Stephen L. Cook, Ph.D., The Catherine N. McBurney Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature at Virginia Theological Seminary, recommends the following books as part of the Bishop Payne Library’s monthly series highlighting a faculty member’s “picks”:

This year, for some Advent formation, I read Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s God is in the Manger (Westminster John Knox, 2010; available also as both Kindle and AudioBook downloads, each under $10). What better way to appreciate the deep meaning of Advent than to read these letters, papers, reflections, and prayers written by a modern Christian martyr. Though written from death-row in a Nazi prison cell, each short chapter is full of hope, confidence, and profound insight into God’s truth.

I recently read (for the first time!) the short story by Leo Tolstoy, God Sees the Truth, But Waits (public domain: http://www.online-literature.com/tolstoy/2061/.) This is a classic dark tale of injustice, spirituality, and conversion that brings alive the spirit of Isaiah's Suffering Servant. The protagonist’s stance and fate surely inspired Gandhi and MLK. A twenty-minute-long audio-book version is available for a dollar: http://goo.gl/U66WSZ

At the suggestion of a faculty colleague, I recently listened to C. S. Lewis' The ScrewTape Letters in an amazing rendering by British comedian John Cleese. Generally known for his utter irreverence, Cleese may at first seem an unlikely narrator for Lewis. In fact, however, he downright revels in the spirit of this book and has brought out to the fullest the dry, razor-edged wit of its monologue. You can access the recordings for free at http://bit.ly/scrwtp

As a final pick, please keep an eye peeled for my major new book on Deuteronomy, hot off the press. Many years in the making, the volume is specially written to be highly accessible, theological, and life-changing for people in the pew. Reading Deuteronomy: A Literary and Theological Commentary (Reading the Old Testament; Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, ISBN: 9781573127578).