

APRIL - MAY 2024

# THE CHRISTIAN <sup>o</sup> writer

## SEE INSIDE FOR

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### Articles:

*The Death of Christian Literature*  
by Rodney Hickman

*The New Babylon* by Chris Sellars

*Enduring Advice for Christian Writers*  
by Marie Anticich

*Is AI Allowed for Competitions?*  
by Debbie McDermott & Kathryn Paul

### Book Reviews:

*Discipling like the Master*  
by Stephen J Turner

*Songs of the Beloved* by S J Beguely

Poetry, New Local Writers Groups,  
Competitions  
and more!

A magazine of NZ Christian Writers



**Mission:** *Connecting Christian writers in New Zealand.*

**Vision:** *To encourage and inspire Christian writers throughout New Zealand.*

**Values:** *Christian faith, God's Word, professionalism, quality and social outreach.*

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**Editor and Membership Secretary:** Kathryn Paul: [editor@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:editor@nzchristianwriters.org)

For magazine contributions, address changes and membership queries.

**Treasurer:** For subscriptions and donations: [treasurer@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:treasurer@nzchristianwriters.org)

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### **Book Review Requests:** (current members only)

Mail a copy of your book to our Book Reviewer, Julia Martin

286 Karapiro Road, RD 4, Cambridge 3496 or email: [reviews@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:reviews@nzchristianwriters.org)

**The Christian Writer** is our bimonthly magazine published by NZ Christian Writers and distributed to all members. Contributions from members are always welcome. If you have some advice, encouragement, or an announcement of an event of interest to members, do send it to the editor for consideration by the 10th of the month before the next publication date. Submissions should be emailed as a word document attachment and be no more than 500 words long, except at the discretion of the editor.

The editor reserves the right to condense and/or edit any contributions for reason of space. Ideas and opinions will not be edited but editing of a technical nature may occur to maintain a high standard of writing. Views and opinions expressed do not necessarily state or reflect those of the editor.

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# The Christian Writer

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**Website:** Our user-friendly website is full of helpful information, such as details of seminars and copies of past magazines. It gives each member an online presence. Feel free to share our website link with other Christian writers so they can join us. Our members are the best advocates for growing our collective of NZ Christian Writers.

[www.nzchristianwriters.org](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org)

# President's Report



Welcome to our April-May 2024 edition of *The Christian Writer* magazine. I trust each of you are enjoying the start of the new season of autumn here in New Zealand. Our magazine will be printed and published around Easter 2024, one of the most spiritually significant seasons in our Christian life. Our faith in the person Jesus Christ is what unites our collective of Christian Writers. Our Declaration of Belief is a galvanising statement of faith that brings unity to our writers. It states: *'We believe in the sovereignty of the triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, through whose life, death and resurrection alone we can have salvation. We believe Jesus Christ is the living Word, who became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. We believe that the Church of Jesus Christ includes all who receive Jesus as Saviour and acknowledge Him as Lord. We believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God—our authority and standard for every aspect of Christian living.'* Ultimately, NZ Christian Writers is all about Jesus. We love Him, know Him, and desire for others to know Him. My personal prayer is that every member of NZ Christian Writers would have an increasingly meaningful, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. As a collective, our greatest goal would be that NZ Christian Writers becomes an undeniable force in the publishing landscape of New Zealand, experienced by community, church and culture.

As you may know, during February 2024, we shared our Survey 2024 with the entire membership of our collective. A special thank you to both Kathryn Paul and Andrew Stirling for arranging and coordinating this among our membership. We had close to 20% of our members reply and provide encouraging feedback, helpful insights and future recommendations for NZ Christian Writers. On behalf of our board, we want to thank all those who entered our survey for sharing their comments. It provides us with a 'finger on the pulse' and several inspired ideas to support the positive direction for NZCW throughout the years ahead. We also had a random number generator select a responder to win the \$40 Manna Christian Stores voucher. Congratulations to Phillip Donnell who was randomly selected as our winner. We trust you are blessed with this voucher and enjoy browsing and buying something from the extensive range of books and products available at Manna Store. It's worth mentioning that our board was delightfully encouraged to discover that many members find meaning and significance from being connected and involved with NZ Christian Writers. Several people commented on how they appreciate that our type of organisation exists for people throughout New Zealand.

Once again, always grateful to our member and photographer, Max Carr, for providing the photo featured on the front cover of this magazine.

Be blessed,

Justin St Vincent

# Editorial: The Real Satisfaction

by Kathryn Paul



We recently asked our members to complete an online survey. Thank you to all who took the time to participate in the survey. We received a response from about 20% of subscribers. The feedback we've received is helpful and I plan to collate a list from it regarding future content for the magazines. There were many encouraging comments. Thank you for those.

I'd also like to say thank you to everyone who has emailed me with a word of encouragement in the past years while I've been magazine editor. Your words do give me a lift and help me to keep going.

I'm motivated to encourage other Christian writers because I know God holds a bigger picture that involves all of us. It's not just about me. There's a satisfaction that comes from encouraging another writer in their journey.

If you're feeling you're not getting enough out of your connection with NZ Christian Writers, I recommend you evaluate how much giving you're doing to inspire others along their writing journey. The real satisfaction is not in the getting but in the giving. Our local Christian writers' groups are places where you can give and receive encouragement. Sending your items into the magazines to be published for others to read is another satisfying way of contributing.

In the past week God has connected me to three writers in my rural community who I have been able to encourage in some way. Plus telling them about our NZ Christian Writers community and magazine was great because I was letting them know they're not alone. We are there for them if they want us to be.

I'm here for you. Thank you for being there for me.

Thank You, Jesus, for being here for us all.

With love in Jesus,

from Kathryn

*I love to hear from our readers! Email:  
[editor@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:editor@nzchristianwriters.org)*



# Notices

## Local Writers Group Leaders Wanted

If you are willing to host a writers group in your area please get in touch. To find out more details email Justin at [president@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:president@nzchristianwriters.org) or Kathryn at [editor@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:editor@nzchristianwriters.org)

## Book Reviews Criteria

Members are welcome to request a book review of any of their published books, whether recently released or not. The main criterion is the book has to have some Christian relevancy. For more information on how to have your book reviewed in *The Christian Writer* please refer to page two.

## Join the NZ Christian Writers Group on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/newzealandchristianwriters>

## Submissions Wanted

More content is always needed for our magazines, *The Christian Writer* and *Young Christian Writer*. Send in your contributions by email to [editor@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:editor@nzchristianwriters.org) by the 10th of the month prior to the publication date.

## South Island Christian Book Authors Network

Meetings are quarterly and are specifically offered to those interested in writing a Christian book or who have published a book. For meeting details contact facilitator: Verna McFelin at [verna.mcfelin@gmail.com](mailto:verna.mcfelin@gmail.com).

## Volunteers Wanted for NZCW Projects

Are you available to help serve NZ Christian Writers? We need to enlarge our pool of volunteers. Find out more about available roles and tasks: contact Kathryn at [editor@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:editor@nzchristianwriters.org).

## Warning! Scammer Alert!

Please remember no one from NZ Christian Writers is authorised to email members asking for money or other forms of help. Check for fake email addresses as the scammers like to pretend to be one of us. Do not reply to the scammer emails; simply ignore them.

