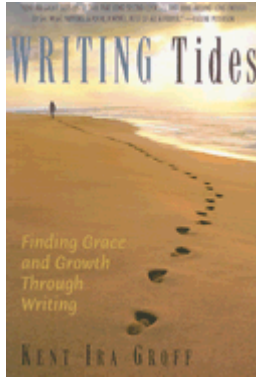


CIRCUITRIDER *Reviews*



Writing Tides: Finding Grace and Growth Through Writing
by Kent Ira Groff (Abingdon Press, 2007
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Reviewed by Kenneth H. Carter, Jr., senior pastor, Providence United Methodist Church, Charlotte, North Carolina.

Writing Tides: Finding Grace and Growth Through Writing by Kent Ira Groff

Kent Groff is a gifted spiritual guide whose previous works have explored the intersections of contemplative life with congregational participation and church renewal. His writing has always been characterized by a broad appreciation of sources within and beyond the Christian tradition, and by a creative synthesis of these resources. It seems natural therefore that Groff might explore the act of writing itself as a spiritual discipline. *Writing Tides* is the wonderful result of this exploration.

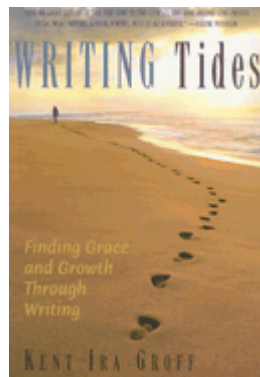
Groff orients the reader with the observation that we all write in a variety of ways and for differing purposes. “I aim to show how every form of writing”, he insists at the outset, “has the potential of calling forth the spiritual dimension that can unlock the treasure of your life’s purpose”(1). Groff organizes the spiritual discipline of writing around five deeper practices: observing, wading, swimming, diving, and floating. In observation the focus is on awareness: our training in contemplation, the perception of images and ideas, making connections and shifting the angle through which the lens is positioned. Wading is a childlike playfulness that arrives at wonder through the juxtaposition of simplicity and seriousness, resistance

and adventure. In swimming the focus shifts to methods, disciplines that guide us, and yet disciplines that ultimately free us for creative work. Diving takes us into the deep waters that engage our minds, bodies and spirits, where we experience not only death but also resurrection. And the practice of floating is descriptive of the flow of life into vocation, particularly the calling to heal the world through words.

Interspersed throughout this framework is a series of spiritual exercises; here Groff utilizes a number of familiar disciplines, among them centering prayer, the writing of collects, and *lectio divina*, alongside fresh perspectives on common tasks such as writing memos and letters. The form of this book thus lends itself to individual study, group reflection and/ writer's retreat and workshops. A particular strength of this volume is the inclusion of a rich array of sources, from movies and classical music to poetry and popular culture. And yet these sources are a part of a larger conversation with the classic traditions of Christian spirituality.

Some will find *Writing Tides* to be of immense help as they seek to become more creative and disciplined writers; this work will be of particular interest to those for whom creativity and discipline are spiritual matters. I am aware that there is a growing number of individuals who feel called to write, and this book is a trustworthy guide in the process. But I also sense (and hope for) another audience: this would be an excellent resource for those who write sermons on a weekly basis. As preachers we can easily lose touch with a creativity that is both a gift of the spirit and the result of attentive practice.

Growth and grace are possible in our writing; the spiritual guidance in these pages is most welcome, for the individual and for the church to whom we bear witness.



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