



FACES IN THE PEW

Anita Bare

Renewing our minds and renewing our books

Jen Foster

Anita Bare will tell you that she's just one of a crew of people who make our church library work so well. She'll point to others on the committee who are faithful every Thursday afternoon, helping organize the library's inventory, placing pockets in the backs of new books, arranging displays to make the good books easy to find. And it's true — any effort in a Baptist church has a committee of people working together. But make no mistake. Behind her modest, credit-the-team approach, Anita is the one who keeps our church library filled with books that teach and challenge, encourage and entertain.

Anita spent her professional life in education, first at an elementary school in Garner, then as a high school librarian at Enloe and later at Garner High School. So it's natural that she'd want to volunteer during her retirement years nestled in the quiet comfort of a library environment. She can't remember exactly when she began helping in our church library, and no one seems to be able to remember a time when she wasn't central to its success. You'll find her there nearly as often as the church staff, on Sundays and Wednesdays to help folks check out their books, and on Thursdays to arrange displays and organize the collection.

Like any good librarian, Anita developed an early love of reading while she was growing up in Davidson County. On a recent Wednesday night, she was puttering around the library, tidying up the displays and putting away a couple of books that had been recently returned. She sat down to trim some extra tape from the spine of one paperback, and suddenly she was engrossed in the first chapter. How quickly a bibliophile can go from curiosity, just reading the summary inside the front cover, to being caught up in a good story! She finds joy in all kinds of books, and when asked for a favorite couldn't settle on one, or even a few. Instead she gave me half a dozen she had read recently, and for each one, she finished by encouraging others in the church to read it.

Our church library is filled with far more than reference books that Sunday School teachers

use to prepare for their lessons. There's a huge section of biographies, all manner of adult fiction, young adult books to pull in kids who are too old for Dr. Seuss. There are low racks of children's picture books, the kind of displays that invite preschoolers to grab them by the armfuls. "That's a lot for you to carry!" Anita smiles as Lila Belle

Davis, Trey's daughter, struggles to balance a stack of books, squeezing the top one with her chin to keep it from sliding off. "They may not get back in the right place, but she'll put them back," Anita says.

She takes pride in finding books our congregation will enjoy, both in the library and beyond. She's part of the Works in Progress small group that discusses books on theology and spirituality, and

sometimes suggests titles for the members. With every conversation, it's clear that she wants the library to be a quality resource for everyone in the church. "We really spend a lot of time trying to be sure we have good books that are going to appeal to people," she says. Anita knows that First Baptist is full of people just like her, folks who have a genuine love of learning. And she makes sure that our library stays full of books for each of us. Anita says, "I'm convinced that libraries are the best place.... There's no other place that people can just walk in and pull a book off the shelf and sit there and read all day. We are lucky to have libraries."

And at First Baptist, we're lucky to have someone who makes sure our library is just that kind of place. 🌸

Anita's book recommendations:

- *The Soul of America*
by Jon Meacham
- *My Grandfather Would Have Shot Me: A Black Woman Discovers Her Family's Nazi Past*
by Jennifer Teege and Nikola Sellmair
- *Anne of Green Gables*
by Lucy Maud Montgomery
- *Little Women*
by Louisa May Alcott

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

— ROMANS 12:2