## Raising Godly Mothers Magazine

If you are an older mother who would like to write an article for future issues of *Raising Godly Mothers* or if you are a young mother who is struggling, please contact Shing at [rgm@rgm.co.nz](mailto:rgm@rgm.co.nz). For information or to subscribe to the magazine visit: [www.rgm.co.nz](http://www.rgm.co.nz)

## Increase to Subscription Fees

As from 1 April 2024 our NZCW membership/subscription fees have increased. Please see the new rates on page two. All invoices from this date onwards will show the new rate.

# The Death of Christian Literature

by Rodney Hickman

Here is an interesting fact. Last year Christchurch City Council did a survey on behalf of their libraries. They found that only 7% of people over the age of 18 years actually read one book in 2023. Those under 18 read more due to school education needs. Now what did the other 93% of people do? They scrolled. They scrolled the internet or their phones, computers or tablets. They took in information in bite-sized pieces. The STUFF website has more traffic on their five second news bits than any other of their detailed articles. Could that also be true of Christian material?

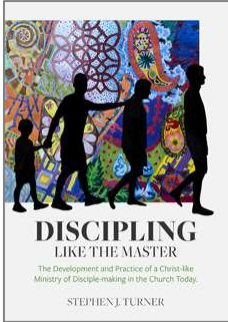
Last week I received a phone call from a close friend who is downsizing their library of Christian books. Did I want any? There were some great books from classics to modern theology. What's interesting is the fact she had trouble giving them away. Op shops don't want them; they are not good sellers. Libraries, too, find religious books hardly ever get taken out, hence their shelf space is constantly being downsized. We are living in a different era since Covid. A minister friend recently told me that all the popular books on church growth written just five years ago are no longer relevant in today's culture. Yet churches still grow, but it's all so different how that happens now. And for every church that grows, ten die. How do they adjust?

The reason I ponder all this is the fact I am considering self-publishing a new book. Is it possible only 7% of my friends would even read it? Last Sunday at church I never saw one person bring a Bible, but almost everyone had their phone and were either making notes on that phone or doing whatever. When was the last time someone said they were reviewing the sermon notes from two years ago? So how do we as Christian writers adjust to how the world is today? Most people today have limited space within their homes and limited space for a bookshelf, which mostly hold trinkets or family photos anyway.



I am not trying to be negative but trying to be realistic. Perhaps the future lies in computer lingo, emails, blogs, downloads, etc. Hard paper copy is becoming a thing of the past. However, I am sure God is not stumped by our process of learning and dispersing information. There will always be a need for written manuscripts but it won't be huge. I guess we have to work smarter and not harder. This article is a reminder of what we do and why, and realise we need to be conscious of society's way of processing information as we head into the coming years. Food for thought here.

*Editor's Note: According to a google search, 500,000 to 1,000,000 books are published annually. If we include self-published it is close to 4,000,000 new book titles each year. Almost 11,000 are published daily. Send us your thoughts – how do we reach readers in the future?*



### Discipling like the Master

By Stephen J Turner

Review by Julia Martin

Self-published with Castle Publishing Ltd NZ 2023

Involved in Christian ministry for 50 years both here in New Zealand and for 25 years in India, retired pastor, Stephen Turner, has written this small book to share his knowledge and experience of biblical discipleship.

Influenced in his younger days by Charles Spurgeon and LeRoy Eims (Navigators), Stephen discovered the crucial role disciple-making plays in the Church, and the importance Jesus placed upon it.

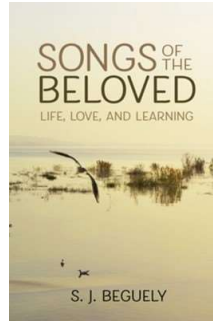
His book is divided into three sections:

1. How did Jesus train his 12 disciples?
2. How does Jesus train his disciples today?
3. Practical insights into disciple-making (including his own examples and observations)

The Lord's Great Commission in Matthew 28 commands all true believers to be disciple-makers. Stephen points out that each believer has a different contribution to make for the spread of the Gospel, and to disciple-making in particular. We all have different giftings. While he claims 'it takes a church to raise a disciple', the true maker is Christ himself. Disciple-making begins with a call to follow the crucified Christ Jesus and to believe his words and not our own.

In his book, Stephen addresses one particular challenging question: What would Jesus think of the way your church cares for those people who, by his grace, have come to believe the Gospel?

This is a practical book – not just for church leaders but for all true believers who desire to live in obedience to Jesus Christ and his word. I strongly recommend it.



### Songs of the Beloved

Life, Love and Learning

By S J Beguely

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Resource Publications 2022

A former secondary school teacher, Bible College graduate, author of textbooks and Christian teaching and training programmes, Steve Beguely is also a prolific and gifted poet.

In his book, Steve has compiled a comprehensive collection of his poems, written over several years – initially as a legacy for his family and friends, but fortunately, now available for the pleasure of a wider readership.

The poems vary in length and purpose and cover a wide range of topics, including: family matters, church and Christian living, theology, world events, and nature.

Some of the poems are personal; many others are insightful and challenging.

They are the product of his observation and contemplation of life through the lens of his strong Christian faith.

I believe there is something for everyone in this amazing anthology which can best be summed up by his subtitle – Life, Love and Learning.

Here is a sample of his work:

#### WORDS ARE...

Words are tumbling images  
 they fall like waterfalls,  
 turbulent and rough as rapids run  
 they shape, erode, smooth form  
 my mind, into bright marble halls  
 of statuary and colonnaded pillars  
 all to be destroyed and then rebuilt  
 by that singular word,  
 God's truth and Spirit.

# The New Babylon

by Chris Sellars

Of the Babylon of old it is told the inhabitants of the Earth tried to build a tower to Heaven. They did not succeed for God confused their language and mankind has babbled nonsense ever since. There are, though, two languages that God did not confuse. They are music and mathematics. No matter where you are, Bach's symphonies are melodic and whether you speak Mandarin or Greek, two plus two equals four. Since then the world, forever repeating past mistakes, has been industriously constructing a new tower in the New Babylon.

The new Babylon has devised another universal language designed to overcome God's imposition of forced misunderstanding. The new universal and all-pervasive language is digital binary code. It is also the method used to communicate and transmit mathematics and music. It marks the convergence of the analogue man with the digital trans-human cyborg.

It is a language that blasphemes God and speaks of the defeat of humanity. It is already manifest amongst us as we see many young people and some not so young worship at the altar of the digitally fed screen. Faces blank and minds captivated by a pseudo reality—one that has the image of the beast without the buck or bite of a real one.

A convenient altar; the faithful offer worship and obeisance more frequently and with greater dedication than any Muslim bowing east a mere five times a day. The god of the screen speaks to its acolytes without any requirement for purification. This new god always says what the faithful want to hear; the more amoral the better. Messages of repentance and conviction are censored by the priests of Facebookland and Twitterville. And what is the fruit of this unholy modern creed? Dumbed down minds, an inability to think critically, wasted time, narcissism, depression, hypnosis and eventual oblivion. As convergence with the cyber world steadily increases so does depression, anxiety and suicide.

A friend in the business informs me that at the medical clinic where she works, numbers reporting with anxiety and depression have mushroomed. Although a variety of anti-anxiety and antidepressant drugs began to be introduced around 50 years ago, people appear to be more anxious and depressed than ever. The cure has been no solution at all, merely another problem.

