

## Of Green Stuff Woven

**Cathleen Bascom**

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In *Of Green Stuff Woven*, theology and pragmatism butt heads, with the fate of the prairie and a Des Moines cathedral hanging in the balance.

Brigid, who's the dean of a historic cathedral, has a crisis on her hands. Her Episcopal congregation is dwindling, and with it go the funds needed to maintain St. Aidan's and its ministries. When Brigid is approached with an offer of almost four million dollars for the prairie land that the church has been restoring, it seems to be St. Aidan's hope of salvation.

But environmentally conscious Brigid, along with the members of the cathedral's Prairie Team, are not so sure. Max, who's a powerful businessman and a St. Aidan's congregant, appears poised to benefit financially from the deal, and a split begins to form in the church. Brigid navigates these tricky waters while trying to discern the right path to take.

There are no easy answers, and the novel avoids the pitfall of vilifying one side of the debate. Max at times skirts the line to becoming an outright villain, but Brigid, too, has flaws, which she recognizes along with her need for grace. Poignant moments of reflection pepper the narrative as gentle reminders of each character's humanity. In the end: grace wins out.

Chapters alternate between the main story around the cathedral and a secondary thread focused on Brigid's life. While the biographical sections are insightful when it comes to understanding Brigid, they sometimes intrude on the more engaging primary story. Gentle prose that exemplifies an obvious love for plants carries interest through. Each chapter is headed with a horticultural entry and illustration from Brigid's journal, tying a specific plant to the events of the chapter.

Bursting with botanical piquancy, *Of Green Stuff Woven* is a novel about the relationship between humans, their environment, and the divine.

MEAGAN LOGSDON (March / April 2020)

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