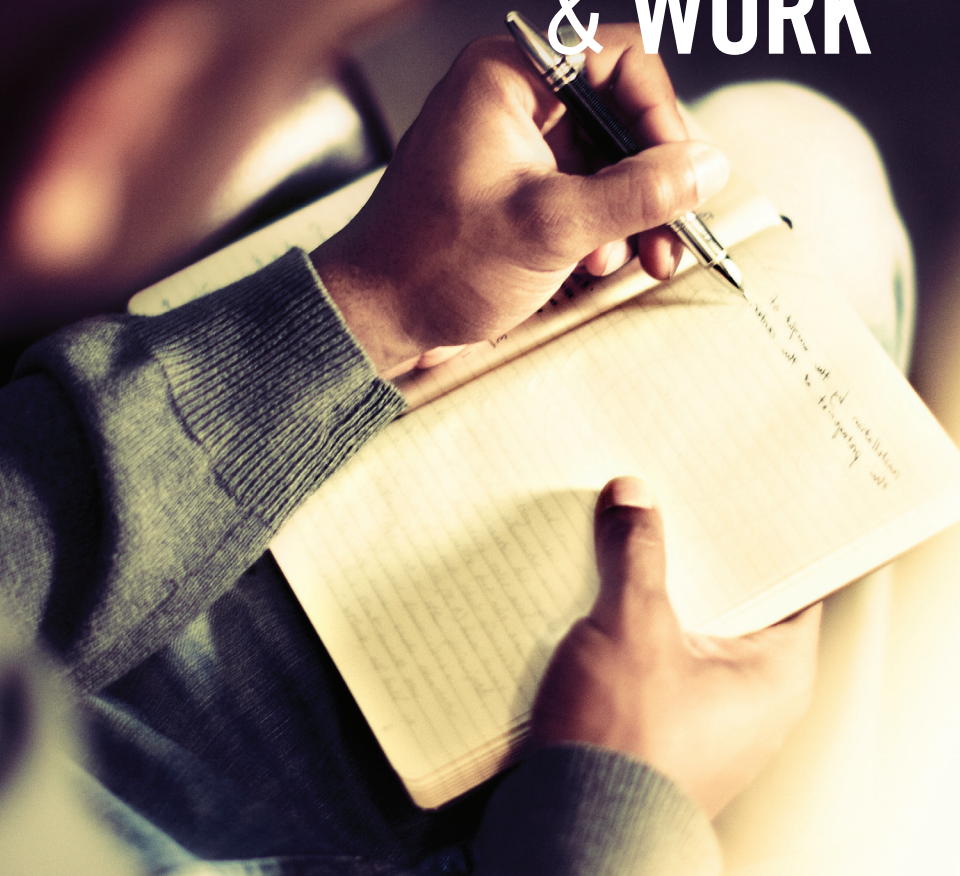


# WRITING AS CALLING, MINISTRY & WORK



EQUIPPING WORLD-CHANGING DISCIPLES [UMCdiscipleship.org](https://UMCdiscipleship.org)



**DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES**  
The United Methodist Church



## **DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES**

The United Methodist Church

This pamphlet was produced by  
Discipleship Resources International.

If you would like to learn more about the resources that  
Discipleship Resources International offers, visit us at:

**<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/drint>**

*This resource is made possible by your generous support of The World Service Fund of The United Methodist Church, individual giving, and through the sale of books, magazines, and other products.*

Discipleship Resources International (DRI) believes that in every place the Holy Spirit is at work, people have stories to tell, and that God is calling writers.

DRI is committed to developing a culture of reading and writing around the world not only to provide local churches with the resources they need for creating and supporting vital congregations but because we believe that writing is a spiritual discipline that connects us to God and deepens our relationship with Jesus Christ through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.



