

Finding Your Voice: A Contemplative Writing Retreat

An online offering by the Arizona Academy Council and The Upper Room

This list of resources was prepared by Robin Pippin, the presenter for our retreat. They are intended as suggestions to help you in your writing journey.

BOOKS

The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity by Julia Cameron

More like a course than just a book, *The Artist's Way* is not only about writing, it is about “practicing the art of creative living.” This book has transformative power for the person who wants to pay attention to her life. Writing “morning pages” has been a lasting habit for me. These morning pages will not only unblock your writing, they will unblock *you*.

Dancing on the Head of a Pen: The Practice of a Writing Life by Robert Benson

Benson describes his own practices of writing in such a winsome, readable, and relatable way. I have used metaphors from this book many times over the years to help writers write.

Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life by Anne Lamott

With her trademark humor, Lamott tells us that first and foremost, “good writing is about telling the truth” and that writing “shitty first drafts” is how good writing happens. Taking one’s writing “bird by bird”—or in short pieces, helps the writer reach the finish line. You will both learn a lot about writing and be entertained at the same time by reading this book.

Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within by Natalie Goldberg

This was one of the first books I read, long ago, that helped me to “just write.” Several editions later, it is still a book that is helping writers get down to the writing.

If You Want to Write: A Book about Art, Independence, and Spirit by Brenda Ueland

If for no other reason, I recommend this book for the chapter entitled, “Why women who do too much housework should neglect it for their writing”! First published in 1938, this book has some older-sounding language/thoughts, but it is nonetheless inspiring and encouraging.

Still Writing: The Perils and Pleasures of a Creative Life by Dani Shapiro

Shapiro gives a glimpse into the dailiness of what it’s like to be a writer, with many gems of what being a writer can do for a person: “the page is where we come to meet ourselves”; and, “Writing saved my life. Writing has been my window—flung wide open to this magnificent, chaotic existence—my way of interpreting everything within my grasp.”

The Pen and the Bell: Mindful Writing in a Busy World by Brenda Miller and Holly J. Hughes

This book makes the clear connection between contemplation and writing and the urgent need for more people to have “unproductive” time for gestation and quiet musing. With 20 short readings, each accompanied by contemplative and writing prompts, the book guides you on a pilgrimage toward understanding your authentic self and awakening your creative soul through contemplation and writing.

The African-American Guide to Writing and Publishing Nonfiction by Jewell Parker Rhodes
Practical guide to finding your voice and getting to know your literary ancestors with writing exercises and excerpts from great Black writers such as Maya Angelou, Brent Staples, and Houston Baker.

The African American Writers Handbook by Robert Fleming

This book focuses more on the publishing phase when one has finished writing. Tips for sending in proposals to traditional publishers as well as navigating self-publishing.

The Word: Black Writers Talk about the Transformative Power of Reading and Writing,
edited by Marita Golden

Critically acclaimed Black writers reveal how books have shaped their personal lives—in often unexpected ways. Includes interviews with Chimamanda N. Adichie, Nikki Giovanni, Edwidge Danticat, and others.

A Poetry Handbook: A Prose Guide to Understanding and Writing Poetry by Mary Oliver

With passion, wit, and good common sense, the celebrated poet Mary Oliver tells of the basic ways a poem is built—meter and rhyme, form and diction, sound and sense.

Writing the Sacred Journey: The Art and Practice of Spiritual Memoir by Elizabeth Jarrett Andrew

Having read Andrew's memoir *Swinging on the Garden Gate* and been nourished by her resources and newsletters from elizabethjarrettandrew.com, I commend this book and the next one to those particularly interested in spiritual memoir.

Living Revision: A Writer's Craft as Spiritual Practice by Elizabeth Jarrett Andrew

Barbara Brown Taylor says "Elizabeth Jarrett Andrew is not only an author you should read but a teacher you can trust. She knows how the tides run between the writing life and the life of the world and she will guide you in a way that frees your soul." In this book, Andrew instructs writers on the next step after writing—revising the work.

Remembering Your Story: Creating Your Own Spiritual Autobiography, revised edition, by Richard L. Morgan

Author Richard Morgan was inspired to write this book after listening to residents of nursing homes tell their stories to him and seeing their yearning to preserve their stories for younger generations. This book, set up as a 10-week study, will help you write/create your own spiritual autobiography and can be used by individuals or groups.

One Day I Wrote Back: Interacting with Scripture through Creative Writing by Jane Herring

Chaplain and pastor Jane Herring describes how to carry on a conversation with scripture through a practice called *scriptio divina*. Each chapter includes Bible passages, reflection questions, and writing exercises.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Writing for Your Life: Resources for Spiritual Writers

<https://writingforyourlife.com/>

Spiritual Memoir Resources from Elizabeth Jarrett Andrew

elizabethjarrettandrew.com

Wild Writing eCourses and online prompts with Laurie Wagner

<https://27powers.org/>