

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2024

# THE CHRISTIAN writer

## SEE INSIDE FOR

### Articles:

*North Shore Christian Writers Group is Growing*

*Influencers* by Kathryn Paul

*How to Format your Competition Entry*  
by Kathryn Paul

### Book Reviews:

*The Part I Know* by Greg Maynard

*What a mess!* by Bruce Ford

Poetry, Notices, Professional Writing Services, 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](mailto:president@nzchristianwriters.org)

**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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## Contents

Page 2	Contact Details – Editor   Membership Secretary   Book Review Requests
Page 4	President’s Report – Justin St Vincent
Page 5	Editorial: Go Team! – Kathryn Paul
Page 6	Notices
Page 7	Book Review: <i>The Part I Know</i> by Greg Maynard – reviewer Julia Martin
Page 7	The Lonely Shepherd – Rachel Jessop
Page 8	The Rose Blooms – John Lindsay
Page 9	The Knowingness of God – Frances Hall
Page 9	North Shore Christian Writers Group is Growing
Page 10	The Beauty of Being Me – Stephen Douglas
Page 12	Professional Writing Services – Free Advertising for Members
Page 14	Topics in <i>The Christian Writer</i> and <i>Young Christian Writer</i> Past Issues
Page 19	Join a Writers’ Group Near You
Page 20	Influencers – Kathryn Paul
Page 20	Mini Booklet Review: <i>What a mess!</i> By Bruce Ford – reviewer Julia Martin
Page 21	Welcome to New and Returning Members
Page 21	How to Format your Competition Entry – Kathryn Paul
Page 22	Writing Competitions Points Board

## Competitions

Page 23	Level One Results	Page 31	Level Three Results
Page 28	Level Two Results	Page 35	Competitions for October 2024

**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



For this August-September 2024 edition of *The Christian Writer* magazine, I want to encourage you that your story matters. Your experiences are unique to you and only you. As we share our stories, testimonies, characters and world building, we help serve others through creativity and imagination.

Storytelling is a skill, so sharing your story matters because it is uniquely your own. No one else can tell it that way you do. Your vision, your voice, your mind, and your story are God-given opportunities to share faith and the power of stories with other people. Jesus would often share simple stories; parables that would illustrate profound spiritual truths and wisdom to those who would listen. Telling your story well can take time. It will require patience, yet the process and journey are all worth it.

Many NZCW members have published and shared their stories as a blessing to others. In fact, our NZCW Members' Books Catalogue makes it easier than ever to discover and buy books from over 200 book titles published by our collective nationwide. Anyone can freely access the catalogue by visiting our website: [www.nzchristianwriters.org/catalogue/](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/catalogue/).

In addition, our *Young Christian Writer* magazine is reaching more people, and is included as part of your digital subscription with us. We encourage current members to forward and share these special edition magazines with younger Christian writers in your church and community.

Several members have been asking about our upcoming Retreat 2025 at the fantastic Flaxmill Retreat Centre, Whitianga. Save the dates for our NZCW Retreat 2025: Thursday 24th April to Sunday 27th April 2025. We will be releasing registration details towards the end of 2024 so be ready to secure your space. As always we'll have inspiring speakers, educational seminar sessions, workshops and plenty of retreat time to relax. Plus, there will be super fun times with our movie night, games night and talent night. Remember: non-member friends and family are welcome to attend. Once all is confirmed we'll be sure to feature additional details in our upcoming magazines and on our website.

Thank you again to member and photographer, Max Carr, for the photo featured on our magazine cover. Be blessed as you read this new edition of *The Christian Writer*.

Best regards

Justin St Vincent



# Editorial: Go Team!

by Kathryn Paul



A big thank you to all who have prayed for and helped put together this magazine issue. It's great to be part of a team who together achieve the goal of producing *The Christian Writer* magazine. From the content-

contributors, president, editors, graphic artist, proofreaders, competition judges, contestants and to the printer – there are many who give their time.

It's like that when publishing a book – the author can't be an island. An author needs input from others and to make use of those who have expertise in specialist areas.

I enjoy leading the Northland Christian Writers group each month, because each writer who attends demonstrates their uniqueness through their writing assignments and personal projects. But uniting us is an awareness we each have something the Lord wants us to write. It's important to support and encourage one another as we write out of obedience to the Lord. Jesus isn't expecting perfection, but He is hoping for obedience and perseverance. It's good to remember the articles, poetry and books we are writing are *His* and He never fails.

We are not measuring the success of our writing only by sales. We're measuring the success of our writing by how many good seeds of hope are reaching others. For a long time prior to becoming magazine editor with NZCW, I had been wanting to learn how to produce a magazine. But I wanted it to be a magazine that was making an impact for God and helping to grow His Kingdom. God granted that desire of my heart by allowing me to learn from Debbie McDermott how to produce *The Christian Writer* magazine. Thank You, Jesus and thank you, Debbie.

I'm grateful to be part of a nationwide collective of Christian writers who I can encourage and who encourage me. Let's keep persevering. We can trust Him that no effort we make for Him is ever wasted.

With love in Jesus,

from Kathryn

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



# Notices

## Christian Writers' Retreat in 2025

Save the dates for our NZCW Retreat 2025 in Whitianga: Thursday 24 April to Sunday 27 April 2025. Costs include accommodation, catering and workshops. Watch this space for more details.

## 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 Please

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).

## 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)

## 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.



## The Part I Know

By Greg Maynard

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Xlibris 2024

Anyone who aspires to write a book and persists through all the challenges and setbacks until its final completion deserves commendation, and Greg Maynard is no exception. Greg readily acknowledges the help he has received from NZCW in getting started as a writer and the assistance given by certain members with the editing and self-publishing of his book.

One might describe his book as memoirs of an ordinary bloke.

After a normal, happy childhood in the South Island, Greg's life fell apart at 14 years, when his parents split up. Leaving school at 16, he drifted into drinking, smoking, drug-taking, and trouble with the law – resulting in corrective training.

Encouraged as a child by his loving, godly grandmother, Greg had a simple faith in God which was tested and developed by his battle with depression, ill-health, employment-difficulties, singleness, failures, and burn-out.