## **WRITING AS CALLING IN THE LOCAL CHURCH**

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*<sup>1</sup> We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— <sup>2</sup> this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— <sup>3</sup> we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.*

1 John 1:1-4, NRSV

In rural villages in Mozambique, in bustling cities like Abidjan, and in suburbs of Kansas City, there are men and women, young people and old, who connect with and deepen their relationship with God by writing. They are those people with journals dating back to junior high, the avid readers, those who care about what kind of pen they use and who love to smell the pages of books. People drawn to the written word who make sense of the world by writing about it. You know these people... maybe you are one of them!

DRI seeks out writers in the central conferences, persons called and gifted to write their stories, the story of God's

activity in their families and churches and countries. And we empower them and train them and, yes, even publish them.



## WRITING AS MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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*Just as the rain and the snow come down from the sky  
and don't return there without watering the earth,  
making it conceive and yield plants  
and providing seed to the sower and food to the eater,  
so is my word that comes from my mouth;  
it does not return to me empty.  
Instead, it does what I want,  
and accomplishes what I intend.*

Isaiah 55:10-11 CEB

Any ministry requires that people of faith listen for God and reach out to those in need in service of discipleship. Writing as ministry is using the written word to meet people where they are and draw them closer to God, walking with them into a rich life of discipleship. Author Robert Benson asks,

*“Who is knocking on your door these days? Who keeps calling? Whose stories can you not get out of your mind and heart? Who keeps grinning when they see you coming? Who has a story that could be helped by hearing yours? Who could use a cup of cold water, and no one else has even noticed? Who is my neighbor? Whose neighbors keep passing them by on the other side of the road? To whom am I being given for this season of my life, for this stretch of my days? And who is being given to me? Who will go unnoticed and unattended if I do not answer this call?” (The Echo Within: Finding Your True Calling)*

Writers have the unique ability to talk and pray and minister with those who are calling them through books and pamphlets and devotions. And these resources can be

kept and underlined and re-read or shared and passed along. Those called as writers have been given words that can enter the world like rain, watering parched souls and nourishing the seeds planted in believers around the world.

And this is a ministry of disciple-making. We see Jesus inviting, forming and sending his disciples out into the world in Mark 3:13-15. Writers are gifted in a myriad of ways to write in these same areas. Some are gifted to write devotionals that draw those who are hurting or discouraged into relationship with a God of healing and hope. Some write Sunday School curriculum or small group material that will educate the young or challenge believers to walk in the ways of Jesus Christ. Others inspire folks to live out their faith beyond their church, to participate in acts of mercy and justice.



## WRITING AS WORK IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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*<sup>3</sup> I thank my God every time I remember you, <sup>4</sup> constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, <sup>5</sup> because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> I am confident of this, **that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion** by the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup> And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight <sup>10</sup> to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, <sup>11</sup> having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.*

Philippians 1:3-11

Like a musician or doctor or a farmer, a writer's calling is also difficult work requiring diligence, skill and a community of support. There are very few writers in the world who can make a living from their craft. Pastors in Zimbabwe write books on baptism and confirmation because of their passion for education and for the young people in their local churches. Missionaries in Angola commit to writing Christian education curriculum even though it is not on their list of responsibilities because they long for pastors and lay people to have material written in their native languages. Writing groups gather in the Philippines to write devotional material so that the world will know of God's work in their country.

*DRI provides writer workshops and training events so that these passionate writers can gain skills in writing and editing that will enable them to share their stories and testimonies and scholarship with those in their areas in their languages... and with the entire United Methodist connection.*



## GOD IS DOING A NEW THING

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All of your prayers and support are part of the new thing God is doing in the central conferences.

***God is doing a new thing through our work with the Central Conferences.***

**6 years ago**, our African Central Conferences possessed no publishing capacity to produce Wesleyan resources to support core ministries. In the Philippines, publishing capacity had become severely constrained.

**Today**, 14 publishing teams serve these CC-s, including Bulgaria and Romania, and are responsible for a flow of resources that didn't exist before.

**6 years ago**, there was no means by which our UM scholars and leaders in Africa could write for the church and theological education, be published, contribute their research, be in the global conversation.

