

APRIL - MAY 2025

THE CHRISTIAN writer

SEE INSIDE FOR

Upcoming Christian Writers Events

Books, Bubbles and Blooms
Sat 26 April 2025 Morrinsville

NZCW Retreat
1-4 May 2025 Whitianga

Creative Writing Retreat
7-8 June 2025 Christchurch

Book Reviews:

Oasis: Soul Refreshing by Barbara J Harry

A Doctor Writes Home 1914 compiled
by David R Lockyer

Through the Years by Janet Fleming

More Thinking about Life by George Bryant

Articles including:

Writing from a Christian Worldview
by George Bryant

The Write Stuff: My Publishing Journey
by Phillip Donnell

Linguistic Blunders by Lorraine Dittrich

Poetry, Notices, Celebrations,
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.*

President: Justin St Vincent: president@nzchristianwriters.org

Editor and Membership Secretary: Kathryn Paul: editor@nzchristianwriters.org
For magazine contributions, address changes and membership queries.

Treasurer: For subscriptions and donations: treasurer@nzchristianwriters.org

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- 2) Printed magazine: Full membership \$75/Student membership (up to 25 yr) \$55

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Credit/Debit card payment is available online or pay by bank deposit, phone or Internet banking to: NZ Christian Writers, a/c 12 3040 0547346 00, Reference: [Your name]

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

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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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

President's Report



Welcome to our Apr-May 2025 edition of *The Christian Writer* magazine. This autumn, from May 1st to 4th, I'll be hosting our Retreat 2025 experience at Flaxmill Retreat Centre, in Whitianga, on the beautiful coast of the Coromandel. We are almost fully booked which is fantastic! I'm excited that around 50 writers from throughout New Zealand will be encouraged and inspired in their God-given gift for writing. It's a unique time where we'll get to learn and be upskilled in what God has called us to do. I'm especially looking forward to hearing and learning from our inspirational guest speakers: Vicki Millar, Murray Smith, Sina Steele, Chris Bovill, Rachel Weston and Peter Anderson. This year we have a wide variety of seminars and workshops covering many disciplines of writing. My prayer is that every person who attends will be blessed in pursuing their writing and publishing journey. Also, this is an advance notice that we will be hosting our AGM 2025 on May 4th 2025 in-person from 9:05 am to 9:30 am prior to our Church service at our Retreat 2025. For those members who are unable to attend, stay tuned for our Retreat 2025 and AGM 2025 reports that will be published in our Jun-Jul 2025 magazine.

In other news, we are growing as a collective. Every year, we have brand new members who didn't know we even existed joining us for the first time. Every month, our membership renewals continue to be regular which is a great encouragement to our board. On behalf of our board members, we want to thank each and every member who finds value in being connected and participating in our community of NZ Christian Writers. One of the many ways that our members choose to be involved with NZCW is through our writing competitions. These are available to all members and you'll find competition details published in both magazines, *The Christian Writer*, and *Young Christian Writer*, plus online via our website. May I encourage you to check out the latest competitions we have available throughout 2025. Why not have a go? Book voucher prizes for competition winners will now be available via Pure Books, a Bible-based bookshop located in Timaru. You can check out their brilliant selection of Christian books, helping you to grow in Christ: www.PureBooks.co.nz.

For those keen to check out and download our Competitions Reference Sheet 2025 it's available online: <http://nzchristianwriters.org/competitions/>.

Thank you to member and photographer, Max Carr, for the fantastic photo he has shared to be featured on the front cover of our magazine.

Be blessed

Justin St Vincent

Editorial: Are you battle-weary?

by Kathryn Paul



This year so far has been the most challenging for me yet, to be working on *The Christian Writer* and *Young Christian Writer* magazines. I've frequently been working six days at two jobs, and of course Sunday is church when I enjoy participating in the worship team and connecting with my church family. I also look after farm animals, morning and evening each day. When I get home at night, I'm very tired so it's been quite the battle to squeeze in working on the magazines; particularly when technology hiccups arise and add more pressure to the mix. However, I really enjoyed challenging myself to learn more about creating graphic art for *Young Christian Writer* magazine and I'm very pleased with how the *March-June 2025 YCW* issue has turned out.

When I committed to be magazine editor in 2019, I was living quietly in a caravan, off-grid, in the Hokianga, homeschooling my daughter in her senior level. Now that she's left home and I'm in paid work, now living in the Kaipara district, it's a serious challenge to also be a voluntary magazine editor. But writing and editing is what I love to do. I enjoy encouraging other writers and I enjoy my paid work and other commitments. So I'm hanging in here through this busy season, which is really a blessing, trusting in the Lord that eventually when the time is right I'll get what most writers dream of – the season to just write, write, write! (I usually add in a disclaimer at this point to the Lord, as I think of people like the apostle Paul who received time to write – just don't let it be in prison thank you!)

The word *battle* wouldn't exist in our vocabulary if there weren't some difficulties in life to work through and then neither would the word *victory*. If you're finding it a battle to keep at your writing project, know that you're not alone. It's not easy. I encourage you to keep going. Even if it's small progress, it's still progress. You will get there, so don't give up, no matter how long it takes. Celebrate every step you take along the way – each one is a victory.

With love in Jesus,

from Kathryn

I love to hear from our readers! Email: editor@nzchristianwriters.org



Notices

NZCW Christian Writers' Retreat at Whitianga 1-4 May 2025

The dates for our Retreat in Whitianga are: **Thursday 1 May to Sunday 4 May 2025**. Cost includes accommodation, full catering and workshops. Bookings are still being taken. Register your place at the Retreat now by clicking this link: <https://www.nzchristianwriters.org/retreat-2025/>. Carpooling is encouraged.

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 or Kathryn at 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>

Creative Writing/Article Writing Submissions Wanted Please

You are invited to send your relevant contributions for our magazines, *The Christian Writer* and *Young Christian Writer*. See page two for details and email to editor@nzchristianwriters.org.

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.

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. For information or to subscribe to the magazine visit: www.rgm.co.nz

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 scammers' emails; simply ignore them.

To locate and read past magazine issues visit www.nzchristianwriters.org/magazines and click on the relevant magazine cover.

MAY 1st-4th 2025

Flaxmill Retreat Centre | Whitianga

NZ CHRISTIAN
writers

RETREAT



**VICKI
MILLAR**



**MURRAY
SMITH**



**SINA
STEELE**



**CHRIS
BOVILL**



**RACHEL
WESTON**



**PETER
ANDERSON**

www.nzchristianwriters.org

books, bubbles AND BLOOMS

SAT 26TH APRIL
1.30 - 3.30PM

ABOUT THE EVENT

We welcome you to an event aimed to inspire, encourage and equip women with tools to support them on their faith journey. Come and enjoy a time of learning and growing together, as we hear from seven authors, introducing seven different topics.

Enjoy a time of refreshments, sipping on non-alcoholic bubbles and tasting delicious nibbles. Learn how to put a bouquet together and go home with beautiful flowers from the Flower Bar to create your own. Books and other beautiful items, will be for sale.