The autobiography contains his open and honest testimony of his spiritual journey with all its ups and downs, twists and turns. Greg gives sound advice on many subjects based on his strong faith, knowledge of the scriptures, and wisdom he has gained from tough lessons and life experiences.

He writes: 'Thankfully, I have held on to my personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. I thank Him for the dark valleys of my life where He has walked with me towards the mountain I must climb with Him. He has been moulding my character into a better vessel to be able to serve Him more.'

It's a story worth reading, and I congratulate Greg for completing his book and wish him well with any future writing projects.

## The Lonely Shepherd

by Rachel Jessop

### Einsamer Hirte

*('Lonely Shepherd' in German) a beautiful piece of music performed on the panpipes, which inspired the poem.*

Picking his way  
up the steep mountain side,  
the Lonely Shepherd's  
heart ached –  
not with the long  
and strenuous journey  
before the work even began;

But for his assistants,  
sitting by the fire  
in the hut  
on the flat,  
eating and fellowshiping;  
not caring for the lost sheep  
in the difficult places –  
how his soul  
wept for them.

Sure it was hard work to get there,  
and once arrived, the real challenges  
only just began...

But to care,  
to at least try;  
maybe even to die for them  
if needed.  
(He would;  
he already had.)

Would no-one else  
follow him?

They called him  
The Good Shepherd,  
and he was very good.

He was also  
The Lonely Shepherd;  
seeking company  
in his work,  
for the sake of love.

Who will go?  
Are there any takers  
at all?

# The Rose Blooms

by John Lindsay

The Rose blooms

Its scent carried on the breeze

Its radiant colour brightening the original garden

All its needs met in this perfect setting

Abundantly nourished by rich soil

Roots anchored in a moist bed that never dries

Visited by energetic bees offering an exchange of pollen and nectar.

The Gardener smiles, enjoying the sight and smell of this beautiful flower

Taking its rightful place in the glory of His good creation.

The frail Rose bud opens

Its weak scent lost on the breeze

Its subdued colour barely lightening the gloomy garden

A scrawny plant almost choked by towering weeds

Struggling to survive in dry, depleted soil

Scarred by legions of sap hungry bugs

Rarely visited by a few sickly bees.

The Gardener frowns, surveying this cursed patch of earth

Noting how far His world has fallen from His good creation.

The Rose blooms

Its scent carried on the breeze

Its brilliant colour joining the dazzling brightness of the eternal garden

All is perfect in this place lit by the glory of God

Every plant and creature thriving on the food of heaven

Bees full of vigour giving and taking as they move from flower to flower.

Here, all is restored, never again to fail.

The Gardener is content, for this is His creation

Evidence of His unfailing goodness

Enjoyed by all.

Genesis 1:31 (NLT)

*Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!*

Genesis 3:17

*...the ground is cursed because of you*

Romans 8:21-22

*...the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

Revelation 22:3

*No longer will there be a curse upon anything*

# The Knowingness of God

by Frances Hall

It was one of those early morning wakeup calls – the presence of God saturating my thoughts, dividing marrow from bone.

I know you, He whispered and my heart was broken and contrite. I sensed His knowingness.

It permeated every fibre of my being. It filled my past, my present and my future. It dimmed the pain, crucified my ego and put paid to my excuses.

I know you – you've been sought out, found out, bought out and brought out.

I know you – when you've tried so hard and been rejected. When you've done your share of rejecting.

I know you – when you stand in front of an audience and make them laugh and receive praise.

I know you – when you bomb and your bubble is burst.

I know you when I cause the bones that I have broken to rejoice and you let me in with joy restored.

I know you – when you stand strong in My name and resist and I know you when tears fill a lonely night.

I know you – inside out, outside in, your upside, your downside – when you face life head on and when you shrink beaten into little corners.

I know you when you're a know-all.

And my Love runs towards you when you take small bungling steps towards me. I let grace and mercy loose on Love's heels as well.

My knowingness catches you when you fall; straightens your path; heads off more trouble than you can imagine.

I am your all-knowing God.

# North Shore Christian Writers Group is Growing

The North Shore Christian Writers' July meeting was well attended with thirteen attending.

Ted Woudberg opened the meeting with prayer. The special guest for this meeting was author Karen McMillan.

Karen McMillan generously came along to the meeting to answer a barrage of questions about publishing and publicity.

An important tip Karen shared with the group regarding finding publishers was a recommendation to explore the website PANZ – Publishers Association of New Zealand.

North Shore Christian Writers presented Karen with a bouquet to say thank you for coming.



*Karen McMillan at the July meeting for North Shore Christian Writers, holding her latest book*



## The Beauty of Being Me

by Stephen Douglas

**I'm learning to be weaved.**

I'm a coloured piece of string  
Nothing much to please, on my own.  
But one day I found, when not alone  
My beauty of being me shone with others.  
Each helping one another to be woven  
Into a priceless, colourful tapestry.

When I stopped gazing at my own hue  
Stopped comparing and allowed myself  
To be moved, positioned, to a pattern unseen  
I understood life is happening, anyway.

**Acceptance of my being, bound with others,  
Revealed my beauty in the blend.**

I learnt, in time, to allow myself to move  
Within the tapestries embrace, as a string  
Of beauty, vibrant; single but not alone.

I used to think my colour given by life  
Wasn't exciting. Not much; nothing special.  
But after much inner questioning and learning,  
I understood I'm special; I'm the only one!  
Alongside many strings, each unique  
There's me! Nothing plain at all!

I found being humble enough to let the  
Master Weaver weave me helps!  
Embracing what I thought a flaw, a mistake  
Allowed the beauty of my string to glow.

**Doing something I'd never done before**  
Or asking "why" is important too!  
To "see" the pattern I was part of helped  
To understand, what my "weaving" was doing.  
The Master Weaver became invaluable.  
I didn't realize I was being weaved till later.

Wow, it's together with other colourful strings  
Each in their rightful place, which reveals the  
beauty of being me.