**Today**, the Africa Ministry Series features 11 titles by Africans produced and available in Africa, in English, French and Portuguese; plus 2 more titles near completion authored by African clergywomen from Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

**6 years ago**, training in the church for writers and resource developers was happening nowhere in Africa and sporadically in the Philippines.

**Today**, such Training has become available and even annual in some places, through our partnership with publishing teams and seminaries.

**Until 3 years ago**, our conferences in parts of Africa awash with people coming from diverse religious backgrounds had no replicable teaching modules for grounding leaders in a Methodist vision of ministry—apart from the Course of Study sporadically offered.

**Today, the “UM Way Seminar Series”**, initially developed with the Congolese, provides that: for knowing and teaching the UM Way of Making Disciples, of Worship, of Being Connectional; thus far, it’s been replicated across Central Congo, East Congo, and Tanzania, with more areas expressing the need.

**As recently as 3 years ago**, our seminaries in Africa could not imagine having access to books and library resources most of us would consider essential to education of a UM pastor. The situation in the Philippines, though less dire, was and is similar, depending on the seminary.

**In 2013**, the impossible became possible beginning with GST in Liberia.

**As of today**,  $\frac{3}{4}$  our seminaries are equipped with the e-reader theological libraries. By the end of 2016, all our seminaries will have basic access to books for theological education.



## YOU CAN SUPPORT DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES INTERNATIONAL

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You can support this work of writing around the globe in several ways.

1. Visit <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/drint> to learn more about publishing teams around the globe, the resources they have authored, and download resources for your own writing practice.
2. The E Reader for Theological Education Project provides e readers to theological faculty students in over 22 United Methodist schools of theology and seminaries in Africa and the Philippines. Visit <http://umcereader.org/> to learn about this exciting project and offer your support.
3. The Africa Ministry Series is a series of theological books authored by African pastors and lecturers to strengthen church vitality across the United Methodist connection in Africa. You can read and buy these books to expand your knowledge of theology, history, evangelism and Christian education from the African perspective. Visit the Upper Room Bookstore, <https://bookstore.upperroom.org/> to support these authors and their ministry of writing.
4. Continue your own practice of writing and submit your writing for publication. Visit [www.upperroom.org](http://www.upperroom.org) to find writers' guidelines for their various magazines.





# DEVELOPING A WRITING MINISTRY IN YOUR LOCAL CHURCH

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The spiritual practice of writing can bring healing and spiritual renewal to individuals engaged in the practice, as well as inviting the Holy Spirit into the daily life, challenges and joys of the local congregation.

For your own **Personal Practice**, consider the following writing exercise.

What are you called to write? Take time to practice writing as spiritual practice for yourself.

Read **Ezekiel 37:1-3**:

*The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know."*

What "dry bones" in your life need a breath of fresh air, a burst of new life, from the Spirit?

Let your written prayer be God's words of encouragement to you as you let God dust off the dry and weary places of your spirit.

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From *Writing to God: 40 Days of Praying with My Pen* by Rachel Hackenberg



## LOCAL WRITING GROUPS

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You can nurture the gifts and callings of writers in your local congregation by starting a local writing group. Invite persons you know have a similar calling to writing as a way to connect with God and deepen their discipleship. Use the following simple outline for your meetings.

- **Opening prayer or devotion.**  
Read Esther 6: 1- 10 or Matthew 4:1-10. Discuss the value of writing as demonstrated in scripture and for the spread of the Good News.
- **Touch base on ground rules together.**  
Listen well. Respond with optimism. Keep confidence.
- **Share good readings from other writers with each other.**  
Each week invite one or two participants to share a short piece of writing that inspires them or touches them. Avid readers are better writers.
- **Bring your writing to share. Get feedback from others.**  
**Revise your work.**  
Allow time each week for one or two participants to read a selection they have been working on. First, offer feedback that is positive, affirming of the project. Second, if the author is willing, offer suggestions. Close each author's sharing by reciting together, "We give thanks for word that give life."
- **Create time and space for writing while together.**  
Allow time in each session for persons to write in silence. If time allows, invite participants to share their writing.
- **Close in prayer.**