**HELD IN THE AUDITORIUM AT
MORRINSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH**

To register to attend this event go to
www.morrinsvillebaptist.com/upcomingevents
Please register your interest by the 20th April

Books. Bubbles & Blooms

Seven Kiwi Authors



'Flourishing' and 'Soul Scribbles' are poetry collections written and illustrated by Sina Steele of Her Mustard Faith. These collections read like modern-day psalms and usher the reader closer to the heart of God. - **Sina Steele**



Road to Belonging is written by Lynne, sharing her lived experience of closed adoption and her journey searching for answers to her identity. Through the lens of faith and family, she tells her story in a gentle and authentic way. - **Lynne Leppard**



There's something special about the feel of a picture book in your hands. The cover beckons you to read it and little fingers want to explore it – touching, turning, talking, you're all wonderfully caught up in the story together. Those moments of undivided attention with children, the closeness and togetherness, can't be beat!"
- **Rachel Weston**



My book is my walk with the Lord as he took me back through my grief. Today I can say I have received complete healing as the Lord showed me how intimately close he walks with us in our dark places of life. - **Angela Armstrong**



Known is a collection of poems to support when we need encouragement, comfort, or simply to know that we are seen by another. Each poem reminds us to slow down, breathe, feel and focus on what's really important - **Heather Pound**

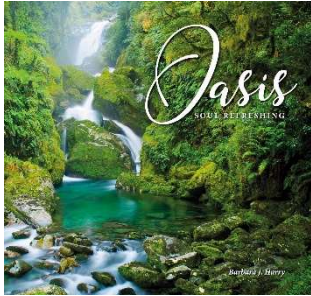


I can't choose the chapter I'm living (stage 4 cancer), but I can choose how I live it. I pray these musings will help caregivers & those facing major health or mobility changes.
- **Rosemaree Redshaw.**



'Flourish' and 'Wonder' each contain sixty hope-filled devotionals to encourage you in your faith journey. The stories are written to remind you that you are seen in amongst your circumstances and that you are loved with an everlasting love. - **Chris Bovill**





Oasis: Soul Refreshing

By Barbara J Harry

Review by Julia Martin

Published by
Menuchan Press
2024

The poet John Keats wrote: ‘A thing of beauty is a joy forever,’ and that’s how I regard Barbara’s beautiful inspirational book entitled *Oasis soul refreshing*. It’s the second in her series which she describes as a ‘contemplative parable.’

In this small book she shares her journey of recovery from burnout using creative prose, her own poems, scriptural passages from appropriate translations, and stunning images from nature along with tranquil water scenes all in magnificent colour.

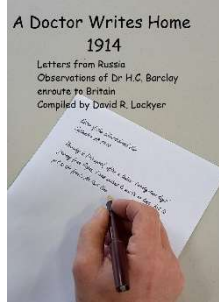
Barbara raises the question: ‘What is your desert place? Emotional? Physical? Mental? Spiritual?’ She believes the answer for all these needs lies in the ‘Oasis of Love’ – in Yeshua, the living God who alone can refresh and revive the soul.

Barbara confesses: ‘I don’t know where I’d be today without the Lord Yahweh/God, my Creator, Redeemer and Refresher of my soul.’

At the end of the book, she explains the good news of salvation with an invitation to surrender to the Lord and receive His forgiveness and restoration.

It’s an ideal book for the coffee table where it can be viewed frequently, or to be shared with those who are feeling ‘parched or stagnant,’ and long for spiritual refreshment.

I thoroughly recommend this inspirational work and refer readers to Barbara’s website – www.refreshingstreamsministries.org.



A Doctor Writes Home 1914 Letters from Russia

Compiled by David R Lockyer

Review by Julia Martin

Printed by Copyland Digital
Print Christchurch 2024

Old letters can be a valuable source of information and insight concerning people, places and events of past times. David Lockyer discovered letters written by a notable surgeon from the South Island town of Waimate. The second son of a pioneering Presbyterian clergyman, Herbert Clifford Barclay was one of the first male graduates from Otago University in 1889.

Doctor Barclay established a successful medical practice in Waimate and also became mayor of the town for two years. In May 1914, he travelled to Japan to publish his medical work, intending to reach England via India. When WW1 broke out his plans were changed. He journeyed across Russia on the Trans-Siberian railway and worked for the Russian Red Cross under the Anglo-Russian Alliance of 1907.

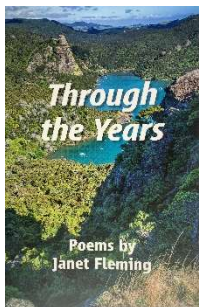
From Russia he sent a series of letters to the local newspapers back home outlining his observations and war experiences. I found his perception of Russia and the Russian people at the time fascinating.

He writes: ‘It is not adequately recognized that a notable change has come over the spirit of the Russian people, as well as over the Government and the Army during the last few years. The autocracy has been largely modified; the entire military system has been re-organized; and the people, though the bulk of them may not yet be in a high state of civilization have nevertheless been consistently enlightened and humanized in the higher sense.’

The ravages of war meant Barclay never returned to his family in New Zealand and he lived out his life in post war-torn England and died in 1933 aged 67.

I recommend David’s small, well-researched book to those who enjoy subjective accounts of historical times.

Book Review



Through the Years

By Janet Fleming

Review by Julia Martin

Self-published 2024 Available from mjflamingos@xtra.co.nz

Janet has had a long association with NZ Christian Writers, having served as President for 13 years in the past, and is currently a member of the board. Apart from being a prolific poet, Janet writes devotions, music, Bible study material, and stories and puzzles for children. The inspiration for her writings comes from her strong faith in God along with her fervent desire to share her Christian faith with others far and wide.

In her book just released, Janet has compiled a collection of more than 200 poems that she has written 'through the years' as a legacy for her family and friends. The poems are grouped into topics such as: nature, family and Christian living. They are illustrated with scenes of nature, favourite landscapes, family pictures, and delightful sketches by her numerous grandchildren.

There's something for everyone in this collection. It's an ideal gift that will challenge, encourage and inspire readers of all ages.

WORDS by Janet Fleming

Words they are powerful, words can cause pain,

Words can bring comfort and cheer us again:

Sometimes confusing, what can they mean?

Challenging, capturing – messages keen.

Creating with power, each word is a gift,

To say what is helpful, the spirit to lift.

Experience showers with treasures so rare,

Bringing a blessing, encouragement, care.

Life can be used to put power into words,

Bringing a thunder never yet heard.

Nothing is wasted falling away,

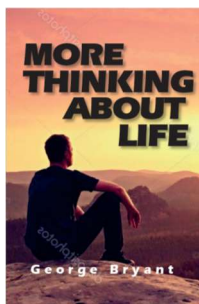
Dead words, I'll seek not to use them today.

Lord, may I write what is living and true,
Knowing your word can bring life that is new.

Jesus the One I am serving today

With words that I write and words that I say.

Book Review



More Thinking About Life

By George Bryant

Review by Julia Martin

Self-published 2025 Available from bryantgw@xtra.co.nz

With a lifetime of experience in a wide range of endeavours, George Bryant is well-qualified to comment on life's issues and what's happening in our world today from a Christian world view.

More thinking about life is George's 26th book and is written as a sequel to *Life is...An ordinary Kiwi reflects* (2020), in which he seeks to explore some new topics to stimulate readers' thinking about what's happening around them.