Welcome to the new Babylon. It has been long in coming but, much like the first one, will last only a short time. Here you will see clowns wearing painted smiles who weep beneath their makeup. Here is good dressed as evil and evil as good, and bitter for sweet. What is lofty is brought low and what is low is exalted. What is Holy is blasphemed.

Here there are many with jobs but few gainfully employed. Those who give, create, produce, repair and heal are a small minority. These are swamped by those who rob, kill and destroy, yet have no idea that they are doing so. Time servers in a short life frittering away what is precious and hoarding worthless baubles. 'Forgive them Father they know not what they do.' The old Babylon had but one tower to heaven. Today there is no shortage of cloud-piercing towers that reach for the sky. Yet what need have we of towers when we have rockets that pierce the heavens so much quicker? In the new Babylon so many define their self by a cyber presence in the 'cloud'. Indeed, is there any need to go to the heavens at all? If rumours are true 'aliens' have come down to us and soon will be revealed. These are 'of course' the minions of 'the prince of the power of the air'.

I am often criticised for being negative and revealing a gloomy picture of the days ahead. Such is the fate of those who tell the truth. It is only gloomy for the inhabitants of the world. For the children of the Kingdom it is the fulfilment of God's mighty plan. What is written must come to pass and we will rejoice in tribulation. Reviewing former prophecy that has already come to pass I must admit that things are not as bad as I have predicted. No, they are much worse than that.

The beast is a system, its language is digital and its image is as close as your nearest screen. Its mind, like the mind of any beast, is not human. With neither the logic of a man nor the instinct of a natural creature it has the cold hard metallic reasoning of 'Artificial Intelligence'. Acting according to its controlling program, its algorithm, it knows no sorrow, feels no pain, does not know empathy and cannot love.

Do not be deceived. In the new Babylon there will be no return to normal. The world itself has fallen into a state of flux where uncertainty is the new certainty. Those who want control are like horses running an evil race now accelerating down the back straight toward their goal and jostling for position. But a kingdom divided cannot stand. Thinking they are gods they will 'die like men and fall like princes'. 'The wicked will be caught in a snare of their own devising'.

The new Babylon is a machine out of control; an avalanche at its beginning. It will wreak havoc downhill, the extent of which we can only speculate upon. But—like the Babylon of old—the hand of destiny and providence has already written Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin, (numbered, numbered, weighed and divided). It is plain for all who have eyes to see.

All but a remnant are acolytes of the new language and the new religion. Their faith is in 'the science', their communion Pharmacia. It is easy, it is painless, it is convenient; the problem is – it is death. There is, though, hope for any who repent of their sorceries and are saved. For although the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ is not of 'this world' it is, however, at hand.



[www.freechristianillustrations.com](http://www.freechristianillustrations.com)

## When we get to Heaven

by Rodney Hickman

In this poem is an image of  
When we arrive at Heaven's door  
Dressed in suits of armour  
With our shields and swords of war.

The armour may be dull  
and splashed with lots of blood,  
some is bent and dented  
or smeared with grime and mud.

And angels look in wonder  
at every woman, every son  
at the battle scars we carry,  
the victories we have won.

For Heaven sees it all as trophies  
a look of wonder on each face  
for every dint's a tale to tell  
of God's amazing grace!



## Diamonds in the dUSt

By Stephen Douglas

Diamonds in the dUSt

Best describes us

You and me; our worth unknown  
Until the Master stooped to lift us up,  
Dust us off and polish us with  
His grace and love.

Now we are precious diamonds being  
held in His nail pierced hands!

## He is alive!

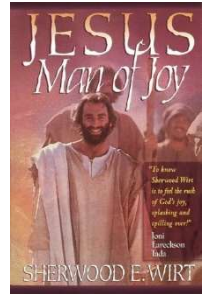
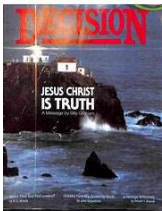


# Enduring Advice for Christian Writers

by Marie Anticich

Interesting things come to light when you are moving house and, during a recent move, I found handwritten notes I had taken at a New Zealand Christian Writers conference in 1983, from which the present-day NZ Christian Writers organisation was formed. The 1983 conference was organised by John Massam, publisher of the long-running, nationwide Christian newspaper *Challenge Weekly* (now defunct.) John was hoping to attract new writers to his newspaper and invited me to contribute at that time. A seed was sown in my life but 30 years were to pass before I began to write regular feature articles for *Challenge Weekly*.

John invited American author and pastor, Dr Sherwood Wirt, to be guest speaker at the 1983 conference. Dr Wirt was editor of Billy Graham's *Decision* magazine and wrote 28 books, including *Billy: A Personal Look at Billy Graham* and the best-selling *Jesus, Man of Joy*. Dr Wirt was the last man to interview C S Lewis before Lewis died. In 1978 Dr Wirt founded the San Diego Christian Writers Guild and helped hundreds of writers polish and publish their work. He died in 2008 at age 97.



Although my notes from Dr Wirt's talks were written more than 40 years ago, his advice and insights are still relevant for writers today. Here are some of his pointers:

- We're only dimly aware of the effect of literature on the human race. I believe you are going to have more impact on New Zealand than the pastors.
- Supply the demand. Feed the market with good stuff.
- Writing is going to have to move up on your list of priorities. Write something every day.
- The media are not Christian but they're not hostile or anti-Christian. They are willing to take you at face value and give you a shot. Look at C S Lewis' stories coming across.
- You're making a mistake if you're writing a book and then trying to sell it. Sell it and then write it.
- There are publishers who'll publish anything you write if you pay. It's called 'The Vanity Press'. It's an ego-trip for writers. But in ordinary publishing it's the publisher who takes the risk.

- We're not in the business for money but it's an extra blessing. Don't write for the Christian market if you want money.
- We have to get started somewhere – crack the market, get your name in print even in the church bulletin, then build on it. It gives you credibility.
- I hope you'll write something that will become a landmark of the century.
- We are the bearers of a life and death message.
- When you begin to rewrite, you're on your way to becoming a professional. On your fourth writing you are tired of it. By the time you've written your book you are so sick of it you don't even want to read it! It is too painful to be objective. This is the main discipline of the professional writer.
- I have never yet failed to get help from a critique group. I write down what they say then sit down and make changes if I like them. I usually do.
- Think of yourself as a writer. Think as a writer. Analyse everything you read.
- Centre your prayer life on this. Stay with the Gospel.
- Think of the reader – why does he/she want to buy it? What's his/her motivation? What's his/her problem?
- If it's done right you can wedge into the secular market. A little humour doesn't hurt.
- We Christian writers can try harder and give our imaginations more scope and hope that the lightning will strike.
- I have great hope for you people.
- Let's expose the myth that non-fiction is more influential than fiction. It is not. Fiction is an entirely different genre – using skills that don't come easily.
- Writing for money is the wrong motive – so is airing your grievance. Thinking about money kills the joy in your writing.
- Words are the most important things in life. Words can both heal and destroy.

Looking back, I am very grateful to John Massam for his foresight in organising the 1983 NZ Christian Writer's conference, which brought about the NZ Christian Writers Guild and encouraged many local writers. Three decades were to pass before I started writing for the Christian media, as bringing up children and helping run family businesses took precedence during those years. But it just goes to show that a seed sown may bloom – eventually!

