



# A Mending at the Edge

*Jane Kirkpatrick*

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**A Mending at the Edge** Jane Kirkpatrick

**"Of all the things I left in Willapa, hope is what I missed the most."**

So begins this story of one woman's restoration from personal grief to the meaning of community. Based on the life of German-American Emma Wagner Giesy, the only woman sent to the Oregon Territory in the 1850s to help found a communal society, award-winning author Jane Kirkpatrick shows how landscape, relationships, spirituality and artistry poignantly reflect a woman's desire to weave a unique and meaningful legacy from the threads of an ordinary life. While set in the historical past, it's a story for our own time answering the question: Can threads of an isolated life weave a legacy of purpose in community?

## A Mending at the Edge Details

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Author : Jane Kirkpatrick

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## From Reader Review A Mending at the Edge for online ebook

### Linda says

I read all 3 books in this series, A Clearing in the Wild, A Tendering in the Storm and A Mending at the Edge. They follow a woman, Emma Wagner Giesy in her journey from Bethel, Missouri to Willipa, Washington and then on to Aurora, Oregon. She is part of a religious group led by a Wilhelm Keil. During this journey she learns a great deal about herself. I wanted to read this book as I volunteer with the Aurora Colony Historical Society. I did enjoy the book as it gave me a great look into the lives of these people and as a volunteer that information is great! However, it didn't capture my attention as much as I would have liked and the story moved along a bit slow for me. I felt the three books could have been condensed into one or maybe two. I think people get bored and turned off with the first book and never make it to the next two so they can read more as the story unfolds. I kept with it because it was a book about the very settlement I volunteer with. If this had not been the case I would have not continued reading that and I had to know the end, of course!

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### Debbie says

"A Mending At The Edge" by Jane Kirkpatrick gets 4 stars from me. I didn't give it 5 stars because it is a rather long story and at times slow reading, I did enjoy reading about Emma and the members of the Aurora Colony. It is the third in the Change and Cherish Historical Series. I felt there was alot of repeating scenes in these three books. I think the story could have been shorter and still been told. These three books are fiction but are based on actual events.

My questions that I left in my review of "A Tendering in the Storm" has been answered.

Yes Emma sees her parents and is reunited with them. Yes her son becomes a doctor. Emma gets her own house but at a cost.

Emma even climbed to the bellfry and stood upside down on the bells.

Emma has more challenges and growing in this book as well as the others. I found myself actually feeling her pain as she is forced to let someone else raise her sons again but in the end realized that the time and place she was in that maybe that was the best from them.

Emma tries to follow The Diamond Rule in inviting outsiders to live with her in her two door house.

Emma and the others who live with her start a inhouse church on Sundays when there are no church meetings and it from this, that changes are discussed and then plans are made to convince their leader Brother Kiel to think it was his idea such as allowing men and women both to sing when they have the service for the new bells. It is at one of these meetings the idea is formed to build a restaurant at the State fair that is held every October. It was at these meeting they were able to connivence Louisa that it was okay to mend quilts for others and not for themselves on Sundays.

Brother Kiel and Louisa Kiel have another heartache in this book to accept and it changes them both once

again.

This book shows that when you give to others you help yourself.

In closing this review I want to include a quote from the book that I think sums Emma really well.

Page 284 "I looked down at my hand. The crooked fingers would always be a reminder of Jack. But they'd remind me, too, of my strength, my ability to take necessary next steps for my family. Maybe I wouldn't bring a dozen people to the faith the way Christian had; maybe I wouldn't tend a large family as my mother did; maybe I'd never be as faithful as Helena and Louisa, but I was who I was; I would leave a legacy of everyday devotion both to my family and to the delights of life, including standing upside down on a bell.

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### **Kathy says**

This is the 3rd book in a historical fiction trilogy about a religious group who came from Bethel, MS to Oregon in the 1800's and founded a colony named Aurora. The leader of the group, Dr Wilhelm Keil, was an autocrat who ruled with an iron hand. The main character is Emma Wagner Giesy and the trilogy tells the story of Emma's life as a thorn in Dr. Keil's side as she fights to maintain her independence. Dr. Keil and Emma were real people and I was SO disappointed when I googled Aurora and discovered David & I had been within a few miles of it on a backroads trip last year. I enjoyed this book and Jane Kirkpatrick's unique style of weaving faith throughout her stories without preaching!

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### **Deon Stonehouse says**

A Mending in the Storm, the conclusion of her trilogy on the life of Emma Giesy. Tireless research gives Jane Kirkpatrick's historical fiction a real window into the past. All of her books feature strong, independent women whose stories would be lost without Jane Kirkpatrick's books. Researching Emma Giesy's story, Jane haunted the archives of the Aurora Colony Historical Society for information on life in the colony. She interviewed descendants of the Giesy, Wagner and Keil families to develop a sense of the real people behind the story. She had access to family letters, journal, and records, granting her rich historical detail. Jane went to the historic houses in Aurora in order to write with a sense of reality about life in the colony. She walked through rooms Emma Giesy would have walked, looked at the view of Mt. Hood Emma would have seen, and got a sense of the rhythm of Emma's days. Reading a Jane Kirkpatrick book you are transported back in time to an era when fir trees were so huge grown men could not circle them with their arms and Celilo Falls ran wild.