He writes: 'If the reader is looking for a theme, I guess it's my regard for the dignity, importance and uniqueness of individual human beings, especially those who suffer at the hands of others – the value of a person.'

George's book is easy to read, thought-provoking, well-researched and documented, and draws on a wide range of experts and commentators.

He has a special gift of being able to discuss, inform, stimulate and challenge all kinds of readers in a relaxed manner without imposing his own opinions and viewpoints.

He tackles the big questions of life along with current topics and problems facing our world today.

As usual, I thoroughly recommend his book to be read and shared with others who may have a different world view.

Change to Young Christian

Writer issue dates:

Please note this year our YCW magazine issue dates have changed to:

March-June 2025

July-October 2025 and

November 2025-February 2026.

Writing from a Christian Worldview

by George Bryant

Most of us view the world from a particular perspective. We interpret what's going on around us, the values we hold, and the way we behave, because of our philosophy of life, or 'world view'.

Some people might explain life in purely humanistic, or natural, or subjective terms. Some might view it through political or agnostic eyes. Others might interpret it from a Christian point of view. If we encompass a Christian view of life does that mean our writing must always use biblical and theological terms and explanations?

Of course not. How we write, as Christians, depends on who we are writing for – our audience.

If we are compiling a dissertation on the book of Ruth for a university degree, we'll use certain jargon and expressions which will be well understood by our professor. If we're writing a devotional for the general Christian public, we'll obviously try to avoid words and expressions that people can't understand. If writing a church bulletin article, how and what we say will be different from writing for a theological journal.

However, when it comes to writing for the general public, of which only 31.2 percent claim to be Christian, we enter different territory. How can we express Christian concepts in a way that: (a) the reader can understand and react to, and (b) without appearing to preach. No reader, including Christian ones, likes to read a book that preaches at them!

In other words, how does a Christian writer clearly express a Christian world view to people, most of whom have different world views! Many have tried – and failed dismally. They haven't been able to move beyond in-house thinking.

A Personal Note

Over the past few decades, I've been on a mission - to challenge fringe or non-Christians to think about all sorts of topics from a Christian world view.

Unfortunately, some well-meaning Christians have misunderstood what I've been trying to do. They variously cry, "This is not a Christian book. You don't outline the plan of salvation!" "You didn't say anything about Jesus." "You haven't quoted from Scripture..."

Christian writing doesn't have to do this.

I've just published yet another book about people in society, titled *More Thinking About Life*. Once again, it has been written from a balanced Christian world view with the general public in mind.

It's not about sex, drugs and violence. It doesn't provide neatly packaged, religious answers which might fit into the weekly churchgoer's pocket. It doesn't expose biblical texts or discuss sin and salvation or the resurrection of Jesus.

However, it does deal with some important issues of life which apply to everyone, including Christians. It does encourage whoever reads it to think seriously about what's happening around them. It does discuss our behaviour as human beings and how we can improve our society.

It displays concern about the rich/poor gap and the effects of war on human beings. Its themes include the need for more compassion, the search for happiness and the promotion of truth. It argues for more wisdom and spirituality in politics and for better understanding between cultures.

In fact, the book does include three biblical quotes, as well as others. And throughout the book there are several lists of actions that can be taken to deal with unhappiness, overcoming difficulties, coping with cancer and using words more honestly. Additionally, it concludes with twelve lessons I've learnt from life, with key phrases like 'count your blessings', 'learn to forgive' and even 'learn to love' embedded within.

What could be more Christian? And religious jargon is non-existent!

In my efforts to write Christianly I've come to a couple of conclusions:

- (i) With a bit of hard work and lateral thinking one can indeed express deep theological concepts using minimal Christian jargon – so the world can understand.
- (ii) No topic is sacrosanct. We can and should be, writing from a Christian world view about any issue.

Surprisingly, the man or woman in the street wants to hear what we have to say.

George Bryant, QSM, MA(Hons)
Honorary Member NZ Christian Writers

What is happening to our world?

George Bryant touched on a number of issues in his book *Life Is...*

In *More Thinking About Life* he explores some more - diminishing empathy, freedom of speech, our obsession for always wanting more, the importance of the words we speak, our search for happiness, the decay of truth, how to cope when the going gets tough, living with cancer, and the need for more wisdom and spirituality in politics.

He also ponders the end of the world and whether there is any hope for the future of humankind.



George Bryant, QSM, JP, MA(Hons), DipEd, DipTheol, AFNZIM, ATCL is one of New Zealand's leading writers on people in society, based on his experiences as a teacher, preacher, public speaker, politician and community worker. He is a member of the NZ Society of Authors and NZ Christian Writers.

More Thinking About Life is his 26th book. He has also written 23 booklets and many articles for newspapers and magazines.



MORE THINKING ABOUT LIFE

George Bryant

MORE THINKING ABOUT LIFE



George Bryant

Tauranga Christian Writers

October 2024 Workshop

Review by Cathy Harris

Time has flown on steroids over this past year. 2 Peter 3:11-12 says, “We must be consumed with godliness while we anticipate and help to speed up the coming of the day of God,” suggesting our days are speeding up. And so, our annual workshop came and went in a flash.

At the beginning of 2024, we met to discuss our year ahead, where I suggested a long-time friend of ours be the guest speaker for our workshop in October. Rosalie Little-Crawford works as a journalist for Sunlive, one of the Bay of Plenty’s NZME news services. Rosalie is well known and respected in Tauranga, with involvement in many arts areas.

We had writers come from as far away as Auckland, anticipating a great workshop and they were not disappointed. There were experienced writers and some who had not written before but were there to learn.

Rosalie focused on writing compelling stories, explaining strategies for constructing a good story and how to build characters using different character traits. We were given many resources, workshopping some of these. An example was writing a journal entry of a day in the life of a character, another ‘show, don’t tell’ your characters personality by reflecting other peoples’ reactions to your person’s character traits.

The end of the day left our heads so full, with so much to reflect on and review.





The Write Stuff: My Publishing Journey

by Phillip Donnell

My background as a teacher of English and ESOL at secondary schools and universities, a qualified proof-reader and copy-editor, plus 20 years as a pastor, means that the tools of my trade have always been words.

THE OUTDOORS

I have written many non-fiction articles on the outdoors. To date, some 16 have been published in *Wilderness* magazine and more than 50 in *Walking* magazine. In 2009 I was a finalist in the Royal Society of NZ Manhire Prize for Creative Science Writing. *Into The Wilderness* was published in 2017, detailing thirty walks that I had undertaken throughout New Zealand.

ONE SHORT STORY

My only short story appeared in *46 By Forty-Four: Stories By New Zealanders* in 2009. All the stories had to use the word “pakaru”. My story was noteworthy for devising a way to use it which had nothing to do with the traditional meaning.

A POETIC BENT

My first love, however, is poetry. In 2013 I commenced work on ten *Now to Forever* anthologies, still a work in progress. Since the first anthology, *In A Pit On A Snowy Day* (2014), two compilations called *Traces of the Transcendent* and *Kai Wairua: Food for the Spirit* have appeared.