*(John Massam is now 90 years old and is managing director of Castle Publishing, a leading Christian publisher).*

# Professional Writing Services

**Are you a member who can offer a professional service related to writing or publishing? If so, you are welcome to advertise here for free! Send your advertisement of 100 words maximum to: [editor@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:editor@nzchristianwriters.org)**

## A WORD ABOUT EDITING

I am a freelance editor having received a Diploma of Proofreading and Editing from NZIBS in 2012. I have edited a large range of documents including novels, biographies, magazine articles, websites, and university assignments.

In August 1968, while beginning teacher training, Jesus Christ changed my heart and the whole direction of my life. I am passionate about working with Christian writers, helping them polish their work until it shines.

I endeavour to read the writer's intentions, not just their words, helping them shape their writing into a more accurate, natural and pleasing form.

**Graham Pedersen:** 027 440 5851

E: [gpedersen@hotmail.co.nz](mailto:gpedersen@hotmail.co.nz)

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## JEFFS EDITING SERVICES

My name is Christel Jeffs and I'm a freelance editor/proofreader based in Northland. I have been editing since 2018 and hold a Diploma in Editing from NZIBS.

Services I offer:

- Manuscript Assessment
- Copy-editing
- Proofreading

I have edited 14 books to date, including numerous assignments, documents, and creative pieces.

If you need help with a piece of work – be it spelling, sentences or structure – I'm able to help. I will always honour your writing voice and the heart you've poured into your work.

**Christel Jeffs (MCW, Dip Ed):**

021 238 9234

E: [christel.jeffs@yahoo.com](mailto:christel.jeffs@yahoo.com)

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Get the solutions you need to share your voice with the world. Try the proxy-publishing services which can all be done remotely. Or acquire the expertise through online courses with the Self-Publishing Institute of NZ (SPINZ). Write, publish, or learn anywhere at your own pace, on your terms.

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## STEPPING STONE EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Dear Writer,

My name is Kathryn Paul and I'm keen to connect with you on this vital stepping stone of your writing journey. Having your work checked is an essential part of the publishing process. It's important to see it as an investment toward your book returning the results that you and the Lord desire. I'd love for you to get to know me better and discover the qualifications, experience and encouragement I will bring to your stepping stone. You can learn more by visiting my website:

<https://steppingstoneediting.mailchimpsites.com>

I'm looking forward to connecting with you.

**Kathryn Paul**

E: [steppingstoneediting@gmail.com](mailto:steppingstoneediting@gmail.com)

## WILD SIDE PUBLISHING

### Demystifying the self-publishing process

Writing a book is hard enough without all the annoying and persistent questions about the next stages of the process (and the costs) buzzing your brain! We get it! Wild Side Publishing can help. Here's all you need to understand the process and costs:

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- Proofreading and editing.
- Cover design and text layout.
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I have over 20 years of experience as a copy editor and proofreader. I work on non-fiction books/articles/memoirs as well as academic editing/proof reading.

I work with authors to prepare their work for self-publishing. I make sure their documents are print ready and, for example, I tell them that they do need to use mirror margins on their documents and no, the printer won't do that for you.

I have qualifications in technical and professional communication, editing and proofreading, science and laboratory technology. I am in my happy place when editing and thoroughly enjoy turning people's prose into award winning documents.

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*Any questions?*



# South Island Christian Book Authors Network

by Kathryn Paul

The South Island Christian Book Authors Network is facilitated by Verna McFelin. Their February meeting was held at the Beckenham Library, which proved to be a great venue for the fifteen authors who attended.

Some of the published authors who have connected through the South Island Christian Book Authors Network also visited Riccarton Market in December 2023. Here we have Brian Wilson, Pauline Marshall, Verna McFelin and Carol Duffy in the photographs below. Good on them for stepping out together and giving their books publicity.



*Treasure of the General Grant by Brian Wilson*



*Hannibal by Pauline Marshall*



*The Invisible Sentence by Verna McFelin*



*Tui in a Kowhai by Carol Duffy*

A big thank you to Verna for organising the meetings and encouraging other book authors.

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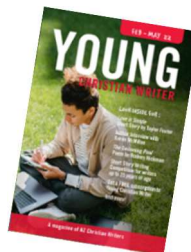
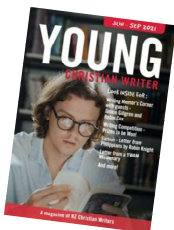
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# W E L C O M E New and Returning Members:

**Anya McKee**

Whenuakite

**Bruce Ford**

Gisborne

**Ian George**

Auckland East

**Kim Hoods**

Wellington

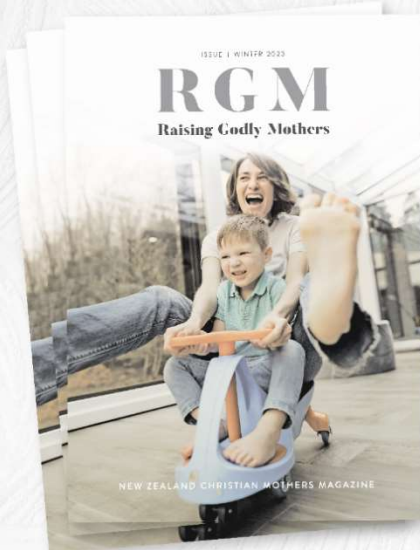
**Leslie Jones**

Lower Hutt

**Peter Britton**

Pukekohe

**All NZCW members are invited to share a Writer Profile and Book Feature(s) on our website. For details email our NZCW president, Justin St Vincent here: [president@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:president@nzchristianwriters.org)**



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# Is AI Allowed for Competitions?

by Debbie McDermott and Kathryn Paul

What is acceptable ‘assistance’ when you are writing a competition entry and what is not? Your competition entry must be your own original work. This means there shouldn’t be any collaboration with another writer.

Let’s clarify what collaboration means. It is perfectly okay to use AI, search engines such as Google, resource materials such as books and online tutorials, and inbuilt grammar and spell check tools as all of these are sources of learning and help hone our writing skills. However, all entries must be entirely based on the personal effort of the writer. For competition entrants, this means you are not allowed to have a personal friend or a professional editor correct your work before entering it into a competition. It also means that the writers of any direct quotes must be acknowledged in a bibliography or footnote.

It is impossible to address certain topics without conducting some research – therefore we need to allow people to use AI and other search engines, but only as a means to gain knowledge, not to write their submissions for them. You need to rewrite facts in your own words.

This isn’t something NZ Christian Writers is able to supervise, so we are trusting our members to submit their work with a clear conscience. We want your personal author’s ‘voice’ to shine through, as no one else can write something in that special way which only you can.

The purpose of our competitions is to offer a simple mentor system. It enables writers to practise, learn and develop writing skills. Collaborating with another writer, or getting AI to write your entry for you, will sabotage the progress of improving your ability to write well.

Many of our members have let us know they benefit from reading the competitions and the judges’ comments. Every entrant receives personal helpful feedback. The points board, levels and prizes are a fun incentive that can help build a humble character with resilience. When we don’t get a placing it’s good for us to pick ourselves up and try again. We may not always agree with the results, or like the assignment, but writing an entry is about self-discipline and stretching us out of our comfort zone.