**I'm learning to be weaved.**

The logo for the NZ Christian Writers Catalogue features a stylized blue feather above the text. The text is arranged in three lines: "NZ CHRISTIAN" in a small, blue, sans-serif font; "writers" in a large, bold, blue, serif font; and "CATALOGUE" in a medium-sized, blue, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a light blue background with a faint feather graphic.

NZ CHRISTIAN  
**writers**  
CATALOGUE

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A massive thank you to Fiona and Alan Murray, who have, together, prepared the NZ Christian Writers Members' Books Catalogue 2024. Click on the image above to view NZCW members' books available for sale.

# 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)

## CASTLE PUBLISHING

Christian and Family publishing services in New Zealand.

<http://www.castlepublishing.co.nz/>

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**Brian Cavit** Dip Edit

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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)

## KIN & KINGDOMS BOOKS/ SELF PUBLISHING INSTITUTE OF NZ

Got a question about writing a book or self-publishing? Angela has multiple best-selling books and has become a formidable presence in the realms of literature and publishing.

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.

**Angela Curtis**

Visit: [www.kinandkingdomsbooks.com](http://www.kinandkingdomsbooks.com)  
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## STEPPING STONE EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Dear Valued Writer,

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

My name is Kathryn Paul and I'm keen to connect with you on this vital stepping stone of your writing journey. It's important to see it as an investment toward helping your book return the results that you and the Lord desire. I'd love for you to discover the qualifications, experience and encouragement I can bring to your publishing stepping stone. Please email me or visit:

<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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- Printing quotes for NZ stock.
- Worldwide listing for print-on-demand paperbacks and eBooks.
- Distribution to NZ stores and libraries.
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Visit [www.wildsidepublishing.com/get-published/#publish](http://www.wildsidepublishing.com/get-published/#publish) or [print](http://www.wildsidepublishing.com/get-published/#print) and download the free guide to self-publishing.

**Ray Curle:** 09 439 5717

E: [ray@thewildside.net](mailto:ray@thewildside.net)

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**Colleen Kaluza**

E: [colleen@wordwyze.nz](mailto:colleen@wordwyze.nz)

Visit <http://wordwyze.nz>

## 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**

E: [WritingAnswers1@gmail.com](mailto:WritingAnswers1@gmail.com)

or [Janette.Busch@gmail.com](mailto:Janette.Busch@gmail.com)

*Any Questions?*



# Topics in *The Christian Writer* and *Young Christian Writer (YCW)* Past Issues

## Financial Side of Publishing

October-November 2023

Andrew Stirling – How to Calculate Tax on Your Book Sales (Article One)

December 2023-January 2024

Andrew Stirling – How to Calculate Tax on Your Book Sales (Article Two)

February-March 2024

Andrew Stirling – How to Calculate Tax on Your Book Sales (Article Three)

## Using Social Media and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

August-September 2019

Kathryn Drinkwater – How Writers can use Facebook and avoid Scams

April-May 2020

Kathryn Drinkwater – Hot Tip – Networking with Newsletters

April-May 2024

Debbie McDermott and Kathryn Paul – Is AI Allowed for Competitions?

## Help with Writing

February-March 2020

Kathryn Drinkwater – Help with Tricky English

October-November 2020

Janice Gillgren – Is Your Writing Active or Passive – and Does it Matter?

December 2020 – January 2021

ProofreadingServices.com poster – Alternatives to Using the Word ‘Said’

February-March 2021

Literarydevices.net – Voice

October-November 2021

Ruth Linton – How to Plot a Book – the W Plot

April-May 2022

Bob Hostetler – Spend it All

April-May 2024

Kathryn Paul – How to Format your Competition Entry

Feb-May 2020 YCW

Kathryn Drinkwater – How to Write and Produce a Puppet Show

Jun-Sep 2020 YCW

Kathryn Drinkwater – Writers Block: Ideas to Help Break Through

Jun-Sep 2021 YCW

Janice Gillgren and Robin Cox – Writing Mentor’s Corner

Oct 2021 – Jan 2022 YCW

Janice Gillgren – Writing Mentor’s Corner

Oct 2023 – Jan 2024 YCW

Kathryn Paul – Tips for Writing a Short Story

## **Publishing – How to**

### August-September 2020

Steve Laube – How do you Know it's Something that will be Published?

Ray Curle – You've Written an Awesome Book – What now?

### April-May 2022

Iola Goulton – Don't Judge a Book by the Cover

### October-November 2022

Kathryn Paul – How to Plan a Book Launch

### August-September 2023

Christine Dilon – Warning! Don't be too Independent

### December 2023-January 2024

Angela C Millen – So You Want to Publish a Book?

## **Meet Our Competition Judges**

### February-March 2023

Introducing Debbie McDermott

### April-May 2023

Introducing Lesley Edgeler

### August-September 2023

Introducing Julia Martin

### October-November 2023

Introducing Shirley Jamieson

## **Author's Share their Publishing Journey**

### April-May 2020

John Fergusson – The Publishing Miracle of *King Solomon's Deadly Legacy*

### August-September 2020

Sherri Bee – Been a While Comin'

### April-May 2021

Annie Browne – The Publishing Journey of Annie Browne (also known as Glennis Browne)

### October-November 2021

Colleen Kaluza – Wordwyze Publishing – The Story

Merlene Midda – Writing and Publishing Journey of Merlene Midda

### August-September 2022

Travis Orams – Introducing Travis Orams, Illustrator

### June-July 2023

Angela Curtis – Introducing Angela Curtis

Mary-Pat Ross – Rough Draft Printed

### August-September 2023

Debbie Watkins – My Publishing Road

### June-July 2024

Rodney Hickman – My Writing Journey with Christian Writers

### June-July 2024

Greg Maynard – My Publishing Journey

Feb-May 2020 YCW

Denis W Shuker – Interview

Jun-Sep 2020 YCW

Rosie Boom – Interview

Janet Pointon – Interview

Oct 2020 – Jan 2021 YCW

Jan Pendergrast – Interview

Jen Gibbs – Interview

Feb-May 2021 YCW

Kathryn Drinkwater – Interview

Feb-May 2022 YCW

Karen McMillan – Interview

Oct 2022 – Jan 2023 YCW

Jeremy Smith – A Day in the Life of a Magazine Editor

**To locate and read past magazine issues visit**

**[www.nzchristianwriters.org/magazines](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/magazines)  
and click on the relevant magazine cover.**