A Mending at the Edge concludes Emma Giesy's story. Life has turned out differently than Emma planned. She has taken refuge in the Aurora Colony under Wilhelm Keil's protection. She moves from pain to acceptance, finding peace in helping others. Other women have also suffered from poor choices or unforeseen circumstances, Emma finds a sense of purpose in helping them get back on their feet. Emma builds a life for herself, doing the best she can. She quilts with the other women in the colony, tends her garden, and discovers a joy in drawing. Her parents move from Bethel Missouri to the Aurora Colony in Oregon. Emma is keenly anxious to reconcile with her parents. Although Emma has had challenges that kept her from raising her children in her own way, she learns to accept that she has done her best.

So many stories from the past are lost. Jane Kirkpatrick saves some of them, giving us historical fiction

about the remarkable women who bravely faced obstacles and helped settle the land. She has written some fascinating sagas of early life in the Pacific Northwest.

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### **Coral says**

I think I liked this book better the first time I read it. But since it is the third and final in the series, you just don't feel complete until you finish the last one. This book does a nice job of tying up the life of Emma, the main character. She finally realizes what things in life she needs to control and what she can let go. She discovers what matters. But this book doesn't have a continuing story line to keep you wanting to turn pages. Instead it has lots of little life moments of self discovery. They were interesting, but not anything that you couldn't put down for a few days. Any exciting stuff seemed to happen to periphery characters whose lives brushed Emma's. That was kinda boring after the first couple of books where the focus is on Emma. You do learn more about the history of Aurora in the third book than the other two and you watch it evolve along with Emma and the founder of Aurora, Wm Keil. I would recommend it to read following the first two books, (A Clearing in the Wild and A Tendering in the Storm) but not as a stand alone historical novel.

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### **Anya says**

The story continues, this time in the Aurora Colony of Northwestern Oregon Territory. In this installment Emma finds her way, still learning how to co-exist in a communal type of life but maintain some semblance of her own identity. She is a natural born leader and even though she lives in a sub-culture that does not recognize women as leaders in any way, she finds that she can be of great service to other women just by her example in persevering and reaching out to those in need. This portion is greatly about the relationships between a few of the women in this colony who developed close supportive friendships, even some unlikely ones.

As times change through this tumultuous era of the 1870's the colony finds itself unable to hold back the tide of worldly influence, a great irony as that was the reason for the move west. Emma also finds that she is unable to hold back the many changes that occur in her own family. She learns that to truly love sometimes means letting go and sacrifice, putting the best interests of others ahead of our own desires, a very painful lesson indeed.

I found Emma Wagner to be one of the most inspirational historical persons I have ever encountered. I could hardly recommend this series highly enough to anyone but especially to women who are trying to grow in their faith and trust God with their lives.

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### **Georgia Herod says**

This is the final book in the "change and cherish" historical series, with Emma Geisy as the central character. Oh, I hated for this book to come to an end because Kirkpatrick has taken the readers on a fascinating journey--physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual--as Emma has grown in each of those aspects of her life.

Strong characters, interwoven plot lines, conflict of every variety (personal, communal, relational), deep themes (hunger for meaning and purpose, desire to contribute and "make others' lives better than my own"; accommodation of family and community, yet maintaining individuality; choices and consequences)--and so much more.

Kirkpatrick is at her best in historical fiction because her research is meticulous. She takes the threads and remnants of stories of women in the past and pieces them together in such a way that creates a literary quilt which illustrates the deepest longings of readers' lives even though our circumstances, landscapes, relationships, faith, and work may be very different.

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### **AngelaGay Kinhead says**

This book wasn't what I expected but it was a nice audiobook while driving the last few weekends. At first, I thought I had fallen into conservative Christian chick-lit, but was delightfully surprised when the author developed a strong female character who was open to exploring non-traditional spiritual practices . . . a house church for women, radical hospitality, walking labyrinths, etc. I liked the setting of a Utopian Christian community and the historical setting. I enjoyed this last book of a series, but will unlikely seek out another.

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### **Kristen says**

In the final installment of the Change and Cherish historical trilogy series, *A Mending at the Edge* featured Emma Geisy's final chapters in her story. This one was a heart-wrenching one, when she dealt with personal loss and grief and tried to protect her family anyway she could. She endured and survived through it all and wanted to reunite with her daughter Ida, when they were separated. She had to make tough choices to build her own home on a peaceful land and learned the important meaning of community. The conclusion of this series was a successful and poignant one with a happy ending to her story.

