

# WordbyWord



Library Newsletter/January 2018

## Book Review: *Claiming Your Place at the Fire* by Richard J. Leider and David A. Shapiro

By Pastor Janet Karvonen-Montgomery

To claim one's place at the fire means to live one's life on purpose. As we age, there are many myths, stereotypes, and misconceptions that our ageist society imposes on people. To what extent our society causes us to believe that our lives diminish in elder years - is one of the many thought-provoking ideas put forth in this book.

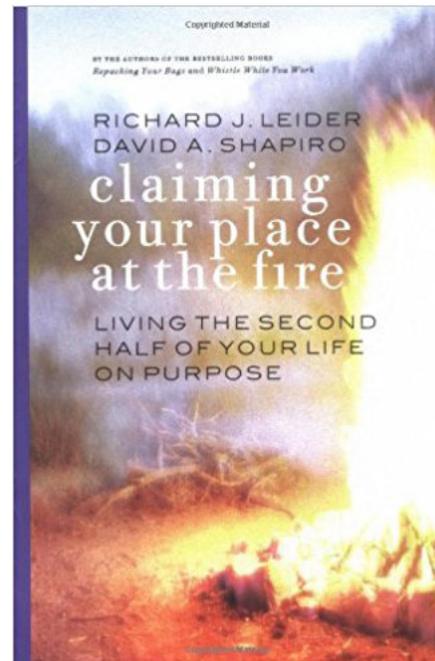
"Grow whole, not old." This is the concept that drew me in to this guide for those of us in the second half of life. As a second career pastor who was ordained at age 55, I have spent a great deal of time looking at questions of meaning and purpose as I considered beginning this new vocation. One's life circumstances are always changing and this book provides a helpful framework as one "looks back and forward simultaneously, to draw from the past while advancing confidently in the direction of the future."

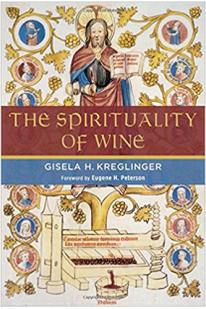
If life expectancy in the United States is currently 78 years of age, people are entering the second half of of life by age 40. Many people deny aging and their own mortality, but the authors encourage people to take time, thought, and intention to make the second half of life authentic and fulfilling. I find it exciting to consider that even as our bodies age, our minds and spirits can continue to grow and expand in possibilities. I enjoyed the many inspiring stories of how people are living into the concept of becoming a "new elder". The key concept for a new elder is to embrace the idea of becoming "a nurturer of life - human life and all of life on the planet."

At the end of each chapter, readers are asked to have a "fireside chat" with another on each of the four key questions to reflect upon: Who Am I? Where Do I Belong? What Do I Care About? What is My Purpose? While there is ample material to draw upon alone, you'll go deeper if you can engage these questions with a spouse, friend, or trusted person.

This secular book addresses spiritual dimensions sparingly, yet asks readers what is central in their lives, using the term "calling" as something that continues after retirement. "Our vocational story unfolds from cradle to grave." As a person of faith, it is not a stretch to incorporate the concepts into our life of discipleship. In fact, embracing God's continuing creative work in all of the world includes us, as part of God's creation.

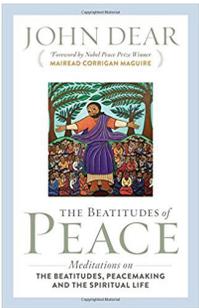
As a pastor in the second half of life, I recommend reading this book with another or in a group setting. It will help you recall, refine, renew and reclaim your power to choose how to live fully into the person God has created you to be.





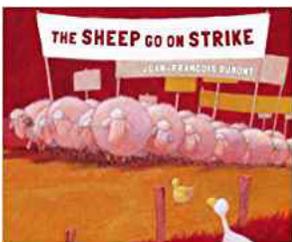
Are you one of those people who appreciated viewing “Babette’s Feast”? Do you find that spirituality works for you through real everyday things like shared meals, good food, and even wine? Then one of the newest additions to the Apostle Library will be good reading for you. Gisela Kreglinger grew up on a winery in Franconia, Germany but also holds a PhD in historical theology and taught

Christian spirituality prior to beginning to write full-time. In *The Spirituality of Wine*, she helps us understand “tasting the goodness of God”, bringing Christian spirituality and the world of wine together in new ways. The book is rich in biblical traditions and church history as well as bringing new and surprising ideas to us about spirituality. This title was recently recommended in “Living Lutheran”, our ELCA’s monthly magazine.



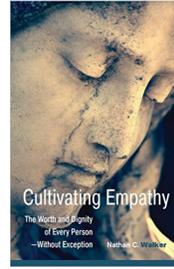
*The Beatitudes of Peace* by John Dear is most aptly subtitled “Meditations on the Beatitudes, peacemaking and the spiritual life”. Dear, who has spent over three decades speaking to people about the gospel of Jesus, the way of non-violence and the call to peace, has authored more than 30 books, is a priest in the diocese of Monterey, CA, and was recently nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by

Archbishop Desmond Tutu. In this book Dear combines the spiritual wisdom of the Beatitudes with practical advice from peacemakers like Gandhi, Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day and others. He describes peace efforts in places like Afghanistan, Israel, and in the United States. I was especially moved to read his “anti-beatitudes” and the closing prayer. I would venture to say you will be, too.



Ever feel someone has taken advantage of you - “fleeced”, if you will? Well, sometimes the sheep do, too! The sheep on the farm in *The Sheep Go on Strike* by Jean-Francois Dumont, are sick of getting sheared - so they decide to go on strike! Things get heated as

the rest of the animals start to take sides, eventually leading to a furry, feathery scuffle. But when they all sit down together, the sheep learn how important their wool is to the farm, and the animals come up with a creative solution to everyone’s problem. This delightful story, beautifully illustrated, demonstrates the importance of collaboration and teamwork and can lead to a wonderful conversation about the art of compromise. Of course, it’s for children but for grown-ups, too; we all need to remember the need to compromise!



*Cultivating Empathy* by Nathan Walker presents a collection of essays about the author’s wrestlings with personal and cultural conflicts and his commitment to stop “otherizing”- which occurs when we either demonize people or romanticize them. Walker’s remedy for these kinds of projections is to employ the moral imagination (a vital character trait used

by those who have the courage to project themselves into a conflict and understand all the perspectives, aware that understanding need not imply agreement) as an everyday spiritual practice. He shows that through this approach, we can save ourselves from irresponsibly using our imaginations by cultivating genuine empathy for those we previously held in contempt. We can visualize ourselves playing various characters within a conflict and choose not to play a lead role in the drama. Throughout the book he endeavors to find connection with skinheads, murderers, homophobic preachers, privileged one percenters, and Monsanto executives. This small book may just provide the key to how we both as individuals and groups/communities/countries are able to move forward together. It is certainly worth a try in this New Year!

We are now in Year 501 in Lutheran Reformation history. Check out this wonderful online timeline and information about Lutheran history! Lutheran Quarterly and Johns Hopkins University Press has this wonderful timeline available FREE. View the timeline at [timeline.press.jhu.edu/lut\\_reformation](http://timeline.press.jhu.edu/lut_reformation) by clicking on the time periods at the top of the page. Links and information abound.



# Library Hours

The Library is open whenever the Incarnation building is open.

## Check-out procedures:

- 1) Fill out the card in book/media pocket with your full name, phone number and the date you take out the materials.
- 2) Leave card(s) in the basket. PLEASE DO NOT FILE CARDS!
- 3) Return books after three weeks and Videos/DVDs/CDs after one week. Place returned items in the large basket on the floor.