## **How to Write Poetry**

August-September 2021

LiteraryDevices.net – Haiku

December 2021 – January 2022

LiteraryDevices.net – Definition of Blank Verse

February-March 2023

Ruth Linton – What is Poetry? (Part One)

December 2023-January 2024

Ruth Linton – What is Poetry? (Part Two)

April-May 2023

Ruth Linton – What is Poetry? (Part Three)

Jun-Sep 2020 YCW

Kathryn Drinkwater – Writing a Great Rhyming Poem

Feb-May 2023 YCW

Ruth Linton – Limericks

## **Editing Help**

April-May 2021

George Bryant – Confused About Editing?

February-March 2022

Iola Goulton – Should we Capitalise Deity Pronouns?

Kathryn Paul – Using Capitals for the Lord

December 2022-January 2023

Ruth Linton – Manuals of Style/Style Guides

Janette Busch – Tips from an Editor; What you need to Check (or Choose) before Starting (or Opening) a new File

February-March 2023

Janette Busch – Tips from an Editor; Changes that will help your File look more Polished

April-May 2023

Janette Busch – Tips from an Editor; How to Format NZCW Competition Entries

### June-July 2023

Janette Busch – Tips from an Editor; How to Check your Final Document

### August-September 2023

Janette Busch – Tips from an Editor; What to Check in your Final Document

## **Notes from Past Guest Speakers at Retreats and Seminars**

### June-July 2019

Keith Newman – Wrestling with Robust Research, Rewriting our History

Angela Curtis – ProWritingAid: Take Your Manuscript from Boring to Bedazzle, Book Trailer Concept to Completion

Stephen Shephard – Bringing Writing to Life Through Film, Prophecy Throughout Scripture

Jen Gibbs – The Vocation of Writing: Insights from my first Book

### October-November 2019

Dave Firth – Authentic Christianity and Authentic Writing

Staci McLean – Writing for Maximum Impact, Writing a Book Fast

### December 2020 – January 2021

Justin St Vincent – How to Write a Book, How to Market a Book

### June-July 2021

Staci McLean – Social Media for Authors, Public Speaking for Writers

Karen McMillan – Publishing and Publicity, The Writer's Life

Eugene Moreau – Writing from the Secret Room, Bringing Your Words to Life

Phil Strong – How to Build a Powerful Publishing Team, Being Motivated for More

### June-July 2023

Anya McKee – The Power of Excellence, The Power of Collaboration

Rosie Boom – Developing the Art of Storytelling, Building Great Characters

Staci McLean – Write On: Eliminating Excuses, Writing with Purpose

Stephen Whitwell – The Writer's Identity, The Writer's Life

## **Other Helpful Topics**

### June-July 2019

Julia Martin – The Danger of Procrastination

### April-May 2020

Rodney Hickman – Five Keys I have Gained by Being a Member

### August-September 2020

John Fergusson – Online Writing Courses

### October-November 2020

Rodney Hickman – Interview with Neven MacEwan: The Second Half was Better

### December 2020 – January 2021

Steve Laube – Ten Commandments for Working with Your Agent

### June-July 2021

Brian Taylor – Hot Tip USA Radio

Maureen Tearle – Narrative Therapy with IDT (Interactive Drawing Therapy)

### December 2021-January 2022

Kathryn Paul – Holiday Fun Writing Game!

## August-September 2023

John Lindsay – AI Gets Creative

## April-May 2024

Marie Anticich – Enduring Advice for Christian Writers

## June-July 2024

Stephen Whitwell – Four Keys to Flow from Your Strengths

## Jun-Sep 2020 YCW

Julia Martin – Invention of Printing

## Oct 2020 – Jan 2021 YCW

Kathryn Paul – What I Wish Someone had told me at School as a Future Writer

## Feb-May 2021 YCW

Kathryn Paul – How to Write a Book Review

## Jun-Sep 2021 YCW

Kathryn Paul – How to Write a Letter

## Jun-Sep 2023 YCW

Dan Balow – Voices of Hope: Why Young Writers are Important

Maureen Tearle – Dreams: How Significant are They?

Kathryn Paul – What Office is Yours and How will you Write for it?

## The Christian Writer 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special Edition 2023

Beth Walker – How Christian Writers Began

Presidents' Backstories

Debbie McDermott – Good Communication – The Writer's Indispensable Tool

Ruth Linton – Local Groups – Why Bother?



**RGM**  
Raising Godly Mothers

ISSUE 1 WINTER 2023

**RGM**  
Raising Godly Mothers

NEW ZEALAND CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S MAGAZINE

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Raising Godly Mothers

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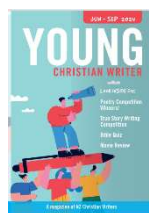
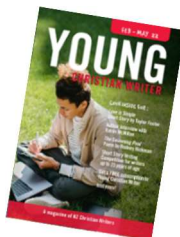
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# Influencers

by Kathryn Paul

At two recent Northland Christian Writers meetings we discussed the question, *Who influenced you to write?* Common answers were: parents, grandparents, teachers and friends. Some said no one had influenced them. I shared with the group the following devotion which I wrote in 2022.

## Influencing people

Influencing people helps people and animals. As Christian writers and communicators we are not only getting people saved we are improving the quality of life for others. Encouraging and teaching people creates a domino effect that spreads further than we could ever imagine.

My personal example is about the famous horse trainer, Monty Roberts. He has influenced my life by helping me improve my horsemanship and parenting skills. He has helped a lot of horses himself – thousands – but he says the real numbers are in the people he's influencing who each go on to make life better for their horses. He couldn't count such a number of horses, that his work has made a positive difference for.