In 2009 I won second prize in the NZ Religious Poetry Competition, and the Nancy Jervis Prize in Great Britain for a poem about reconciliation. In 2010, I was a finalist in the Rielo World Prize for Mystical Poetry (Spain), and gained third place in the International Kusamakura Haiku Competition (Japan). In 2011 I was a finalist in the Cricket Art Prize Poetry Competition in Australia.

CHRISTIANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

I have maintained a life-time interest in caring for the natural world. My poetry has periodically appeared in *Forest and Bird* and *Te Awa* magazines. In December, 2012 I commenced a regular column on environmental issues in *Taonga*. This continued for several years. With the formation of *New Creation New Zealand* in 2018, I began to write regular articles for its website and also the *Christian Environmentalists* Facebook page.



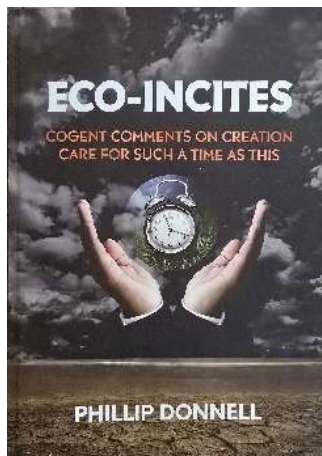
Pieces on this theme have now been gathered in a 286-page volume called *Eco-Incites: Cogent Comments on Creation Care for Such a Time as This*. This book will be launched in Auckland on 7 June 2025.

“NOW LET IT WORK”

When asked what the defining mark of my writing is, my quick response is that God is involved at every stage of the process, from seeding an idea, to germinating and growing it, to translating it into words on a page. This has huge implications for the way we go about our creativity. The process must begin with prayer and be done under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It will then have the impact God intends.

In Act 3, Scene 2 of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, Mark Anthony concludes his speech at Caesar’s funeral with the words, “*Now let it work.*” The crowd riots and searches out the traitors. For any piece of writing we should be able to pray, “*Now let it work...*”

(Phillip is available to speak to groups and read some of his poetry. You can contact him on 021 172 3244 or phillipjohndonnell@gmail.com. You can also order his books through this email.)



RGM

Raising Godly Mothers

Inspired by Titus 2:3-5, RGM is dedicated to providing inspiring and insightful content that nourishes the hearts and minds of Christian homeschooling mothers in N.Z.

Join the Movement
If you are passionate about seeing the next generation of mothers strengthened in embracing their divine calling of motherhood, we would love for you to contribute.
Email: rgm@rgm.co.nz

For more info and subscription details:
www.rgm.co.nz

Songwriting DIY

Column by Felicity Logan

Part Three: Rhythm Pattern

Further crafting of the words may be required to conform to your chosen pattern. If there's to be a second verse, craft the words to follow the same rhyme and rhythm pattern. For example, it's user-friendly if any 'upbeats/pick-ups' are consistent throughout the melody. These are single or small handfuls of unaccented notes that direct the singer to the next important word. Here's how upbeats (underlined) can be made to match:

Oh when the / SAINTS -- -- go marching / IN -- -- O Lord I / WANT to be in that / NUMber -- -- when the / SAINTS (etc.) Notice that 3 of those upbeats each have three syllables, but then the fourth gets away with two syllables. Also consider "Amazing Grace" with regular upbeats (underlined) A / MAZ-ing grace, how / SWEET the sound, that / SAVED a wretch....

So you have your lyrics, and by now you may have detected a regular pattern for the syllables, perhaps matching one of these:

Da DUM, da DUM, da DIDDLE dee DUM, etc.

DUM diddle DUM diddle DUM diddle DOO, etc.

DIDdle dum DIDdle dum, DIDdle diddle DOO, etc. or many possible variants!

The benefit of following a regular pattern is that it's user-friendly for church music groups to interpret, and for congregations to learn. Try not to let it become too similar to an already-existing song.

For the brave: Suppose you'd like your song to have a chorus, this can have a different pattern. So can any Bridge Passage that might just "happen".

For further information on "Poetic Feet" visit Wikipedia "Metrical Foot" and read up to the end of Disyllables, perhaps also Trisyllables. Read your own lyrics aloud and dramatically, and they might fit one of those patterns. Your voice gives you the clues! (*Part Four due out June-July 2025*).

Let's Celebrate!

Do you have a significant writing related moment to share that we can celebrate? Perhaps it's a goal you've reached or a writing challenge you've overcome. Tell us so we can celebrate with you.

Congratulations to Janet Fleming who has published her book of poetry called, *Through the Years*. Janet is NZCW's vice president.

Congratulations to Clare Matravers who has published another children's illustrated book.

Congratulations to Geraldine Crow who has uploaded more of her children's chapter books to Amazon!

Congratulations to Lola Goulton for her new release *Always in my Heart*, mentioned in the Omega Writers News March 2025.

Here are some helpful writer/reader websites:

NZ Society of Authors: <https://authors.org.nz/>

Storylines NZ: <https://www.storylines.org.nz/>

Read NZ Te Pou Muramura: <https://www.read-nz.org/>

Christian Writers Institute (USA): <https://christianwritersinstitute.com/>

Omega Christian Writers (Australia and NZ): <https://omegawriters.com.au/>

← Extra Note from Felicity:

Even if you've not completely established the lyrics, I strongly advise you visit Dylan Laine on her YouTube video *How to write a melody – very easy trick – Songwriting 101*. It is 17 minutes well spent – more, if you pause and review and follow her directions. I admire how she uses the chord notes on a ukelele to suggest melody lines.

Creative Writing Retreat

7-8 June 2025 in Christchurch

Have you always wanted to write a book, poem, or memoir? Perhaps you're halfway through writing an essay but can't find the time to finish it off.

This retreat is designed for people wishing to learn a bit about the craft of writing, as well as spend some time focused on a particular writing project. Former Sister Eveleen Director, Eddie O'Connor, will lead this popular retreat, using the skills he developed during the Masters of Writing he completed in 2019.

Refresh yourself amid the beauty of this place, filled with a spirit of contemplative joy, and the peaceful environment of Sister Eveleen Retreat House rooted in the Christian contemplative tradition. The weekend is accompanied by gentle prayers and moments of reflection as a space for rest, contemplation, and meditation in a welcoming setting for all. Enjoy nutritious meals, sweeping vistas, and serene walking tracks.

About your retreat leader:

Eddie O'Connor is currently a Chaplain at Burwood Hospital in Christchurch, as well as a retreat leader, spiritual director, and writer. He was the Director of Sister Eveleen Retreat House from 2020 – 2023, where he also completed his formation as a spiritual director in the tradition of St Ignatius of Loyola. Eddie is currently finishing a book that uses film and insights from psychology to represent the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius in a way that is accessible to a modern, spiritually-skeptical audience.

Cost (fully catered): 2-day (2-nights) retreat: NZ\$380.

You will have your own room in the Main House or Annex. You also have the option to arrive earlier or stay longer by booking extra nights (self-catered and guided) at Sister Eveleen.

Here is the link for the Retreat: [Writers Retreat 7-8 June 2025](#)

or visit

www.sistereretreat.com



Would I have Turned on you? (Based on Luke 4:14-21 NKJV)

by Lesley Edgeler

Would I have turned on You, Lord
If I had been there?
Hearing Isaiah's words read out
Or would I have been more aware?

