“The Water is Wide” Book Group Discussion Questions

1. How would you define Mima’s relationship with her mother? How does it change over the course of the book?

2. Over the course of the book Mima embarks on several journeys. How do these physical journeys parallel the spiritual and emotion journeys she also undertakes?

3. What role does water play in the book? How is it used as a metaphor?

4. What did you learn about music from the book? What does music mean to Mima?

5. How is Mima’s experience different because she is not a member of the Mormon faith? How do her feelings about God change over the course of the story?

6. After the mob violence in Nauvoo, many members of the church fled to St. Louis where the community welcomed them, although the cholera epidemic and fire of 1849 were particularly devastating. Were you surprised by this turn of events?

7. In the 1850’s in the U.S., 1 out 5 babies died at birth, with many more passing away in early childhood. How does this fact impact the women of the time period?

8. Captain Woodbury gives Mima a piece of sea glass, “frosted over with the foam of waves and the pounding of the surf.” What does the sea glass come to represent?

9. This is the first book in a series of three. What do you anticipate will happen to Mima, Will, Mary, and Mima’s mother in the next two books?

9. This book was inspired by the story of the author’s ancestor. What are some of the significant stories from your own family history?