God keeps track of our influence and the fruit it bears. As writers influencing writers who write helpful content, we are making a whopping difference right across the world. So if I was to ask you as you are reading this article today – 'Who influenced you to write?' – think about what your response would be. Have you considered who you may be influencing? We are all influencers whether we intend to be or not. We are always leading by example. Our actions and our words are impacting those around us in some way. Let's be intentional and ensure we're influencing in a way that grows God's kingdom.

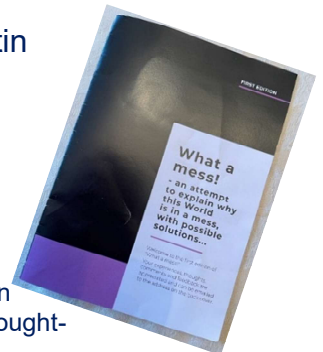
*Be of good courage and let us behave ourselves courageously for our people and for the cities of our God; and may the Lord do what is good in His sight.* 1 Chronicles 19:13 Amplified.

## Mini Booklet Review by Julia Martin

### What a mess!

By Bruce Ford

A small 10-page booklet written by a new writer and NZCW member, Bruce Ford, outlining in simple form his possible explanations and solutions to the mess the world is in, along with statistics, thoughts and theories. Written from a Christian viewpoint, it's an easy-to-read and thought-provoking resource to share with others.



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

**Carol Girven**

Hastings

**Chris Naylor**

Wellington

**Kathryn Hardwick**

Shannon

**Kerryn Levy**

Auckland

**Liam Waddington**

Auckland

**Matthew Schwass**

Te Puke

**Sylvia Stump**

Wellington

**Tundi Blank**

Te Karaka

**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)**

## 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 6 pt:** Under 'Paragraph' locate the 'spacing' 'before' and 'after' boxes. Mine is usually set by default to 'before' 0 pt and 'after' 10 pt. Change it to 'before' 6 pt and 'after' 0 pt. This changes the measurement of the space between the previous paragraph and your first sentence, and the space after the last sentence before the next paragraph.
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	
Kerryn Levy	15	Sandy Miller	15	Elaine Dixon	15
Robert Prins	12			Jill Clarke	12
Debbie Bennett	9			Felicity Logan	12
				Taylor Foster	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 Dec 2024–Jan 2025 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:** Select a poem with a biblical theme and write a story based on the poem's main message. Your story must be in prose. Give it whatever title you like, but your subtitle must be: 'Based on the poem [title of poem] by [name of poet]'. A copy of the poem must also be provided so the judge can compare it with your story (450 words, story only).

### General Comments

*I received four well-written entries and congratulate each contestant for giving the competition a go. Each nicely crafted story was different and clearly highlighted the main message of the poem it was based on. Interestingly, two of the entrants selected a psalm from the Bible as the basis for their story, while the other two selected a contemporary poem with a biblical theme (copies of the two poems and the psalm have been included with the three winning entries in this publication). NB: Although the English translation of the psalms has rendered them largely in prose form, they are officially recognised as a collection of poems and worship songs. Therefore, using a psalm as the poem on which to base your story is acceptable for this competition.*

*The key requirement of this competition was to write a story entirely in prose, regardless of whether the poem on which the story was based was in a rhyming style or in free or blank verse. The only exception to this requirement would be to include a couple of direct quotes from the poem in the story. Unfortunately, a misunderstanding of the meaning of prose resulted in the fourth contestant missing out on being awarded a winning place. Had their highly commendable entry not been a mixture of prose and poetry, they would have scored higher and been among the top three as a result. If you are unsure of a competition requirement, please do feel free to ask for clarification.*

*So, what is prose and how does it differ from poetry? Grammarly and the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (among other sources) define prose as follows:*

**Grammarly:** *Prose is defined as writing that does NOT follow a metre or rhyme scheme. It is writing that follows standard grammatical rules and communicates ideas in a linear, logical order.*

**Merriam-Webster:** *the ordinary language people use in speaking or writing; a literary medium distinguished from poetry especially by its greater irregularity and variety of rhythm and its closer correspondence to the patterns of everyday speech.*

# First Place



Kerry  
Levy  
of Auckland

## Embers of Faith

Inspired by the biblical poem "The Lord Is My Shepherd" (Psalm 23) by King David

---

In the quiet village of Sunnynook, surrounded by rolling hills and lush pastures, lived Mimi, a talented crochet artist, and her husband Thomas, a hardworking farmer. Mimi cherished her simple life, finding peace in her craft as she meticulously crocheted elegant garments from the finest yarns, many spun by her own hands. Known for her gentle demeanour and wise counsel, the couple lived quietly, devoted to their passions.

One summer evening, tragedy struck when a fierce fire ravaged the barn that housed Mimi's beloved studio. The blaze left the building severely damaged, scattering her precious yarns and tools, and plunging her into despair. Her once-thriving sanctuary of creativity now lay in ruins.

Distraught, Mimi and Thomas sought comfort in a walk through the nearby native bush, where the scent of pine mingled with the earthy forest floor. Softly, Mimi recited Psalm 23, a verse her mother had taught her: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

That night, Mimi struggled to sleep. When she finally did, she dreamed of an elderly shepherd named Joseph, tending his flock with a calm and weathered grace born from years close to the land. Sensing Mimi's distress, Joseph invited her to sit and rest.

"Sometimes," Joseph said, "we must release our burdens and trust in God. He leads us beside still waters and restores our weary souls, even when the path ahead seems unclear."

Joseph's words resonated deeply with Mimi, stirring a newfound sense of peace within her heart. "We, like sheep," he continued, "are prone to wander and lose our way. Yet our Shepherd knows each of us intimately, guiding us through even the darkest valleys. We need only trust and follow."

The next morning, Mimi awoke with renewed faith. She began to rebuild her small creative haven, step by deliberate step, trusting in God's guidance.

As days turned into weeks, Mimi found profound fulfilment in the simplicity of her craft and gratitude for life's everyday blessings. Her work flourished once more, each creation a testament to her resilience and faith. Thomas, witnessing Mimi's unwavering spirit, expressed his pride in her steadfastness.