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### **Nancy says**

"Of all the things I left behind in Willapa, hope was what I missed the most." This is the story, based on a real person, of the first woman of a German community to migrate to Washington Territory in the early 1850's. Emma's a strong-willed woman and continually gets herself into trouble by challenging the dictates of the men in her life. She also feels that she's meant for more than just cooking, cleaning, and looking after the children. I felt constricted just reading about her life, but felt better when she was able to put everything into a perspective that allowed her an acceptable way of living.

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### **Joleen says**

*A Mending at the Edge* by **Jane Kirkpatrick**  
Year: Late 1800s

*Emma Wagner*: Living at the Aurora Bethelite compound

*Wilhelm Keil*: Leader of the Bethelites

*Locations*: Aurora, OR - south of Portland

This was a VERY different book. It was like a diary of Emma's life in a communal society which began it as a German Christian society, but more or less ended it as an economic one in which Wilhelm Keil held all the purse strings, allowing no other's decisions but his own, including whether a person married, or who took care of their children or educated them. Emma had resisted this colony all her life, because she resented his leadership, but when her new husband had continued to be dangerously abusive, she sought refuge there. In this book she worked her tail off and got nothing, including the right to be a mother to her two boys. Wilhelm decided her boys would be better off without her and took them to live in his massive house with many others. All the way through the book she either resented other's input, sadly relented to their decisions, or manipulated others to have things done, including hiding truths or lying. I didn't like her much of the time, then she would show such kindness, generosity and submissiveness, learning much from the circumstances, I was impressed.

I suppose it was the "diary" way of telling the story I didn't care for. So much of it was day to day events, and inconsequential stories that lead to more questions and non-endings that it was tedious to wade through. I was so hoping for more of impactful ending to this series, but it just ended with resignation to her life as it was rather than a "*Mending*" as the title suggests.

I do not recommend this series unless you want to read someone else's fictional accounts of the Bethelite history in Aurora, Oregon.

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### **Kate says**

I want to visit Aurora! I knew nothing about the Aurora Colony, a 19th century religious commune that is now the town of Aurora OR, just before the Keizer Starbucks turnoff if I remember correctly my Saturday trip to Salem. This historical novel is based on the life of Emma Giesey, the only Colony woman to get her own house and have her own page in the commune's ledger. I'd have to see her as an early feminist in a society defined as patriarchal. I learned in the acknowledgements that late in life, she moved to Portland where she was a member of Kenilworth Presbyterian Church. The final volume in a 3 part series about Emma, now I have to read the 1st 2!

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### **Jennifer says**

An enjoyable read, however, I felt that it ended rather abruptly.

Having lived for a bout 10 years in the area, I really liked the historical aspect of the series. It was fun to read about places I've been and what they were like when the first settlers came. Many things about Aurora have not changed, many of the original buildings are still there, even if they've been moved. The Aurora Historical Museum is a wonderful place to visit, especially during Aurora days.

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### **Sknox says**

I love historical fiction and this is the third book of Jane Kirkpatrick's, Change and Cherish Historical Series, that I have read. It is a saga of pioneer woman Emma Giesy, her story and that of the Aurora Colony in

Oregon. It is based on the history of the Aurora Colony and deals with the politics and culture of the 1860s. Emma lives in a religious communal society and the story shares what life was like in the Oregon community. The author's discription of the Oregon landscape, Mt Hood and the seasons are captivating.

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## **Joyce says**

Public library copy. Last in the Emma Wagner series.

There's not much one can say about Jane's books. You either like them or you don't. They are very historical and very well written. I am in awe of the work that goes into a series like this. It is amazing and, from my amateur point of view, flawless.

I like that the author tells (in the back of the book) which parts are historical and which are fictional. The fictional parts are so in character with the story that I'd never know the difference. Could you?

So why did I give the book less than a five-star rating? It has to do with my preference in what I read, which undoubtedly differs from yours.

I love Jane Kirkpatrick's writing style. I love the way she paints ideas with words and turns phrases and concepts and quilts and food and physical surroundings and characters and whatever else, and weaves them all together to show the reader what the character is feeling or doing or thinking or learning. Every bit of her writing is showing, and very real to the reader. Maybe I love it too much... I feel sidetracked about halfway through the book. From real life.

This particular series, being about a religious colony's communal living, is the thing I most dislike, the subject. (I feel the same way about other religious colony/communities.) That part of the story is so dark to me. Hopeless. It is difficult to focus on Emma, when the reader would like to avenge her by giving the colony leader his just dessert! Good writing, of course, to make the reader want to jump into the story.

I found it trying, though I know it is based on a real person, to follow the faith of a group of people, most of whom showed no evidence of a personal relationship with God. That's my preference, to read about people who know God personally and grow in relationship with Him by faith. I don't expect an author to insert that into a story where it doesn't fit. I just prefer reading that kind of story, and that's why it's less than five-stars.

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