Thank you to all who have been entering in the past and please keep up the awesome work. We encourage all our members to give the competitions a go.



# How to Format your Competition Entry

by Kathryn Paul

Contestants for all levels please take note of this article. As magazine editor I copy and paste your competition entries into the magazine. When you haven't formatted your document by following the instructions on the competitions page—I then have to make the adjustments. Judges are scoring you on meeting these criteria, so it's important to know how to do it. I hope the following instructions will be helpful to you. If you follow them it will also be helpful to me, and you will benefit from expanding your skills.

I am referring to using Microsoft Office Word as I explain the competition instructions. There is a toolbar along the top of your document under the 'HOME' tab. This is where you will locate your tools to format your document or text. You can set these format rules at the beginning of your text and then type. Or you can highlight a block of text and then change the format rules for what you have highlighted.

1. **Word count:** Along the top of your toolbar is the tab 'Review'. Click on it and you will see 'Word Count'. Click on it and a box will open telling you what your word count is. Close it and return to the 'Home' tab.
2. **Font Arial 10pt:** Under the tab 'Home' is a drop-down menu offering a long list of font style options. Click on the little down arrow and the alphabetical list will open up. Scroll up or down and locate 'Arial'. Select it. Then next to that box is the font size drop down menu. Click on the little down arrow and select size 10. You have now set the typing style and size of your font.
3. **Heading Bold Title Case 18pt:** The heading should be in Arial type font:

## Heading

Highlight it and make it bold 18pt as per the font instructions in No. 2 above.

4. **The next four instructions** are all found under 'Home' and 'Paragraph'.
5. **Line spacing Multiple 1.2:** Under 'Paragraph' locate the drop-down menu for line spacing. Select the word 'multiple'. Next to it is the measurement for it, select or type in 1.2.
6. **Spacing Between Paragraphs 6pt:** Under 'Paragraph' locate the 'spacing' 'before' and 'after' boxes. Mine is usually set by default to 'before' 0 and 'after' 10. Change it to 'before' 6 and 'after' 0. This changes the amount of space between the paragraph before it and between the paragraph after it.
7. **Paragraph Indentation None:** Under 'Paragraph' by default it's usually already set at 'none'.

**8. Alignment Justified:** This is where you can change your text to align on the left margin, or be centered, or align against the right margin or be spread evenly against the left and right margins (justified). This option is found in icons above 'Paragraph' and it's also found under 'Paragraph' in a drop-down menu.

Fifteen percent of your entry score is marked on meeting the above requirements. I encourage you to have a play around with the text and your toolbar until you see it is doing what you want it to. This is the guideline for most of the magazine content, so if you practise doing it with competition entries, you will then be able to do the same when sending in a contribution for the magazine.

## Writing Competitions Points Board

Level One		Level Two		Level Three	
Lisa Marie Preston	30	Stephen Douglas	27	Felicity Logan	15
Sandy Miller	21	Elaine Dixon	27	Taylor Foster	15
Robert Prins	12			Pat Kerr	12
Rachel Batten	9			Eion Field	12
				Kathryn Paul	12
				Fiona Murray	9
				Janet Fleming	9

In each magazine, place getters receive points: 15 points for first, 12 points for second and 9 points for third. At the end of May and November, those with the highest points in Levels One, Two and Three will be awarded monetary prizes for first, second and third. Prizes up for grabs are: **\$60 for First Place**, **\$50 for Second Place**, **\$40 for Third place**. These are usually awarded as Manna Christian Store vouchers. Our next prize winners will be published in the Jun–Jul 2024 magazine edition.

All new members begin by entering in Level One. To be promoted to Level Two or Three, contestants need to receive points at least three times on their current level. Our judges also require regular entries and improved writing. All entrants receive helpful constructive feedback via email from the judges. It's like a mentoring system and competition all in one!

*Please note published competition entries have not been edited.*



# Competition Results

## Level One

**Judge: Debbie McDermott**

**Requirement:** Beginning with a relevant Bible verse, write an inspiring devotional piece on the topic of Easter. Ensure you include a short testimony (yours, or someone else's with their permission) and conclude the devotion with a short prayer. (350 words)

### General Comments

*I was pleased to receive eight submissions, seven of which met all the key requirements of the competition and were awarded high scores ranging from 95.5% at the top end and 83.5% at the lower end. Unfortunately, the eighth entry only met two of the requirements and scored quite a bit lower as a result.*

*The devotions written by Lisa Preston, Robert Prins and Sandy Miller were particularly good and earned them a well-deserved first, second and third place, respectively. The writing of all entrants was also of a high standard for the most part, but special congratulations must go to Lisa Preston who only made one punctuation error that I could see. Such excellent writing deserves an acknowledgement and my thanks. It is very gratifying to mark an entry that is so carefully put together and presented.*

*I want to especially commend all those entrants who transparently shared about some very difficult and painful times or events in their lives and how the Lord came through for them in ways that only He can. Such openness and honesty in a devotion or inspirational piece can have a huge impact on the reader—simply because you're sharing **your** story, not someone else's. In most instances, speaking from personal experience will add credibility to whatever you share with others.*

*Unfortunately, the entry that did not meet all the key requirements of the competition not only arrived a day late because of an email glitch, but was also completed so hurriedly that it concluded with information pertaining to some pictures instead of with a prayer (probably due to a copy and paste error by the entrant). I cannot stress enough the importance of giving yourself time to carefully proofread your work before entering it into the competition. Marking, judging and critiquing unchecked submissions takes quite a bit more time than usual and I personally find it so discouraging to have to deduct marks from an entry that would have been excellent had the writer just spent a bit more time on checking and correcting it.*

*Just a reminder that I usually acknowledge receiving an entry within a few hours of receiving it. If you haven't heard back from me within 24 hours, please contact me.*

## First Place



Lisa Marie  
Preston  
of Whakatane

## Walk in Newness of Life

---

*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. Romans 6:4 (ESV)*

During the Easter season we pause to reflect upon the meaning and significance of the resurrection of Jesus. Upon the cross on Good Friday, Jesus not only physically experienced a torturous death but also spiritually experienced the agony and weight of all our sin and shame. He paid the ransom for us – dying for our sin so that we don't have to. Three days after his death and burial, which we celebrate on Easter Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead, victorious over sin and death. Seven weeks later at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to empower the believers to live new lives for Jesus and to spread his good news throughout the earth.

I also pause to reflect upon my journey with Jesus: how I lost my old, dead-in-sin life and found a whole new life in Christ. I was raised attending church but thought God was distant and angry. Suffering from chronic illness and abandoned by my father, I felt like unworthy, unlovable, damaged goods. Spending my teenage years in self-destruction, I ran away from my family. Pregnant at 19, drugs and alcohol no longer an option to mask my misery, I accepted an invitation to church. There I heard that God wasn't angry with me after all. In fact, God loved me so much that he sent his own son Jesus to die for my sins. I accepted Jesus as my Saviour, and by the power of the Holy Spirit I began to change from my old ways of thinking and doing to 'walk in newness of life'.

*Father, Thank you for the sacrifice of your son, Jesus, and the gift of eternal life. Holy Spirit, continue to change my old ways of thinking and help me find my identity completely in Jesus. As I walk in this newness of life, may all the people in my spheres of influence see the changes in me and be drawn to your light. Amen*

## Second Place



Robert  
Prins  
of Auckland East

## Scars

---

*"When the disciples were together ... Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord" (John 20:19-20 NIV).*

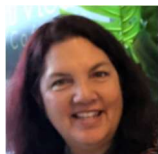
They are ugly. Some are grotesque. But every scar has a story to tell.