In time, Mimi's creations gained acclaim not only for their artistry but also for the joy they inspired. Her story became a beacon of hope in Sunnynook, a testament to the enduring lessons of trust and simplicity. Neighbours and friends sought her wisdom, drawn by the transformative power of letting go and embracing God's plan.

Ultimately, Mimi realised that the fire, though devastating, had been a catalyst for profound growth. It had taught her that true peace and fulfilment could be found in embracing life's simplicities and trusting in the divine guidance that gently leads us forward.

**Inspired by:  
Psalm 23 (KJV)**

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
he leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul:  
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:  
thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

## Second Place



Robert  
Prins  
of Auckland East

## Ulterior Motives

**Based on the poem *How May I Help You?*  
from *Better than Rubies*, a collection of  
poems, by Sarah Griffiths**

---

"I can't believe it," Jacob exclaimed. "No one can be that selfless. He must have an ulterior motive."

"He doesn't," replied Ezra. "He is who he says he is. He is motivated by serving God and helping people."

"Yes, but what's he getting out of it? He must want to be popular, want power or money. Even we do – and we are Pharisees! No one does things for people without getting something out of it."

Ezra thought a moment. "He does."

"Rubbish!" shouted Jacob. "You wait. I'll find out what he's after."

Dressed in his finest teaching robes, the masses parted while Jacob strode to the front of the crowd where Jesus taught. He had been there less than a minute when Jesus looked straight at him.

"Woe to you, Pharisees..." he began.

Jacob cringed. He shouldn't have dressed up. All eyes were on him as Jesus pronounced woe after woe. But despite the woes that flowed from the lips of Jesus, his eyes pleaded for Jacob to truly turn to God. His words were cutting, but Jacob had no doubt that Jesus was trying to lead him to the presence of God.

As soon as possible, Jacob slunk away.

Disguised as a beggar, Jacob followed Jesus into Samaritan territory. This was the place Jesus would reveal his true character and motivations! Jacob hid behind a rock as Jesus began a conversation with a Samaritan woman. But tired as he was, all Jesus wanted to do was to help the Samaritan woman come to know God. He quenched her thirst for God without asking for anything in return. Jacob clenched his fists and stomped his way back home.

"Teacher, I have a question to ask you." Jacob and his fellow Pharisees were going to trap Jesus. They dragged an adulterous woman toward him. "Should we stone her as Moses told us to? What do you say?" Now Jesus would reveal whether he wanted power, fame or even a bribe. Jacob rubbed his hands in glee waiting for Jesus to fall for their bait.

Instead, Jesus crouched and wrote on the ground.

When Jacob repeated the question, Jesus looked up. "Whoever is without sin should cast the first stone."

Jacob stared down and saw his name written in the dust. Thoughts of his sin flooded his mind. He slipped away as he heard Jesus say to the woman, "Neither do I condemn you." Jesus gained nothing, but gave forgiveness.

Confused, Jacob met with Ezra again. "I've watched him. I've heard him. Nobody speaks like this man. He's selfless, he helps people, he's honest and true. I hate to admit it, but I want to be like him."

"Then join us, brother," said Ezra. "How can I help you?"

## **How May I Help You?**

From *Better than Rubies*, a collection of poems, by Sarah Griffiths

How may I help you? was always Christ's thought  
His greatest help was the salvation he wrought  
His teaching was always compassion and love  
And showing examples of our Father above.

Although he spoke woe to those Pharisees  
He also showed a way they also could please  
The God of their fathers, who's our God as well  
And taught all his followers in God's presence to dwell.

Neither do I condemn you, he would say  
as he spoke to a woman who had gone astray  
To another woman he said – You will never thirst  
I am the Messiah – You are blessed and not cursed.

So if we follow Christ showing love and compassion  
And not being guided by this world's passing fashion  
Then – How may I help you? – will be our first thought  
And we'll love and forgive with the freedom Christ taught.

## Third Place



Debbie  
Bennett  
of Auckland

## The Young Marriage

based on poem by Helen Steiner Rice

---

Hannah married David one year after her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in 1992. They enjoyed living in a small country town. Hannah's parents advised the couple to wait at least a year to get married until they had saved \$90,000 for a partial house deposit, complete the "Faith and Sacrifice" pre-marriage course and wait for spiritual confirmation for their marriage.

Hannah and David achieved all this in one year! Feeling fulfilled in their obedience; they got married in 1993. They absorbed the pre-marriage course's key message deeply: "You can't go wrong with abiding in God and self-lessness for each other."

Married life was cruisy like a honeymoon to start with, until disagreements crept in. In frustration, David postponed their honeymoon to Fiji.

Over the next few months, Hannah and David started arguing over every issue imaginable. As they weren't quitters, they tried to maintain their Christian faith through solitary quiet times with God. They considered repairing their marriage as well. Marriage counselling was too far to travel to. Discussions to compromise over disagreements didn't work. Talking with the Reverend...too embarrassing.

Doing nothing was not an option.

Therefore, Hannah and David decided to reserve Saturday afternoon culminating with "Saturday Date Nights." Wishful thinking. With their church's small congregation, David felt obliged to lead the men's Bible study and gardening maintenance on Saturday's. David's duties rapidly eroded time with Hannah.

Hannah then spent Saturdays alone which generated a cycle of loneliness. She reacted by driving aimlessly for two hours every Saturday. She would wake on Sunday mornings with heavy eyelids, pulling herself to church.

One Saturday Hannah’s mother called spontaneously since she knew David was away for that weekend. Hannah’s hand quivered from anxiety as she hung up the phone on the table. Her mother’s concerned voice echoed in her mind: “How’s your Saturday date night?”

Without thinking, Hannah picked up a wedding card she’d bought for her cousin. Gently flicking it open, she read:

*For love that endures...*

*Is built on strong faith*

*And unselfish giving...*

Thick salty tears dropped onto the card. Hannah quickly pulled up a tissue to dab off the damp spots.