Would I have turned on You, Jesus
As Your declaration took hold?
The crowd, amazed, stunned
Their attitude turned cold.

Would I have followed the angry crowd
To thrust You to Your death?
And stone You for Your genuine words
Or would I have held my breath?

Would I have slowly lagged behind
Not intending to be counted?
Nor wanting to see You murdered
Or be harmed as tension mounted?

Would I have condoned the crowd's intent
Or tried to stop their stealth?
Or would I have been a coward
Thinking only of myself?

Then, wonder of wonders You didn't die!
You miraculously went on Your way
Your time had not come; You were still alive.
The cross was meant for another day.

Bread Buns and Beef Meat

Another Excerpt from *Mozambique Missions Book*

by Mary-Pat Ross

Freshly-baked bread buns were high on my list to purchase. One early morning while having coffee with Anya and Cris on the screened veranda, I saw a young man walking fast into town. It wasn't the speed of his walk that got my attention though. He carried a large table on his head with bread buns neatly stacked on top! *Where are those loaves baked?* As soon as I finished my coffee, I raced to the market to buy his fresh bread.

Yum, nothing like fresh warm bread!

During my afternoon language lesson, Anya told me people can build a clay wood-fired oven in their village or next to their house. *Wow, so the piles of bread loaves in the market are baked at different places by many local bakers!* The small round buns and bigger loaves were all hand-fashioned and irregular shapes. I loved that bread, crusty on the outside and dense yet soft on the inside. *That was one good legacy left by the Portuguese colonists.*



Fortunately, I also liked goat meat, which was the most common red meat available; it made the most delicious curry. I wondered if beef was ever sold. My imagination ran wild with thoughts of a fly-screened box big enough, picturing the head of a cow on top, similar to the goat meat being sold. That thought, though grotesque, made me giggle. The day I forgot to take my camera was the day I found out how they sell beef meat. The most amazing sight presented itself to me behind a big crowd of people on the footpath.

A whole cow was on a cobblestoned part of the path, thankfully away from the dirt. The seller was its owner. He had a big hatchet that he used to carve and chop chunks of meat off the beast as its blood drained down the gutter. A European-sounding man asked for the eye fillet, pointing to it down the length of the beast's back. The owner tried not to understand his sign language.

Finally, he said, "Nãõ," shaking his head. He explained that it was to be shared amongst everyone. *Good on him!* The chopping up of the beast continued, people came and went, and the meat, bones, and even the hooves disappeared fairly quickly. The European man went home empty-handed.

Linguistic Blunders

by Lorraine Dittrich

Somehow, I can't help but smile and even have a chuckle because of some embarrassing moments of the past 30 years living in New Zealand. This is all because of being an Afrikaans-speaking South African who took a gigantic leap in migrating to an English-speaking country on the other side of the world.

Despite my English education, I rarely practised. In comparison with my husband who preferred to read only English literature and the children who shared their dad's interest, I was the only one who got the least exposure to English. I always had more courage than sensibility for being challenged. A trait which was going to get me into trouble in an English-speaking country.

Shortly after our arrival and in a rush, I had to refuel the car. I felt so thankful that a young man who fitted the description my husband gave me came to my rescue. I tried to be polite by making small talk with him. So, I started by asking if he was Murray. He did not answer me immediately. At last, he answered, sounding annoyed and asked if I wanted to meet his wife. I then realised with my strong South African accent, it sounded as if I asked if he was married. His answer made me blush and I felt highly embarrassed.

I have this amazing ability to form my own words by combining some to make a new one or to replace the right one with another that sounds the same.

Once, during a serious conversation with a friend, I said that I came to the consumption. I did not understand why she looked amused. It was such a serious topic under discussion. Somehow, I combined the words conclusion and assumption and formed one word that was completely out of context.

While having morning tea with friends, we were talking about these clubs advertising for singles who were looking for partners. One elderly friend was quite shocked and wanted to know what they call these clubs. Nobody could get the right word, and of course I had one and said I think it was called a Mating Club. They had a good chuckle and I realised later it was supposed to be a Matching Club.

I was also not very popular when a friend told me her middle-aged sister is so lucky to date a man 20 years her junior. So I remarked, "Wow, she's lucky to have found a 'cradle boy' at that age!" Well, I defended myself later by saying a toy boy is not that much older.

There is always some good that comes from our mistakes. The Lord taught me through these mishaps in the 'link of my think' that I don't need to be perfect. Embarrassing moments are reminders we can't be more than being human. He accepts and loves us just as we are. The most important aspect is to accept and love Him.

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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.

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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
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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.

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Dear Valued Writer,

Having your work checked is an essential part of the publishing process.

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WRITING ANSWERS

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.

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.

Janette Busch

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Any questions?



South Island Christian Book Authors Network (SICBAN)

Meeting held 16 February 2024

Report presented by: Verna McFelin

Meeting Summary

The South Island Christian Book Authors Network (SICBAN) gathered at the Christchurch City Council Halswell Library, as our usual Colombo Street venue is being demolished. To help cover expenses—including the \$90 venue hire, printing, and refreshments (muffins, coffee, and tea)—a koha of \$10 was requested.

A total of eighteen people attended the meeting, eleven of whom were first-time attendees. Three attendees travelled from the Nelson and Motueka areas. We had eighteen apologies. Our current database of those who have attended or have shown interest in the network over the past year, stands at 72.

Many newcomers expressed that they had never heard of NZ Christian Writers before and had felt isolated in their writing journey.

Meeting Proceedings

The meeting began at 9:30 am with tea, coffee and muffins, providing an opportunity for informal networking.

- Verna welcomed the attendees and provided an overview of the next three hours. God had given Verna a prophetic word for the group which she spoke over them (see below).
- Attendees were encouraged to join NZ Christian Writers either online or by completing a physical form.
- New members introduced themselves and shared their current stage in the writing process. Time was dedicated to answering their questions and encouraging networking among members.



- An open forum discussion allowed for questions about book writing, covering topics such as different types of editing and they were directed to the NZ Christian Writers Magazine for reputable professional writing services..

Special Thanks

A heartfelt thank you to:

- **Tracy Glatz**, for her insightful presentation on podcasting, which received excellent feedback.
- **April May**, for sharing her innovative method of bringing God's Word through commercial radio waves.
- **Dawn Lawrie**, who has generously offered her large lounge room as a permanent meeting venue.
- Everyone who helped set up and pack down the venue.

Resources

A resource table was set up and authors had an opportunity to show case their books.

Conclusion

The meeting was a great success, providing valuable insights and fostering a sense of community among Christian writers. However, effectively reaching potential members through churches remains a challenge. I look forward to the continued growth of SICBAN and our collective efforts to support Christian writers in the South Island.

Prophetic Word for Scribes of the New Era – Verna McFelin 15 February 2025

Scribes of the Most High God, awaken! The Lord is calling you forth in this hour to write with fire, with clarity, and with divine precision. No longer shall your pen be idle, for the Spirit of the Lord is stirring within you, unlocking scrolls of revelation and wisdom for this new era.