This easter we remember the scars in the hands, feet and side of Jesus. They are still there even though he has been raised from the dead. The scars are there because they tell the story of the pain and agony he suffered as he died on the cross. They show us in graphic detail how much he loves us, and the price he paid to save us from our sin. Jesus has scars so that we will never forget how much he gave for our freedom. The scars of Jesus tell a story that affects each one of us.

It's not just Jesus that has scars. Just as it "*pleased the Lord to bruise him,*" (Isaiah 53 v 10 KJV) so it pleased the Lord to bruise me. I have scars too. One goes around the right-hand side of my chest from my sternum almost to my backbone. Another runs from my heel to half way up the calf of my left leg, and yet another across my right hip. They are scars from life saving operations, but they are also scars that have saved my life – both here and now and for eternal life. I even have scars on my heart from being wounded in the house of my friends. As ugly as the scars are, each one shows God's glory, the work of God in my life, and tells the story of God drawing me close to him. The scars I have tell me of the love, purpose and plans God has for me.

Thank you for the scars of Jesus and for the scars you have inflicted on each of us. As much as we dislike the pain, we are so thankful for your healing, guiding and correcting hand drawing us to you. Amen.

## Third Place



Sandy  
Miller  
of Auckland

### God's Faithfulness

---

*And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22:41-42 NASV).*

Following the death of his 21-year-old son who died of an accidental overdose, TobyMac wrote a song titled "Faithfulness". In this song, he recalls how God was faithful to make a way for him amidst his sorrow and grief at a time in his life when he felt that his world was falling apart.

Life has a way of challenging our faith when we are faced with unexpected tragedies or life changing situations. I had always considered myself a strong Christian until my marriage ended in divorce and I became a solo mum of two children. When this happened, I realised that my relationship with God was not as strong as I thought it was. At one stage, I considered walking away from God instead of dealing with the issues I was faced with in prayer.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, we see a human side of Jesus as He prayerfully wrestles with what lay ahead of Him. He had foretold that His disciples would desert Him, Judas would betray Him and Peter would deny Him three times. Despite what He was about to endure He went ahead with being crucified on the cross because He was committed to fulfilling His Father's will.

God may not take the cup of suffering away from us, but sometimes He allows these challenges in life for a reason. We don't always understand why these things happen at the time, but it is an opportunity for God to demonstrate his faithfulness towards us. If we give our situation to Him in prayer, it will develop in us a closer and deeper relationship with a God who promises to never leave us or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:8 NIV refers).

*Father, I thank you for your faithfulness. According to your word, if we cry out to you, you hear our prayers and promise to deliver us from our troubles.*

## Level Two

### Judge: Lesley Edgeler

**Requirement:** Choose a famous quotation to include at the end of a short story narrated by the antagonist to a group of imaginary secondary school students. You must mention the person who originated the quotation. (350 words)

### General Comments

*Short-story writing for young people needs to be vital and unputdownable.*

*When I questioned my sixteen-year-old granddaughter for advice, she suggested the opening sentence should be: "epic to bring in the reader." Her other suggestion was for the story: "to have a cliffhanger ending to keep him/her wondering."*

*She also thought the story should incorporate some romance or tragedy.*

*In these days of advanced technology, attention spans are not as disciplined. Therefore, it is important to begin with an attention-gripping title.*

*The Mouse in the House Made Mischief is boring and uses too many unnecessary words whereas Mischievous House Mouse is more succinct and appealing.*

*In this competition the narrator had to be the antagonist (minor character) which can be either one person or a group of people in opposition to the protagonist (major character). Therefore, the protagonist had to overcome an obstacle or hardship, or sometimes be the cause of trouble for others.*

*A setting or environment must be established as well as the time factor.*

*The reader must finish the story with a sense of satisfaction, or the story has failed to achieve its goal.*

*For this competition I wrote a sample story, Meat Factory Crisis, to help competitors understand what I wanted them to achieve.*

*The entries I received for this competition all varied in composition.*

*I awarded Elaine Dixon first prize for her retelling of a famous story from the bad guy's point of view.*

*Stephen Douglas came in second place for his retelling of the well-known Biblical story from Goliath's perspective.*

*It is important to read and list the requirements on a piece of paper and tick each one off before submitting an entry to make sure every aspect has been included otherwise points will be deducted.*

*Keep up the good work and your writing will improve.*

## First Place



Elaine  
Dixon  
of Tauranga

## The Benefits of Labour Day

Good morning, students. Today I want to tell you a true story from my earlier life. I am German and during the second World War I was an overseer in the infamous concentration camp at Ravensbruck, north of Berlin, the largest camp for women in Nazi Germany.

I am ashamed to say that the power I had over those women corrupted me absolutely. Many of the women were Jewish, but there were also political prisoners, Roma (gypsies), Jehovah's Witnesses, and criminals. I was given freedom to do what I liked with them, which included beatings, torture, and all kinds of sadistic acts designed to degrade them completely.

After the war I suffered from terrible guilt over my actions. Finally I cried out to God and asked him for forgiveness for all the terrible things I had done. Immediately I knew I was free. In my joy I asked God for the opportunity to meet one of my victims in order to ask forgiveness in person.

My prayer was answered in 1947 in a basement room in Munich, where a Dutch woman called Corrie ten Boom was speaking on forgiveness. I knew she had been in Ravensbruck and realised that here was my opportunity. After the meeting was over I went up to her and said the words which had been burning in my heart for so long. I put out my hand to shake hers, but there were a few seconds of hesitation before she shook mine.

Later I found out that she had not wanted to forgive me. However she knew that if she did not, God could not forgive her. In those few seconds she cried out to God and asked him to help her. I felt her warm hand in mine, and saw the genuine smile on her face. As a result of that incident she was able to say the following words, which have become one of her most famous quotes.

*“Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.”*

## Second Place



Stephen  
Douglas  
of Wellington

## Goliath and David

A young debater known for his ability to incite controversy, Goliath waits to address the Christian Students Association. He thinks *I must challenge the students; god is not a proven fact*. Tall and well-built for his age, he likes to boast about his IQ.

A senior student welcomes him and the students.

Behind the podium, grinning ear to ear, Goliath introduces himself: “Afternoon students, I am Goliath Philips from the school’s debating team. It’s a pleasure to speak about the existence of god. I believe your last speaker, David, from the synagogue, highlighted that life has setbacks but not failures. A catchphrase such as ‘God is watching and timing all events as he sees fit’ is popular among Christians and Jews; god knows the outcome of all happenings. I guess you may approximate today to the Bible story of David and Goliath.”

He gives a laugh. Some students mimic their reply, being unsure how serious he is.

“However, how can there be a case for god? To quote Bertrand Russell, ‘Fear is the basis of the whole thing—fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death’(1) To say a god created our universe is a ploy to dumb down our fears.”

“I challenge anyone”.... but before finishing, there’s a stir, and someone stands.