Twenty minutes later, she heard the click of the front door. David stepped in looking at Hannah with an odd expression. She held up the wedding card for him to read it. He read it in seconds and quickly noticed Hannah’s tears, so pulled something out of his breast pocket. They were two tickets to Fiji!

They laughed, praising God.

Soon they made some prayerful sacrifices. Hannah sold her car. Loneliness-fueled driving was pointless. David quit leading Bible study to pass this over to a theological student. “Saturday date night” became a regular event they looked forward to. “Sunday church” became a joy once more.

## **With Faith in Each Other—And Faith in the Lord**

With faith in each other  
And faith in the Lord  
May your marriage be blessed  
With love’s priceless reward,  
For love that endures  
And makes life worth living  
Is built on strong faith  
And unselfish giving...  
So have faith, and the Lord  
Will guide both of you through  
The glorious new life  
That is waiting for you.

## **Level Two**

**Judge: Lesley Edgeler**

**Requirement:** Write an essay on the topic of Increasing Difficulties for the Christian in our Modern Western Society. Include a true example of Christian suffering. (500 words)

## General Comments

*Essay writing is a learned skill and incorporates structural organisation to ensure the main point captures the reader's attention. It is important not to begin or end a paragraph with a quotation from a source.*

*Elements include:*

- 1. A clear introduction to the dissertation*
- 2. Consolidatory body paragraphs which include evidence or examples to emphasise the argument*
- 3. Fluid words to connect points*
- 4. Topic sentences at the beginning of paragraphs with no tendency towards bias or favouritism*
- 5. No multiple topics*
- 6. An annotated bibliography*
- 7. A conclusion which encapsulates the significance of the hypothesis.*
- 8. An essay comprises 10% introduction, 80% main body and 10% conclusion.*
- 9. No quotations to be at the beginning or the end of a paragraph.*

*For this assignment, research was an essential requirement to help write cohesively with facts to convince the reader of the real-life example chosen. This, then would signify the relevance between the person/event and the thesis chosen for the essay.*

*I received one well-thought-out essay from Sandy Miller to whom I awarded first place.*

## First Place



Sandy  
Miller  
of Auckland

## Secularism – A Threat to Christianity

Christians have suffered persecution throughout the ages. In Matthew 5:11, it warns us that if we choose to follow Christ, we can expect persecution and false allegations to be made against us<sup>1</sup>.

During the Roman Empire, the rise of Christianity was met with a lot of opposition. The polytheistic Roman religion conflicted with the monotheistic faith of Christianity<sup>2</sup>. Christians were persecuted because they refused to worship the Roman gods including the emperor. Under Emperor Nero, Christians were blamed for the Great Fire of Rome in 64 AD<sup>3</sup>. This resulted in brutal persecutions that included being thrown to beasts in arenas and crucifixions.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we can see similarities between ancient Rome and Western society<sup>4</sup>. The worship of pagan gods and the emperor has been replaced with bowing down to anti-Christian concepts and philosophies. These concepts and

philosophies include secularism, progressivism, individualism and materialism. One of these concepts, namely secularism, “has set the stage for Christian persecution in Western society”<sup>5</sup>.

While some Christians face severe persecution in the Islamic world or under communism. In Western society, which has become mainly secular, persecution is far more subtle and underlying<sup>6</sup>. Secularism, in an advanced form, creates a fertile ground for the development of an anti-Christian climate. This phenomenon has the effect of eliminating religion from all areas of society, relegating it to the private sector. According to Uruguayan Father Martin Lavarte, a missionary in Africa, he believes that the growth of Western secularism is a threat to Christianity because it can kill the faith<sup>7</sup>. The rise of secularism is restricting Christians to refrain from expressing their views and beliefs in public<sup>8</sup>.

In 2018, Australian full-back Israel Folau was dismissed because he chose to publicly oppose Australia’s decision to legalize same-sex marriages. Folau was simply expressing his Christian beliefs on social media because he felt compelled by God to do so<sup>9</sup>.

In a high-profile case in 2021, Finnish Member of Parliament and former cabinet minister Päivi Räsänen, a self-declared Christian faced criminal charges. These charges were based upon Päivi Räsänen publicly questioning the official support of her country’s Lutheran Church for the ‘Pride 2019’ event. To support her position, she quoted the bible. It is cases like these, that send a clear message to Christians in Western society. Should they express their Christian views, they will risk discrimination, social exclusion, legal charges or professional harm.

During Jesus ministry on earth, he experienced persecution. Those who live a godly life in Christ Jesus can expect to receive the same treatment. The religious ideologies of the Roman Empire and concepts

1 – Matthew 5:11, ESV refers.

2 – Australian Christians. (2023). *The History of Christian Persecution*. [https:// https://australianchristians.org.au/the-history-of-christian-persecution](https://australianchristians.org.au/the-history-of-christian-persecution). – cited 13/6/24.

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## Level Three

Judge: Julia Martin

**Requirement:** King Solomon wrote: 'Better one hand with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind' (Ecclesiastes 4:6 NIV). Explain what you think he meant and if this statement has any relevance to our modern society. (250 words)

### General Comments

*When Solomon was crowned King of Israel around 3000 years ago, he felt inadequate for the role and so asked God for wisdom. As a result, he became the wisest man in the world and was a sought-after expert on all manner of subjects.*

*But despite all his practical insights on life, he failed to heed his own advice and thus began a downward spiral by leaving God out of his world with long term consequences.*

*The book in the Bible which he wrote later in his life called Ecclesiastes can be regarded as pessimistic because it views a world 'under the sun' and apart from God. But despite the overall negative view of life in this book, there is much sound advice and wisdom which is useful and relevant to our lives in the modern world. The statement for discussion is an example of this.*

*In judging the competition, I looked for a balanced discussion of this statement. I was delighted to receive six entries and the writing was of a high standard and in most cases followed the practical requirements laid down for the entries. As usual the article needed an arresting start and a satisfying conclusion. Some of the entries included other relevant scriptures or wise sayings to back up statements and insights. One member who was unplaced this time, approached the topic in an interesting and thought-provoking way by writing a clever interaction between two characters who misunderstood each other regarding work and leisure.*

*I awarded first place to Elaine Dixon who is off to a flying start having just been promoted to Level Three. Her article was well-written, and her ideas flowed smoothly. Second place equal went to Jill Clarke and Felicity Logan, followed by Taylor Foster in third place.*

*My thanks to all members who consistently enter the competitions.*

## First Place



Elaine  
Dixon  
of Tauranga

### A Balanced Life

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‘Better one hand with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind’ (Ecclesiastes 4:6 NIV).