The Lord says, **"I have anointed your hands to write the words of My heart. I am releasing fresh oil and zeal upon you—oil that flows from My throne, igniting a new boldness, a new authority, and a new depth of understanding. I will fill your spirit with words that shake nations, awaken the weary, and call My people into alignment with My purposes."**

Fear not, for every resistance that has kept you silent is now broken in Jesus name. Every doubt, every delay, every attack against your voice is falling away in Jesus name. The Lord is placing a new quill in your hand, dipped in the ink of heaven, and He is saying, **"Write, for the time is now!"**

Step into your divine assignment. Write the vision, proclaim the mysteries, and release the sound of heaven through your words. The Lord Himself goes before you, and He will establish every word He ordains through you. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**

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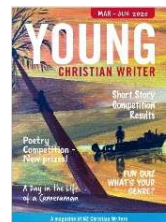
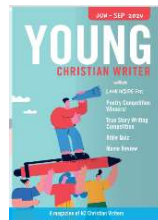
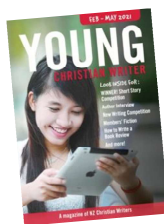
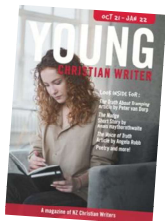
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W E L C O M E New and Returning Members:

Janet Tillman
Christchurch

Melanie 'Unufe
Kaitaia

Sarah Richards
Wellington

Vicki Ryan
Auckland

**Kathryn
Humphrey**
Christchurch

Nastassja King
Wairarapa

Sharla Costelow
USA

Wendy Bryce
Hamilton

Rebecca Ifopo
Murchison

Sheila Johnson
Cheltenham

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

Writing Competitions Points Board

Level One		Level Two		Level Three	
Verna McFelin	15	Robert Prins	27	Elaine Dixon	27
Peter Wilson	15	Christine Platt	24	Sandy Miller	27
Renee Tavita	12	Stephen Douglas	12	Taylor Foster	9
				Heather Vincent	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 Christian bookstore vouchers. Our next prize winners will be published in the Jun–Jul 2025 magazine edition.

All new members begin by entering in Level One. To be promoted to Levels 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: Is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the real location where Jesus was crucified, or was it on the skull-shaped hill outside Jerusalem? Research the topic, then write an article on your findings. Citations from your research may comprise up to 20% of the wordcount and you must include a brief bibliography. (400 words, excluding bibliography)

General Comments

Congratulations to Peter Wilson for presenting me with an interesting and well-researched entry on a topic that has become quite controversial in some Christian circles. While Peter himself does not appear to have come to a personal conclusion in his article, his final paragraph clearly states that the results of the crucifixion (i.e. "It is finished!" and we are saved) is what matters, not the site. This is a strong takeaway message that we all need to remember.

While it was disappointing to receive only the one entry, I can honestly say that Peter did not just win this competition by default. His standard of writing is excellent and contains only a few minor errors. The majority of marks lost were only due to a misunderstanding of two of the requirements. These are as follows:

Wordcount: *Peter included his bibliography in the overall wordcount when he should not have. This resulted in the main content of his article being only 340 words long, which is 15% below the required 400 words. (NB: For those who have recently joined NZCW, please be aware that we only allow a leeway of 5% above or below the stipulated wordcount before we begin deducting marks.)*

Citations: *The citation at the beginning of Peter's article comprises more than 20% of the main content. This was probably due to wrongly including the bibliography in the wordcount and working out the citation percentage based on the wordcount of all content, rather than just on the wordcount of the article itself.*

The other issue I had was not being able to cross-check all the sources from which Peter had obtained his information. When including a bibliography, it is important to ensure it contains details such as book/author names, the page/s on which the citation or information can be found, and any URL/website links to online articles.

All of the above are things that we, as writers, learn as we go. As already stated, Peter made an excellent effort and I look forward to receiving further entries from him in the future.

First Place



Peter
Wilson
of New
Plymouth

Exactly Where Did Jesus Crucifixion Take Place?

“Go to Jerusalem today and a tourist bus will take you to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where you can put your hand through a hole in the floor to touch the rock below, purportedly the one that held the cross that Jesus was crucified on. Meanwhile a short distance away the bus parks on a rocky place which some say is the real Golgothaⁱ or Calvary.”ⁱⁱ Other referencesⁱⁱⁱ describe it as a skull cap – just the shape of the top of a skull and yet another shows the side of a hill with hollows in the face of it which gives the facial view of a skull. It is possible that the crosses were erected below the top of this hill with the hill in the background. This would have made the actual crucifixion site quite close to the public thoroughfare which agrees well with the scriptural reference.^{iv}

In AD 325 Queen Helena, mother of Constantine the Great^v, supposedly identified the rock on which the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built. Scripture states^{vi} that the rocky outcrop where the crucifixion took place was “without the gate”.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is inside the old city wall as it is today; the uncertainty is just where the city wall was in Jesus’ day. Archaeologists do not seem to know the absolute definitive position. There are signs that a wall existed between the two sites placing the Church inside the wall which would exclude it as the crucifixion site. However the archaeological indications are that the foundations uncovered are not sufficiently heavy enough to have been an external defence wall for a city which the wall in question would have been in AD 30.

Jesus died on a cross, He rose from the grave three days later, He lives for ever more to be our Saviour and our God. To me it doesn’t really matter where the exact position was that He was in when He yielded up His spirit with the words, “It is Finished!”^{vii}

- i. *“**Golgotha**, Aramaic for “skull” indicating either that the place looked like a skull or that it was a place of execution where skulls accumulated. Its location is uncertain. Ryrie Study Bible commentary on Matt 27.33*
- ii. The recent experience of a visitor to the site.
- iii. *Pictorial references in video promotion for the “Garden Tomb Devotional Tour”*
- iv. Mt 27.39 and Mk 15:29 *“and they passed by him”*
- v. Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helena,_mother_of_C...
- vi. Hebrews 13:12
- vii. John 19:30

Level Two

Judge: Shirley Jamieson

Requirement: “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). At Bible study you and your friend have been learning about why John the Baptist announced that when he saw Jesus coming. Write a dialogue as if you are discussing it, bringing in the Passover in Exodus 12:21-28. (500 words)

General Comments

John’s announcement that Jesus is the Lamb of God is central to our beliefs as Christians. Often, though, the meaning behind it isn’t mentioned at Easter.

Writing a dialogue about it creates a discussion. It is usually more interesting reading a conversation than an essay. Well-chosen words portray different points of view, attitudes, feelings and personalities of the participants.

There are several pointers to writing a dialogue:

- *The purpose for the conversation needs to be expressed in the first speaker’s opening sentence or two.*
- *Draw the reader in with well-chosen words in a concise way that carries it along.*
- *Actions and descriptions can add meaning and bring the story alive but need to be brief.*
- *Each speaker has a new paragraph, use speech marks appropriately (British & NZ rules — see my Comments in the December CW issue) and show who is speaking.*
- *Bring it to a satisfying conclusion.*

It is a rewarding to research Passover. We see that it is a picture of how Jesus took our place, like the Passover lamb, dying for us so we may live — be free from the slavery of sin, Romans 6:7 NIV.

Messianic believers, who celebrate Passover, include New Testament verses to show how each part of the Jewish Passover is a portrayal our Messiah, Jesus.

Here are three examples:

At Passover, the Jews eat unleavened bread called matzo. Leaven (rising agent in bread represents sin in the Bible). The unleavened bread at Passover represents Jesus who has no sin.