All the students turn to see—David, walking to the front—there’s silence in the room. This brings confusion to Goliath; the unexpected has happened. David, who is Christian and Jewish, is coming forward. *Can I hold my argument against David?*

David addresses Goliath and the students: “Christianity gives all humanity an answer to the simple question: What is the meaning and purpose of life? Freedom of conscience and speech is perhaps the greatest benefit”(2)

Goliath is speechless; it’s like the stone in the Bible story struck him. He realises it is true: civilisation is built on the Judeo-Christian tradition. It’s not enough to belittle this tradition; rather, an answer is required, and he doesn’t have one!

“Christianity is more than being religious; it’s the answer. ‘I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work,’ said Thomas Edison.”

David cheers, Goliath is stunned, and the students applaud.

Footnotes:

1. Bertrand Russell; <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/466499-religion-is-based-primarily-upon-fear-it-is-partly-the> – cited 2/2/24
2. Polina, Pfeifer; Facebook; I am an Ex-Muslim – cited 30/1/24

## Meat Factory Crisis

by Lesley Edgeler (Level Two Judge)

Kimbo. We all hated that name. Our irrational, cruel, self-preserving boss – manager of the meat works in Chicago. It was 1902, the year I became a murderer.

We worked long hours, were treated brutally, like slaves, huddled together amongst the fifth, rats and stagnation of a slave trade ship.

Simone had been poisoned by rat droppings dipped in chemicals and recycled in our putrid water supply.

I pleaded with Kimbo for her to be taken to hospital. He laughed. “Get back to work, idiot, or you’ll be forced to soak in Bubbly Creek for a day.”

Bubbly Creek was stagnant with waste from the stockyard.

We dreaded that creek. Many had drowned overcome by the fetid stench and decay.

“We’ve got to do something,” I said. A hundred eyes stared at me, stunned.

Next morning before starting time, I wrapped a fallen bite-sized piece of meat in newspaper, placed it in a piece of stale bread and placed it on Kimbo’s desk.

We were immigrant workers. Kimbo made us work with processed bones—some died of lung disease.

He expected tanners to use bare fingers when working with chemicals—no gloves allowed.

Some had amputations and worked with only one arm. It was their only livelihood—they had no escape. Kimbo even made us use a corner of the room as a bathroom.

These conditions caused us to revolt. We went on strike that day. Our mutiny was short-lived.

“If any of you try that trick again, I’ll see to it that your lives won’t be worth living!” screamed Kimbo as his face turned purple. We saw him choke. He had yelled with his mouth full of the stale sandwich.

I smiled, I had committed murder and no-one suspected me. Perhaps I would do it again. We would have a new manager.

I read *The Jungle* a few years later. I could relate to Upton Sinclair’s famous quote: ‘*The people who worked in the meat factories of Chicago at the turn of the century “were tied to the great packing-machine and tied to it for life.”*’<sup>(1)</sup>

1. Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (Doubleday, 1906, p99). [wikihow.com](http://www.wikihow.com) (Sinclair, 99)

## Level Three

### Judge: Julia Martin

**Requirement:** Choose a Bible character mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11 (sometimes referred to as God’s Hall of Faith or Hall of Heroes) and, in a monologue, reveal how your character came to faith in God and how it impacted his or her life. (400 words)

#### General Comments

*In this amazing eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews in the New Testament, the writer explains what true faith in God involves and then proceeds to give an account of the many Old Testament saints who attested to the value of living by this faith.*

*Faith that is sure and certain involves believing in God’s character – that He is who He claims to be; and then believing in God’s promises – that he will do what He says He will do. God’s children demonstrate true faith when they believe that God will fulfil His promises even though the promises don’t always materialize in their lifetime here on earth. This faith equips people to be strong in victory while also hopeful in suffering.*

*Members entering this competition had to choose a character from this chapter and assume his or her identity. Then, in a monologue, reveal how the character came to faith in God and how it impacted their life.*

*A monologue is an uninterrupted speech made by a character which reveals the individual's thoughts, feelings, motivations, and experiences; thus giving a subjective point of view rather like a personal testimony.*

*I received five entries – two chose Moses, one chose Abraham, one Issac, and one member wrote about David from the long list of faithful men and women of the past.*

*I awarded first place to Taylor Foster for her monologue. While David is mentioned only by name in the chapter, she gives a good account of his chequered career.*

*While being regarded as one of the most famous men in the Old Testament, Israel's greatest king, the ancestor of the Messiah, and described by God as a man after his own heart, David was also a betrayer, liar, adulterer and murderer. In Taylor's monologue she reveals his success and failures but also shows the crucial part his faith in God played throughout his life.*

*I awarded second place equal to Eion Field and Pat Kerr who both chose Moses as their example of faith. Third place goes to Janet Fleming for her monologue which describes how Abraham's son Issac came to faith in God through his father's actions and example.*

## First Place



Taylor  
Foster  
of Tauranga

## David's Monologue: Faith with Feeling

Frustrated. Awed. Abandoned. Confident. These were feelings I felt towards God during my life. I could be so passionate that my voice would break with praises, and so heartbroken that my lips wouldn't dare to move.

As a young boy, I grew up guiding sheep. I'd shuffle them from field to field while watching for lions or bears. At the sight of one, I would attack, lunging at it with staff and sling. I'd protect the sheep with my life. Father, on one majestic day, came to me and said, "That, David, is exactly how God is. We are His sheep, and He is our Shepherd." This is how I first came to faith.

From then on, my life was set on chasing after God. Everything was for Him, His purpose and design. I would pour out my faith in passionate displays: slaying Goliath and his taunts, returning the Ark and dancing in the streets. Nothing could stop me from feeling on top of the world. I was God's anointed, the chosen King, the one the nations needed. Well, only God could stop me, save me from my arrogance.

Just when I thought I had everything, it was gone. I was on the run, fleeing into the night from King Saul and his army. Death stalked me in the desert as I cried to God for rescue. Night after night, I called to God and sought reassurance from my faith. In longing, I remembered His works of old and clung to my faith like a child to his father. It was all I had, a belief that God would save me, that He still loved me.

My own child turned on me, my morals shut down. I was nothing, a despised worm. But I was more than that to God. Time after time, I submitted to Him, clung to Him for comfort. He was my shield, my rock, a voice in my silence. When I was knocked to the ground or when I rose as a victor, God was my safe place, the anchor for my often-troubled soul. Faith, in the end, was all I had.

In my life, I felt a million emotions towards God, but He only felt one towards me: love. He was always going to fulfil what He had promised, even if I couldn't see it. All because of His love and my passionate, emotional, all-over-the-place faith.

## Second Place Equal



Pat  
Kerr  
of Roxburgh

## My Spiritual Story: Moses

I'm an old man now, 120 years old and near death, but I'm still *compos mentis*. God has always been in charge of my life. He has given me an extraordinary life; forty years a prince, forty years a shepherd, and forty years as prophet, priest and leader of the Exodus from Egypt.

The glory is all His. I am His humble servant.

My birth was unusual in that I survived infanticide. Hebrew boy babies were being killed, but thanks to God, I was raised as an Egyptian prince by Pharaoh's sister.

When I was forty, all that changed. I intervened in a fight between a Hebrew slave and an Egyptian bully. I murdered a man. My privileged life in Egypt was over.

But it led me to God, my Lord and Saviour.