This proverb, written by King Solomon, could almost sum up the overarching message of the book of Ecclesiastes. A wise king who has everything he could ever wish for, looks back over his life and warns against the relentless pursuit of material wealth or success at the expense of one’s well-being.

He comes to this conclusion not only through his own experience, but by watching the activities of the people within his vast kingdom. Even though Solomon lived thousands of years ago, he discovered a timeless truth, namely, that fulfilment comes not from abundance but from appreciating and being content with what one has.

Unfortunately we seem doomed to repeating the mistakes of the past. In our modern society the A-type workaholic is seen in almost every business. Sometimes it is because an executive is given a huge salary and then is expected to work an eighty-hour week in return. For others it is the dream of a lavish lifestyle and luxurious retirement that drives them on.

The result is inevitable. Both relationships and health suffer when the pursuit of money through overwork becomes one’s aim in life. In contrast, one handful with peace offers health, productivity and stronger relationships. Often it is not until old age that one realises the difference, too late for anything but regret.

God gave Solomon the gift of wisdom. We benefit from that wisdom when we learn early to value contentment and good relationships over riches and material success.

## Second Place Equal



Jill  
Clarke  
of Wanganui

### Solomon’s Wisdom

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We live in a busy world. The 24 hours in a day seem insufficient to get everything done. We seek the fastest ways to reach destinations. Employers want more work

from their staff and workers want more money. Patients must learn patience waiting for an elusive doctor's appointment. Stress is inevitable.

Our spiritual health can be affected by the rush and bustle. How can we stop this frantic activity? Where can we find balance in life? What is our goal?

Our answers can be found in **Psalm 46:10a**, "Be still and know that I am God".

"There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the creator, made known through Jesus."

## Blaise Pascal

King Solomon wrote: "Better one hand with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind." **Ecclesiastes 4:6**.

Throughout Ecclesiastes King Solomon reflects on his lifetime. He compares the futility of our days on earth spent in selfish pursuit with that of allowing God to take control of all our personal details in life. Spending time with him in praise, prayer and meditation, sharing also our needs and concerns is the wisdom Solomon wants us to learn as he did. We need to still our constant motion to find confidence in God. With our trust in God's provision for all our needs we can rest assured that we will have a balanced and satisfying life through Jesus.

## Second Place Equal



Felicity  
Logan  
of Feilding

## Toil and Trouble

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Modern life involves frequent stress and distress. In his day King Solomon had monumental matters to administer, yet pondered what motivated human endeavour—skill and energy expended to satisfy envy of their neighbours [Ecclesiastes 4:4a]. Is this true for the twenty-first century?

Today's get-rich-quick schemes, peer pressure and manipulative advertising create a recipe of rush and ruthlessness, demands and deadlines, constant consumerism. We're thrust into the fight/flight syndrome or "sympathetic mode"—a cortisol build-up damaging to body and brain. Solomon recommends instead the "parasympathetic mode": rest, recovery, tranquility.

What is his "striving after wind"? Any suggestion promotes worthwhile thought. If "wind" is futile human toil, then it should prompt an assessment of worldly offerings.

If it warns that what we toil to obtain might be fleeting, pointless, lost when we die, then sober and prayerful consideration is due.

Strong's Concordance defines "wind" as courage, rational spirit or sensible breath—so perhaps modern life's frantic pace might prompt us to seek rationality and sense instead. Either view of Solomon's advice relates to where stress rules.

Elsewhere, Scriptures echo Solomon's insight. Christ said "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" [Matt 11:29 RSV]. He urged his disciples into isolated places to rest their souls from daily demands. He praised Mary for sitting at his feet, not rushing about like Martha. Paul learned "in whatever state I am... be content" [Phil 4:11 RSV] saying it is "great gain" [1 Tim 6:6 RSV].

The gain? Tranquility!

## Third Place



Taylor  
Foster  
of Tauranga

## An Empty Hand for the Father

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Is life about endless striving, or is it about pursuing peace?

According to Solomon, in Ecclesiastes 4:6, it is better to have tranquillity than to toil away for things forever out of reach. To me, this looks like laying down our busyness and letting peace be our focus. This is extremely relevant to our society. We are continually told to be doing and achieving more in order to find belonging, purpose and satisfaction. But, no matter how hard or long we try, we never reach our desired feeling. Only God and his peace can fill us with what we need. Our two hands of toil will always result in heartache, but one hand with peace will begin a restoration of our soul.

Solomon's father David wrote in Psalm 16:11, "In Your [God] presence is fullness of joy." (NKJV, paraphrased) When we cease striving and only have one handful of peaceful things, our other hand is empty. God can finally hold onto us. We can go from someone who sought satisfaction from the world to someone holding onto the one who gives life. And now, we get to dance with Jesus. Our lives become a journey with the Prince of Peace, one where we do our little with him by our side. We will be living for eternity by living with him today. So, how about we listen to Solomon and empty our hands? As we do, God becomes our Father and Jesus' nail-wounded hands are welcomed into ours.

# Competitions for October 2024

Due by 1 September 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:** Think about someone who influenced your life when you were a child growing up or as an adult. In what way did they encourage and inspire you to become the person you are today (400 words)?



*Debbie*

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

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

**Requirement:** Write a recipe for a happy life based on Scripture, to be printed on a tea towel to be manufactured and sold to the public. Include scriptural ingredients and back-up methods to make the recipe successful (300 words).



*Lesley*

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

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

**Requirement:** 'Artificial Intelligence presents benefits and dangers for our world today'. In a secular article, discuss both sides of this comment (400 words maximum, excluding references if used).



*Julia*

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



**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.