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– Glenn H. Asquith, Jr..

## Selected Book Reviews of *Crossroads: Stories at the Intersections* by Ted Bowman

*Crossroads* is a book about living and dying, sickness and health, youth and aging, caregiver to care receiver and other crossroads in one's life. Using poems, stories and reflective pages, Ted Bowman invites readers to explore life's crossroads. The book can be used as a reflection resource for individuals, for family and group discussions or as a retreat/teaching resource for congregations and other settings.

Anton T. Boisen, the founder of Clinical Pastoral Education, based his approach to pastoral theology and care on his personal belief and experience that "the divine is nearest when the struggle is keenest."<sup>1</sup> This is also the premise of *Crossroads*, the latest writing of Ted Bowman, an educator and ordained Moravian minister who has authored many works on grief, loss, and change; he asserts in the Foreword of the book that "it is in the intersections of life that God can be known most profoundly" (p. i). To that end, Bowman has assembled a series of short stories, poems, and reflections based on events and intersections in his own life, plus a few similar pieces from other authors. Because this book is intended to stimulate reflections of the reader on the meaning of their own life events (a primary purpose of spiritual writing), there is blank space for notes and answers to questions at the end of most of the short chapters, making the book a very interactive experience of meditation.

The first chapter is a prime example of Bowman's concept and use of life's crossroads. It tells of how Bowman's father, never known for his writing skills, unexpectedly produced a carefully handwritten memoir of major events in his life and asked Bowman to type it for him. It became a precious gift to Bowman and his family, what some refer to as an "ethical/ spiritual will" (p. 3). The chapter closes with a blank page and an invitation to the reader to write a particular lesson from their life that could be shared with others. Other stories and poems from Bowman's life experience invite the reader's reflection on parenthood, children who have taught us, prayer, death, friendship, safe places, grief, pain, and joy.

"In this book he has broadened the scope to include stories about living, dying, youth, aging, work, marriage, divorce, disappointment, grief and hope—the whole gamut of life's crossroads."

– Michele Fedderly

I recommend this book as helpful reading for almost anyone in any particular life situation. You do not have to be a particular "kind" of Christian or even a believer in any particular faith perspective. All you need is the time and openness to do some reflection on your life—a very helpful exercise for young people, old people, and middle-aged people trying to take a break from their swirl of generativity. I will recommend it to counselees, students, parishioners, and any other companion on the journey. Thanks, Ted!

Glenn H. Asquith, Jr., Ph.D.  
Professor of Pastoral Theology  
Moravian Theological Seminary

<sup>1</sup> Anton T. Boisen, "Ideas of Prophetic Mission," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 15:1 (Spring, 1961): 2.

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Using poems and stories, Ted Bowman invites readers to explore life's crossroads. Ted is well-known in Minnesota for his expertise in grief support. In this book he has broadened the scope to include stories about living, dying, youth, aging, work, marriage, divorce, disappointment, grief and hope—the whole gamut of life's crossroads. The stories are short, many are Ted's personal stories, and each is followed by space for the reader's personal reflection. From the Foreword: "My story is important not because it is mine...but because if I tell it anything like right, the chances are you will recognize that in many ways it is also yours."

Michele Fedderly  
Executive Director Hospice Minnesota

If June brings to mind warm breezes, tall glasses of lemonade and a dog-eared collection of stories you just can't put down, do I have a deal for you! If you're looking for a good book for summer reading, I'd strongly recommend MCDES board member and educator Ted Bowman's latest publication. Newly released, Ted's collection of stories brings together his own reflections from a lifetime of learning. The book can be read in one sitting, if you're lucky enough to have an afternoon of solitude, or selected chapters may be chosen at random. In either case, you'll be sure to enjoy the quiet reflections. Ted's writing style is both instructive and entertaining. He shares stories and poems that invite you into his personal life. He includes others writings to mirror his own thoughts. His text may inspire you to pick up your own pen and write. Some chapters have spaces for adding your own thoughts. If you are lucky enough to know Ted personally, you'll recognize

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– Sharon Dardis

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– Kim Stafford

his sensitivity. He shares his stories, and those of others, with gentle insights and a quiet thoughtfulness. Snag your own copy and head to the hammock. This book will stay with you long after summer's end.

Sharon Dardis, Editor of *Coalition News* and board member of Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support

From *Coalition News*, the newsletter of the Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support, June 2008, p. 6

**W**hat if you had another chance to get things right? What if you could return to a day you made an error, and do and say things deftly this time? What if you could meet again someone you have lost, and this time say the right thing, ask the right thing, listen and exchange and come to rest?

Ted Bowman's *Crossroads* gives you this chance. With a series of memorable and compact stories, and graceful invitations, the book offers a resonant visit to soul doctor, where old ailments caused by silence, anger, confusion, and un-said hope can be remedied.

This is a book to read, to converse with, and to give to anyone hungry for healing. Ted Bowman is minister, healer, and friend to us all.

Kim Stafford, author of *The Muses Among Us: Eloquent Listening and Other Pleasures of the Writer's Craft*, from the *Museletter*, newsletter of the National Association for Poetry Therapy

**I**f you sometimes feel a vague urge, a deep desire or even an obligation to develop spiritual depth or a devotional practice, but have trouble fulfilling such needs, Ted Bowman's new book, *Crossroads: Stories at the Intersections*, may be helpful. Even if you don't feel the need, this 116 page volume offers a rich stimulus for reflection. The book's sub-title suggests how it helps discover depth and meaning in the poignant moments of life—through capturing and sharing of stories from our lived experiences.

All of us have events and episodes in relationships and everyday life which have special meaning to us—joyful or painful. Whether it's the emotional string-pulling of living with growing up children, the casual story-telling at an extended family gathering, or the reminiscing around a table after a funeral, our lives are a rich landscape of potential spiritual wealth.

“Bowman’s musings offer not only wisdom themselves, but more importantly encouragement to find ones own wisdom, spirituality and meaning in our life experiences—as we make them ‘stories’ and pass them on.”

– Rev. Tom Duke



Too often we let ourselves be deprived of the rich treasure of such incidents and situations, as we mindlessly pass over them. Bowman helps us make connections, and discover the spiritual treasures at the intersections of our lives. Through vignettes, stories, poems and quotations, he encourages us to be more aware, intentional and rewarded, as we reflect on and savor the deeper meaning of life experiences, and transform them from being ordinary and uninspiring, to memorably rich and extraordinary, from just events to treasured “stories.”

*Crossroads’* potential to stimulate appreciation of the deeper meaning of life’s events caught me by surprise. At first I thought the blank pages for note-writing were unnecessary, at best. Soon I found myself jotting down some of my own experiences and reflections, fragments of my own life story. Bowman’s stories and illustrations from his own life were particularly charged with heartfelt sensitivity and vulnerability, with reflective wisdom woven through.

The book is probably best kept for a long time near that special chair one uses for inspirational reading or reflecting and writing. Bowman quotes Norman Cousins, “Far more than the finding of time is the way we open up the minutes and invest them with meaning.” Through many such quotations, and even more of his own experiences and perspectives as minister, divorced dad, step-parent and insightful observer and recorder, Bowman’s musings offer not only wisdom themselves, but more importantly encouragement to find ones own wisdom, spirituality and meaning in our life experiences—as we make them “stories” and pass them on.

Rev. Tom Duke

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*Crossroads: Stories at the Intersections* is available for purchase (\$14.95 plus postage) at [www.moravian.org](http://www.moravian.org). At that site, go to publications and follow the guides to *Crossroads*.

The author will also sell copies; contact Ted Bowman at [bowma008@umn.edu](mailto:bowma008@umn.edu).