The matzo has markings as if it is bruised, has stripes on it and holes pierced in it. It represents Jesus’ suffering and death.

During the Passover Haggadah (order of service) a piece of matzo is broken into three (representing Father, Son and Holy Spirit) then the centre piece is wrapped in linen and hidden. It reminds us when Jesus was laid in the tomb. Later, during the Passover Haggadah, the children hunt for the hidden bread and bring it to the table. We know that Jesus rose from death and will come again.

The earliest written version of the Passover discovered was from 189AD. It has changed over the years but the story remains the same.

I have found a link to a Messianic Passover if you would like to read it:

<https://messianicbiblestudy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Messianic-Passover-Haggadah.pdf>

I find it so uplifting the way it brings glory to God and tells of our Saviour's sacrifice to free us.

Congratulations to the two winners for achieving first and second places in the competition. It was a difficult decision for me as they submitted well-written entries in very different styles. There was only one point difference. They both met the competition requirements well.

I awarded Christine Platt first place. Her dialogue is set out like a skit, and I think it would be really worthwhile for her and a friend to perform it in a church service near Easter. Her dialogue between her and her friend Jen discussed how Jesus is the Lamb of God. She showed the connection between God setting the Israelites free at Passover in Egypt and setting us free of sin.

Robert Prins has a well-deserved second place. His well-written imaginative dialogue flowed well in an easy, relaxed style. He and his friend Jeff highlighted the comparison of an innocent lamb to Jesus, the innocent Lamb of God. His conclusion, recognising that Jesus is his Passover Lamb who shed his blood, dying for his sins and giving him life is a powerful message for us all.

First Place



Christine
Platt
of Hibiscus
Coast

The Lamb of God

Me: Hey Jen, that was an interesting discussion last night at Bible Study. What did you think about it?

Jen: To be honest, I struggled to follow what was said. I don't know the Old Testament that well. I know in Hebrews it says 'the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.'¹ So I understand Jesus' sacrifice for our sins but what that's got to do with the Jews in Egypt passed me by.

Me: You've definitely got the main thing right. Jesus, as the Sinless One, sacrificed his life so that we, sinners, could be forgiven. His blood covered all that we've done wrong against God.

Why do you think John the Baptist called him the Lamb of God?

Jen: They did sacrifice lambs on special occasions in the Old Testament, didn't they?

Me: Yes. John took that image from the Passover in Exodus 12. The Jews had been enslaved in Egypt for 430 years and God was about to deliver them.

You remember the plagues that God inflicted on the Egyptians?

Jen: Yes, they must have been awful. All those frogs, flies and boils, Yuck!

Me: And the 10th plague was the death of every first-born son of every family.

Jen: Why is it called the Passover?

Me: God gave instructions through Moses that every family should select a perfect lamb, kill it and daub its blood over their doorways. When God went through the land that night, he would see the blood and pass over those homes and only the unmarked families' firstborn would be killed. The blood signified protection from death. The Jewish people continue to celebrate the Passover every year.

Jen: So, how come Jesus is called the Lamb of God?

Me: John recognised that Jesus was the One sent by God to deliver humanity from sin and Satan, so he called him the Lamb of God.

Jen: I get it now. Jesus had to be perfect just like the lamb at the Passover.

Me: Exactly, he was the only one who could take our sin on himself because he had none of his own sin.

Jen: You said the Jews celebrate this every year. Should we do anything like that?

Me: Good question. Isaiah 61:10 says: 'I delight greatly in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with the garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness.' When God looks at us now, he sees Jesus' righteousness. Our sins are covered. Isn't that fabulous! There is no more need for a blood sacrifice.

Jen: Wow! Should we do something to remember what Jesus has done for us?

Me: Really good point. We do celebrate Holy Communion and the bread and wine represent Jesus' body and blood.

Jen: Of course. I think communion will mean a lot more to me now that I understand the background.

¹Hebrews 9:22

Second Place



Robert
Prins
of Auckland East

Lamb of God

“Great Bible Study! What did you think?”

“Great,” I replied. Actually, I hadn’t understood. It was about John the Baptist introducing Jesus using the description of a lamb as a zoomorphism. I didn’t know what zoomorphism meant.

“Sandwich?” Jeff shoved a plate and sandwich into my hand. I pulled back the top layer of bread to peer at the contents.

“What’s in it?”

“Lamb. Tastes great,” replied Jeff with his mouth full.

“I don’t eat lamb.”

“You’ve touched it now. I can’t put it back. Why don’t you eat lamb?”

“They’re cute,” I replied. “The thought of a gentle, innocent lamb being killed and eaten is unbearable.”

“I see,” said Jeff, taking another bite. Some chutney stuck to his moustache. I wasn’t sure whether to tell him about it or not.

Jeff continued. “Innocent, gentle and led to the slaughter, describes Jesus. That’s why John the Baptist introduced him as the Lamb of God.”

“Even more reason to avoid lamb,” I protested.

“Not really,” Jeff said. “Your lamb died so you could enjoy its meat. You could refuse it, throw it away, and waste the life it gave, or you could eat your sandwich and the lamb’s death will give you energy and life. Its goodness will live in you.”

I couldn’t see where Jeff was going. Was he coercing me to eat lamb against my will, or was there something deeper? Not knowing what to say, I said, “Mm-hmmm.”

“Jesus is the same,” Jeff continued, chutney glistening on his lip. “He was innocent and gentle. He didn’t defend himself when led to the slaughter. He willingly sacrificed himself for our forgiveness and life. Like your sandwich, you could refuse to accept his sacrifice and make it worthless. But if you accept his sacrifice, he will give you everlasting life.”

The penny dropped. Jeff licked his lips as he watched my understanding grow. His tongue found the chutney and removed it from his moustache.

“The teacher was trying to say that in tonight’s study,” I exclaimed. “I wish he explained it as simply as you!”

“Thanks,” said Jeff. “I thought he would teach about the Passover Lamb too.”

“Yeah?”

“The Israelites had to kill a lamb in Egypt on the Passover night.”

“Uh-huh.”

“They had to paint its blood over their door frames. The blood protected the people inside the houses from the destroying angel.”

I nodded.

“Jesus is not only the Lamb of God, he is also the Passover Lamb. Everyone covered in his blood is saved from death. After the Israelites had eaten the lamb, they had strength to flee from Egypt and be saved.”

I was mesmerized. I took a bite of my sandwich and thought about it. “Thanks, Jeff,” I said. “I’ll never look at lamb the same way again. Jesus, the Lamb of God. My Passover Lamb who died to take away my sins and give me life. I’m glad I came tonight,” I said, as I finished my lamb sandwich.

“Me too,” said Jeff.

Level Three

Judge: Julia Martin

Requirement: Choose one of the seven ‘I am’ statements Jesus made to describe himself and what he did, as recorded in John’s gospel. Write a devotional based on your chosen statement and conclude with a takeaway message and short poem or prayer. (400 words)

General Comments

A fundamental question many people ask is, ‘Who am I?’

While on earth Jesus asked the disciples, ‘Who do men say I am?’ They gave an honest answer, but Jesus probed deeper and asked, ‘But who do you say I am?’

Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ the Son of the living God.’

