search for God through religion? Minister and celebrated author Lillian Daniel gives a new spin on church with stories of what a life of faith can really be: weird, wondrous, and well worth trying.

23. *When the Moon is Low: a novel* – Nadia Hashimi (F) Mahmoud's passion for his wife Fereiba, a schoolteacher, is greater than any love she's ever known. But their happy, middle-class world—a life of education, work, and comfort—implodes when their country is engulfed in war, and the Taliban rises to power. Mahmoud, a civil engineer, becomes a target of the new fundamentalist regime and is murdered. Forced to flee Kabul with her three children, Fereiba has one hope to survive: she must find a way to cross Europe and reach her sister's family in England.
24. *Where the Light Gets In: losing my mother only to find her again* Kimberly Williams-Paisley (B) Actress Kimberly Williams-Paisley tells the full story of her mother's illness—called primary progressive aphasia—from her early-onset diagnosis at the age of 62 through the present day. Kim draws a candid picture of the ways her family reacted for better and worse, and how she, her father and two siblings educated themselves, tried to let go of shame and secrecy, made mistakes, and found unexpected humor and grace in the midst of suffering.
25. *Wish You Happy Forever: What China's Orphans Taught Me About Moving Mountains* – Jenny Bowen (NF) This book chronicles Jenny Bowen's personal and professional journey to transform Chinese orphanages—and the lives of the neglected girls who live in them—from a state of quiet despair to one of vibrant promise. She created Half the Sky Foundation, an organization conceived to bring love into the life of every orphan in China and one that has actually managed to fulfill its promise.

MISSION STUDY TITLES

26. *Black and Blue* – Anna Quindlen (F) Fran Benedetto tells a spellbinding story: how at nineteen she fell in love with Bobby Benedetto, how their passionate marriage became a nightmare, why she stayed, and what happened on the night she finally decided to run away with her ten-year-old son and start a new life under a new name. Living in fear in Florida--yet with increasing confidence, freedom, and hope--Fran unravels the complex threads of family, identity, and desire that shape a woman's life, even as she begins to create a new one. As Fran starts to heal from the pain of the past, she almost believes she has escaped it--that Bobby Benedetto will not find her and again provoke the complex combustion between them of attraction and destruction, lust and love.
27. *The Murder of Regilla: a case of domestic violence antiquity-* Sarah Pomeroy (NF) A fascinating story of the life, marriage, and death of an all but forgotten Roman woman. Born to an illustrious Roman family in 125 CE, Regilla was married at the age of fifteen to Herodes, a wealthy Greek who championed his country's values at a time when Rome ruled. Twenty years later--and eight months pregnant with her sixth child--Regilla died under mysterious circumstances, after a blow to the abdomen delivered by Herodes' freedman. Regilla's brother charged Herodes with murder, but a Roman court (at the urging of Marcus Aurelius) acquitted him. Sarah Pomeroy's investigation suggests that despite Herodes' erection of numerous monuments to his deceased wife, he was in fact guilty of the crime.

28. *Next Time She'll Be Dead: battering and how to stop it* – Ann Jones (NF) This study brings home as few others have the number of women who are battered and the virtually insuperable obstacles they face trying to combat abuse. We learn that more than a million American women are battered each year, most by husbands or boyfriends, who are also likely to hit children in the home as well. A critique of domestic violence and society's ineffectual response, which uses case studies to show how judges (refusing to issue restraining orders), police (refusing to interfere in "lovers' quarrels"), journalists (referring to "crimes of passion"), and even many feminists still hold women responsible for appeasing men and absorbing their violence.
29. *Not to People Like Us: hidden abuse in upscale marriages* - Susan Weitzman (NF) How is it possible for a highly educated woman with a career and resources of her own to stay in a marriage with an abusive husband? How can a man be considered a pillar of his community, run a successful business, yet regularly give his wife a black eye? The very nature of these questions proves our unarticulated assumption that domestic violence is restricted to the lower classes. When we do hear stories of high-profile victims, we regard them as exceptional cases and still believe abuse doesn't happen to "people like us." Now Susan Weitzman counters this assumption by exploring a heretofore overlooked population of battered wives—the well-educated, upper-income women who rarely report abuse and remain trapped by their own silence.
30. *Surviving Domestic Violence: voices of women who broke free* – Elaine Weiss (NF) Relates the stories of twelve women. Each was a victim of domestic violence, escaped from her abuser, reclaimed her dignity, reconstructed her life, and rediscovered peace. Domestic violence doesn't just happen "out there" somewhere. It happens in our town, in our neighborhood, on our street. It happens to women we see at work, the supermarket, the movie theater, the ballet and the PTA board meeting. Every woman who has left an abusive man—every woman who has yet to leave—will find encouragement and hope in the voices of these women who broke free.
31. *When Katie Wakes: a memoir*- Connie Mae Fowler (B) In this piercing memoir, Fowler chronicles the emotional battery and physical abuse that marked her own passage to adulthood. She draws a searing portrait of growing up with her manipulative and needy mother, a woman unable to give the love and comfort every child has a right to expect. And then, as a young woman, Fowler found herself involved with a man whose behavior disturbingly echoed her mother's. The man she lived with alternately displayed a desperate need for her or rejected her as if she were worse than useless. With heart-wrenching candor, Fowler records the abuse she suffered at his hands, from his constant attempts to undermine her self-confidence to his acts of brutal physical violence. The unconditional love Fowler longed for finally came—in the shape of an adoring Labrador puppy named Kateland. With Katie at her side, she was able to withstand her mistreatment and the crushing weight of her childhood and, miraculously, managed to create a small refuge from the horrors that surrounded her. This is the story of her decision to end the years of mistreatment and even to open her life to a new, gentle man, whose love and understanding helped to transform her.

2016 – 2017 Reading for Renewal Record Sheet

Due to your local church's Reading for Renewal contact in April 2017.

Each reader is asked to record the books read from this list during the year. Please indicate the books you read by placing a check in front of the number of the book title listed below. Any number of books may be recorded. A **qualified reader** must read **six (6)** books from the list, **including** one (1) Mission Study book.

1	The Art of Crash Landing - DiCarlo	14	My Sunshine Away - Walsh
2	Balm – Perkins-Valdez	15	Raising Ryland - Whittington
3	Georgia - Tripp	16	A Remarkable Kindness - Bletter
4	Girl at War - Novic	17	Rise of the Rocket Girls - Holt
5	Girl Waits With Gun - Stewart	18	Season of the Dragonflies - Creech
6	Grounded - Bass	19	The Secrets of Midwives - Hepworth
7	I'll See You in Paris - Gable	20	The Sunken Cathedral - Walbert
8	The Impossible Life of Greta Wells - Greer	21	The Sunrise - Hislop
9	Life Reimagined -Hagerty	22	When Spiritual But Not Religious is not Enough - Daniel
10	Lights Out - Koppel	23	When The Moon Is Low - Hashimi
11	Lila - Robinson	24	Where the Light Gets In – Williams-Paisley
12	The Little Bookstore of Big Stone Gap - Welch	25	Wish You Happy Forever -Bowen
13	Mrs Sinclair's Suitcase - Walters		

MISSION STUDY BOOKS on Domestic Violence

26	Black and Blue - Quindlen
27	The Murder of Regallia - Pomeroy
28	Next Time She'll Be Dead - Jones
29	Not to People Like Us - Weitzman
30	Surviving Domestic Violence - Weiss
31	When Katie Wakes - Fowler

Total number of 2016-2017 Reading for Renewal Books Read: _____

I am a **Qualified Reader**: Yes _____ No _____

Name: _____