I had to flee to Midian. For forty years I was humbled, but not humiliated, working as a shepherd for Jethro, a great boss. I married his daughter Zipporah, and raised two sons. All the Egyptian glitz, glamour and godlessness was rubbed out of me. I now worshipped God, my God, the God of the Hebrews.

He had a plan to use me in a mighty way over the next forty years.

When I was out shepherding one day, I saw a bush that seemed to be burning strangely. As I approached God spoke to me. “Take off your sandals, Moses, You are on holy ground. I am God.” I fell to my knees, and listened hard. God wanted me to lead His people out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. Me, Moses. I pleaded weakness and inadequacy. He promised to provide.

I promised to obey.

God provided numerous miracles: plagues in Egypt, safe crossing for us through the Red Sea, food and water in the desert, covering of fire and clouds, the Ten Commandments, laws for living. The people quickly forgot the miracles, grumbling about everything. Instead of thanking God, they had Aaron create a golden calf idol while I was up Mt Sinai for forty days. God was angry but forgiving, over and over.

When I disobeyed God’s command to get water, by angrily hitting the rock, he didn’t just punish me. Canaan was unreachable for our generation, except for Joshua and Caleb.

Every day, for forty years, we remembered who He was, Jehovah Jireh, God Provider.

Always.

Hallelujah!

## Second Place Equal



Eion  
Field  
of Waikato

## A Burning Faith

I have early memories of being pampered. A woman – not my mother – named me Moses (“drawn out of water”). She was actually Pharaoh’s daughter; she’d fuss over me and call me “handsome”. But my nurse whom I loved was my real mother. I felt close to her and her Hebrew people.

I grew up tall and athletic. I preferred being out of the King’s palace, in the community where I noticed how oppressed my mother’s people were. The Egyptians were harsh and unjust overlords. Once I found one attacking a Hebrew boy. Incensed I took to the aggressor – savagely. Not knowing my own strength, I went too far. The Egyptian was dead.

I buried him, but the secret was soon out, both among my own people and the authorities including Pharaoh himself. I panicked. A Hebrew (palace boy albeit) killing an Egyptian meant a death sentence.

Better run – fast! Grabbing a pony, I got away before dawn, heading east. Eventually reaching the land of Midian, I was safe. Soon after, I was sitting near a well. Some girls came to water their father’s sheep and goats. Then four shepherds arrived and began bullying the girls so their own flocks could drink first. Again, that sense of injustice moved me, but I restricted my anger to some earthy words and sent them packing.

The girls were impressed. When they told their father Jethro, I was invited into his household. Later, one his daughters, Zipporah, became my wife.

Still, I was a restless soul; herding Jethro’s sheep, mindful of my people’s oppression but lacking faith or direction to act. Yet God had plans for me – an assignment beyond my imagination.

Shepherding one day, I encountered God in a unique situation. A bush on the mountainside was on fire but it didn’t burn up. As I looked, God spoke to me – unmistakably. Ultimately, he appointed me to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt, Pharaoh’s opposition notwithstanding, to the “promised land”. What a monumental task!

But though I had many questions, I couldn’t deny God’s presence or disregard his word. I’d been infused with a faith enabling me to face Pharaoh in some bitter encounters, prepare my people for the Passover, and to lead them out, then through the Red Sea. It was miraculous, yes, but faith empowered me to choose to obey God. Look at the result.

## Third Place



Janet  
Fleming  
of Kaeo

## It Took My Place

As a young man I saw my father offer many sacrifices to God. One day he took me on a long journey to Mount Moriah to offer a sacrifice. After three days travelling, we saw the place in the distance.

My father said to the servants, “You stay here with the donkey while Isaac and I go and worship and then we will come back to you.”

I carried the wood for my father and he carried the fire and the knife.

“My father,” I asked, “We have the wood and fire, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

His reply was, “My son, God Himself will provide a lamb for the burnt offering.”

We continued walking along together. When we reached the place, I helped Dad build the altar and put the wood on it. I was still puzzled. When he had finished, Dad reached out his hand, took me, and tied me on the altar. What was he doing? My father loved me so much.

I saw his tears as he raised the knife above me. I was shaking, but then a voice called from heaven. “Don’t touch the boy. Now I know you fear God because you were willing to sacrifice Isaac.”

My father spoke as he untied the ropes that bound me. “There’s a ram caught in the bushes. We’ll put it on the altar and offer it as a sacrifice to God.”

And that is what Dad did, calling the place ‘The Lord will provide’.

The voice came again promising my father that because of what he had done God would give him many descendants and that all nations on earth would be blessed through him.

What happened that day made such an impression on me. I knew my father loved me so much and yet he was prepared to trust and obey God by sacrificing me. Also, hearing the voice from heaven, and the way in which God provided a substitute impacted my life.

My father realized that my birth had been special and God was able to raise the dead if necessary. As I blessed my sons in later years, I knew I could commend them to the God who has led me all the way.

As the years have further passed, I cannot see, but I know I can trust God even in the darkness.



Isaac

[www.freechristianillustrations.com](http://www.freechristianillustrations.com)

# Competitions for June 2024

Due by 1 May 2024

EMAIL ENTRY AS AN ATTACHMENT, COMPLETE WITH WORD COUNT AND YOUR NAME.

**Font:** Arial, 10 pt **Heading:** Bold Title Case, 18 pt **Line spacing:** Multiple 1.2

**Spacing between Paragraphs:** 6 pt **Paragraph Indentation:** None

**Alignment:** Justified. **Send a photo** of yourself for publishing purposes.

**NB: If you are not sure which level you're on, email Debbie McDermott at: [level1@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:level1@nzchristianwriters.org)**

Entries are judged on: Entering, format and layout 15%, Topic requirements 25%, Creativity, flow and impact 25%, Grammar and punctuation 25%, Spelling 10%. Stipulated wordcounts have a 5% leeway under or above the required wordcount. A maximum wordcount has a 5% leeway under the wordcount.

## Level One—for members 16 years old and over

**Requirement:** Beginning with the words 'The clock struck midnight...', write a story that is full of mystery and keeps your reader sitting on the edge of their seat until the final sentence when all is revealed. (500 words)

**Email entry to** Debbie McDermott at [level1@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:level1@nzchristianwriters.org)



*Debbie*

## Level Two—for members 16 years old and over

**Requirement:** Residents in rest homes often miss owning a pet. Research the trained visitor dog service in New Zealand, then tell a story of the difference that visits make to an imaginary elderly person's life. (500 words)

**Email entry to** Shirley Jamieson at [level2@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:level2@nzchristianwriters.org)

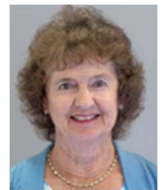


*Shirley*

## Level Three—for members 16 years old and over

**Requirement:** Choose one of the seven wonders of the modern world. Imagine you are there and describe your experience in an article suitable for a travel magazine. (350 words)

**Email entry to** Julia Martin at [level3@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:level3@nzchristianwriters.org)



*Julia*



**NZ CHRISTIAN WRITERS** is a nationwide collective of authors, bloggers, editors, lyricists, poets, publishers, songwriters, storytellers and writers throughout New Zealand. Along with our bi-monthly magazines and competitions we offer inspiring seminars and writers retreats to encourage, inspire and upskill people in their writing.

NZ Christian Writers' vision is to create a vibrant community of Christian writers by connecting them to other like-minded writers in New Zealand. We welcome both beginner and experienced writers.