In the Gospels, Jesus often used parables and word pictures when teaching the people. In John’s Gospel He made seven statements that explain who He is and the various roles He plays. The statements also give assurance to His followers that He is sufficient for all their needs.

He uses metaphors which were understood, such as: bread, light, door, way, truth, life, resurrection, shepherd and vine. Each one is preceded by two powerful words – I AM.

From this list of seven, members were invited to choose one and write a devotional.

Regardless of length, a devotional requires structure. The following is an example of an outline.

- 1. First quote your chosen scripture.*
- 2. Start with an arresting anecdote which can be secular.*
- 3. Blend the truth of the scripture with the story.*
- 4. Give your application and takeaway.*
- 5. End with a challenging conclusion along with a wise saying, poem or prayer.*

I was pleased to receive six well-written devotionals. Four of the entrants chose ‘I am the light of the world’. I looked for an entry that was well structured with ideas and comments that flowed with smooth transitions. Some of the entries strayed away from the main focus of their devotional by widening the scope of their topic. All entries ended with a suitable prayer or poem.

I awarded Sandy Miller first place for her devotional which had an arresting beginning to pique one’s interest, followed by sound teaching from scripture, and a challenging application and conclusion. Second place went to Elaine Dixon and third place to Heather Vincent.

I hope each of the members get the opportunity to share their devotionals.

First Place



Sandy
Miller
of Auckland

Jesus is our Guiding Light

Once again, Jesus spoke to the people. This time he said, “I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won’t be walking in the dark. You have the light that gives life” (John 8:12, NIV).

On the morning of 29 April 1881, the SS Tararua sank on the Otaru Reef off Waipapa Point in Southland, becoming New Zealand's second and worst civilian shipwreck. This disaster killed 131 men, women, and children. To avoid a similar tragedy, a lighthouse was built on Waipapa Point. Lighthouses serve as navigational aids, guiding ships to safety and warning them of dangerous rocky coasts.

Throughout the Bible, God has shown himself to be a guide for his people. We see this in Exodus when God led the Israelites out of Egypt and into the promised land. “By day, the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light...” (Exodus 13:21 NIV). This act of God’s guidance is remembered and celebrated in the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Light Ceremony takes place at the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles. This included the ceremonial lighting of four golden oil-powered lamps in the Court of Women, which illuminated every courtyard in Jerusalem. On this occasion, when the lamps went out, Jesus declared himself the “light for the world” (John 8:12 NIV refers). He used this ceremony to teach the Jewish people what it meant to walk in the dark.

In John's Gospel, Jesus made seven "I am" statements. This is the only time Jesus mentions that we must make changes in our lives if we do not want to walk in darkness. First, we must decide to follow Jesus. He is the source of light for those that do. If we abide in Him, we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free (John 8:32 NIV refers). Second, Jesus wants us to be the light of the world, representing Him. When we shine His light, people can see Him through us (Matthew 5:14 NIV refers).

Lord, thank you for being our source of light, guiding us in a darkened world. Help us to abide in you so that we can be a light to those who are living in the dark.

Second Place



Elaine
Dixon
of Tauranga

The Bread of Life

Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the Bread of Life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’ John 6:35

When I was around 6 years old, my younger sister and I were sent to the local shop to buy bread. In those days one could buy half a loaf, which had been pulled apart between the two risen humps. The broken part resulted in the exposure of the white inside of the loaf. In our family this was known as the ‘first piece’ and there was always a competition for this particular slice. The two of us were duly given our loaf and started on our walk home. But the rough textured ‘first piece’ looked very inviting. I thought I could just carefully tear off a sliver with no noticeable damage.

But of course my sister also wanted a sliver, and before long we had a decent sized hole in the middle of the bread. I don't remember our punishment, but I do remember the magnetic pull of that fresh, soft, white inside, fully exposed in all its fluffy goodness.

In almost every culture of the world a form of bread is a staple part of the diet. It fills us up, satisfies our hunger and provides energy and life-giving strength .

When Jesus made his astonishing statement, he had just performed the miracle of feeding the five thousand. No doubt this would have been fresh in the minds of the crowds as they listened. As was Jesus' habit, he used everyday examples to illustrate deeper truths. When we come to him we find that all our heartfelt desires and spiritual longings are met, not just till the next meal, but permanently. Jesus should and can be our staple diet because there is nothing or no one that will meet the needs of our souls apart from him.

Do we long for him and find that magnetic pull towards him that fresh earthly bread does for our physical needs?

A Prayer

Lord Jesus, just as you gave the crowds bread to satisfy their bodily hunger, I ask you to meet my spiritual needs. You promised that I would never go hungry or thirsty. I believe you and trust you to give me everything I need to become like you, resisting temptation and delighting in your will for me. Thank you for your promises which can never be broken.

Third Place



Heather
Vincent
of Tauranga

I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life – Jesus said

***I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,
That's what Jesus said.
Without the Way there is no going.
Without the Truth there's no Knowing
Without the life, there is no living!
I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.
That's what Jesus said.***

There's profound truth in this old ditty I learnt at Sunday School. Its based on John 14:6 and simply sums up who Jesus is and what our relationship with Him looks like.

In this 'Age of Reason,' where everyone is encouraged to find their 'own individual truth,' it's difficult to persuade people to believe there is but 'one Truth' and 'one Way'.

Little has changed since Jesus came to earth. For He came to 'seek and save the lost.' He came to reveal Truth so that those who believed might 'know the Truth which would set them free.' When Jesus said He was the Way He brought freedom to those who were lost, lost in their minds, their emotions and souls.

Have you ever been on a journey through unfamiliar territory? For those of us who haven't got much sense of direction, how can we find our way? We could consult a map – or our phone's GPS! Or find a local person who could direct us on the right road. Sometimes there's only one way – the safe right way to reach our destination.

What about our spiritual destination? Do you remember the sign in the 70's and 80's "One Way Jesus?" It was a slogan used to remind us that by keeping close to Jesus we would not lose our way. It's sad to think that today's society has come a long way off that road. They think "anything goes – we're all free to find our own 'Truth' or 'way. This often means that Christians are accused of being 'dogmatic' or 'narrow minded'.

When Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," He also said "Come, follow Me." Can we not accept His gracious, loving invitation and follow Him all the days of our life?

Prayer: Thank you Jesus that **You** are the Way, the Truth and the Life. This means we can trust **You** and the Truth of Your Word. We are not merely following the words on a page, but can have a personal relationship with **You**. We can safely follow **You** all the days of our life and live with **You** in Your house forever. Amen.



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Competitions for June 2025

Due by 1 May 2025

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

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: Imagine you are a witness to Jesus raising the widow's only son from the dead (see Luke 7:11-17). Write a first-hand account detailing how this event impacted you. (400 words)



Debbie

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org

Level Two—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Share your testimony to show what inspires you to write. Have you received encouragement that would also encourage other writers? (400 words)

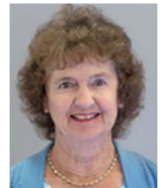


Shirley

Email entry to Shirley Jamieson at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

Level Three—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Write a poem in any format depicting the state of the world today but ending with the hope of the Christian believer. (24 lines maximum)



Julia

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org



NZ CHRISTIAN
writers

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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.