

DECEMBER 2023 - JANUARY 2024

THE CHRISTIAN writer

SEE INSIDE FOR

Articles:

What is Poetry – The Missing Part Two
by Ruth Linton

How to Calculate Tax on Your Book Sales
by Andrew Stirling

*Northland Christian Writers
Retreat Report*

Helpful Topics in Past Magazine Issues

Poetry by:

The Star Men Travel by Alan Crosby

Silence by Stephen C Douglas

Christmas Message by Lesley Edgeler

The Craftsman by Rodney Hickman

December Prize Winners!

Professional Writing Services,
Local Writers Groups, Competitions
and much 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, donations: treasurer@nzchristianwriters.org

Join Us! Annual Subscriptions—2 options:

- 1) Digital magazine: Full membership \$40/Student membership (up to 25 yr) \$20
- 2) Printed magazine: Full membership \$55/Student membership (up to 25 yr) \$35

Join us through our website: www.nzchristianwriters.org/join/

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.

© Copyright 2023

This issue printed locally by

BookPrint.
Making Bookshop Quality Easy

Contact David at
hello@bookprint.co.nz
09 443 1775
www.bookprint.co.nz

The Christian Writer

Dec 2023 – Jan 2024

ISSN 2537-8708 (Online)

VOL 40. No 6

ISSN 1171-0098 (Print)

Contents

Page 2	Contact Details – Editor Membership Secretary Book Review Requests
Page 4	President’s Report – Justin St Vincent
Page 5	Editorial: The World is Waiting – Kathryn Paul
Page 6	Notices
Page 7	Upcoming Increase in Subscription Costs – Andrew Stirling
Page 8	What is Poetry? – The Missing Part Two – Ruth Linton
Page 10	The Star Men Travel – poem by Alan Crosby
Page 11	Northland Christian Writers Retreat – Kathryn Paul
Page 12	Devotions from Northland Retreat Attendees
Page 14	Professional Writing Services – Free Advertising for Members
Page 16	How to Calculate Tax on Your Book Sales – Andrew Stirling
Page 17	Welcome to New and Returning Members
Page 18	Let Go Let God – Mel C Wood
Page 19	Join your Local Writers Group
Page 20	Silence – poem by Stephen C Douglas
Page 21	Christmas Message – poem by Lesley Edgeler
Page 22	So you Want to Publish a Book – Angela C Millen
Page 23	Helpful Topics in Past Magazine Issues
Page 28	The Craftsman – poem by Rodney Hickman
Page 28	Writing Competitions Points Winners

CW Competitions

Page 29	Level One Results	Page 39	Level Three Results
Page 34	Level Two Results	Page 43	Competitions for February 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

President's Report

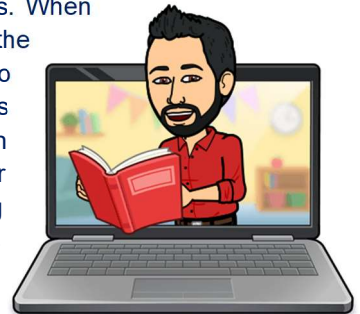


Welcome to the December 2023-January 2024 edition of *The Christian Writer*. We trust you will take some time during the Christmas season to reflect on the past year, pause to enjoy those reflections and look forward to your new writing endeavours in the new year ahead.

In this edition of *The Christian Writer*, you'll see we've included an article from our Treasurer, Andrew Stirling, sharing the latest price adjustment that will take effect from 1 April 2024. As a Board, we haven't adjusted our subscription pricing model for over seven years and want to provide our membership with plenty of notice of this change. Once again, thank you for your continued support for NZ Christian Writers and we trust you will continue to receive value from our growing collective.

Many members benefit from our competitions, being connected to a local group, attending our retreats and seminars, plus having a writer profile and book feature shared on our website. These are just many of the multiple benefits of being a member of NZ Christian Writers. Your support ensures we can 'extend the tent pegs' (Isaiah 54:2) so that NZCW can add more value to our members in the future.

We also want to thank Fiona Murray who has kindly offered to prepare our catalogue 2023-2024 featuring many of our members' books. This is a brilliant resource that helps to connect book buyers with our published members. When completed, perhaps consider printing a few copies of the catalogue and sharing it with others. This helps to expand the visibility of our members' published books and provides an essential connection point between readers, writers and those who are looking for their next book to enjoy. We hope you will consider making a purchase to support another member-author. Books make great gifts, especially for Christmas.



Once again, thank you to our featured photographer and member, Max Carr, who has provided the photo for our front cover of this magazine. On behalf of our Board, our local group leaders and operational volunteers, we want to thank you for your ongoing membership and support for NZ Christian Writers. All the best for a fantastic Christmas, and an enjoyable New Year season. We trust you and your writing will continue to be a blessing to others throughout 2024 and beyond. May 2024 be your best year yet!

Kia Manaakitia – be blessed,

Justin St Vincent

Editorial: The World is Waiting

by Kathryn Paul



At some point in our lives we experience emotional pain including grief. This can knock our faith.

It's helpful if we recognise it's a time of testing. As in the book of Job, the point of the test is to prove our faith is genuine. Knowing this doesn't necessarily make the pain any easier to bear. But if we hold on to the hope that the Lord does care and will restore, even double for the trouble, then this can provide a light at the end of the tunnel.

If you have gone through something sad or hurtful, or you are currently struggling, or find yourself going through something difficult in the future, remember to hold on to your faith in the Lord. Writing a poem or journalling can be therapeutic for processing emotions. When we are raw and real, others will connect with our shared words. For me, writing a poem allows an outlet for the sadder thoughts and by the end of the poem hope is rising again.

It's good to take one day at a time and it's also important to have positive things to look forward to. We don't know what 2024 will hold for us but we can plan, hope and dream with the Lord.

I encourage you this summer to get out and do some activities you've not experienced before. Also think about what writing projects you would like to begin, continue with and finish.

Recently, I learned what it means to be 'centered'. To summarise, it's knowing we have significance in who we are; we have innocence rather than condemnation; we are agents of influence; we are making progress in our purpose; we have security and we belong. Let's remain centered in Christ and write in partnership with Him. You will discover the world is waiting for your words.

With love in Jesus,

from Kathryn

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



Notices

Local Writers Group Leaders Wanted

If you are willing to host a writers group in your area please get in touch. To find out more details email Justin at president@nzchristianwriters.org 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>

Submissions Wanted

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

South Island Christian Book Authors Network

Meetings are quarterly from 9:00am to 1:00pm at the Tenants Lounge, Maurice Carter Courts, 16 Dundee Place, Spreydon, Christchurch 8024. These are specifically offered to those interested in writing a book or who have published a book. For meeting details contact facilitator: Verna McFelin 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.

Warning! Scammer Alert!

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

Raising Godly Mothers Magazine

If you are an older mother who would like to write an article for future issues of *Raising Godly Mothers* or if you are a young mother who is struggling, please contact Shing at rgm@rgm.co.nz. For more info' or to subscribe to the magazine visit: www.rgm.co.nz

Increase to Subscription Fees

As per the following article on page seven, please note that from 1 April 2024 our NZCW membership/subscription fees will increase.

Upcoming Increase to Subscription Fees

by Andrew Stirling

To our valued members,

Here at NZ Christian Writers, we pride ourselves on being able to connect, inspire and encourage Christian writers across NZ. We do that through a variety of means such as:

- Regular magazines and competitions
- Local small group meetings
- Seminars and retreats
- NZCW Website Platform

We have always endeavoured to provide this service at a subscription rate that is both affordable to our subscribers and which also provides us with enough funds to do what we do.

Over the past few years, this has become more challenging for us as costs across the nation have gone up. One of our biggest costs is postage, which has increased dramatically along with many of our other costs. We have been absorbing these cost increases for as long as possible but cannot continue to do so.

Unfortunately, due to these increased costs, NZ Christian Writers has decided to increase our subscription fees from 1 April 2024.

This is not a decision we have taken lightly, and we are aware of the impact this may have on some of our subscribers. You will be pleased to know that fee increases are not something we do on a regular basis. The last change to our subscription rates was over seven years ago!

Our hope is that, with the extra funds available, we can continue to offer a great service. We are also looking at ways we can add more value to our current members as well as coping with the influx of new members.

The new subscription rates are below:

Digital Magazine: Full membership – \$50/Student membership (up to 25 years) – \$30

Printed Magazine: Full membership – \$75/Student membership (up to 25 years) – \$55

This new rate will apply from 1 April 2024. We have chosen this date to give people time to adjust to the new rate.

If your renewal invoice is due before 1 April 2024, you will pay the old rate. All invoices from this date onwards will show the new rate.

If you have any questions regarding this change, please feel free to contact me at treasurer@nzchristianwriters.org

Andrew Stirling

What is Poetry?

The Missing Part Two of a Three-Part Article

by Ruth Linton

Editor's Note: My utmost apologies to Ruth and readers – I discovered I somehow missed publishing part two of Ruth's article on poetry. Part one was in the Feb-Mar issue and part three was in the Apr-May issue.

THE STRUCTURE OF POETRY

Strictly speaking each line of a poem is called a **verse** and every series or groups of **verses** is called a **stanza**. However, for clarity's sake this article will use the term **verse** or **stanza** in the now-common way as meaning a group of lines.

Punctuation and indentation varies according to the poet's desired effect.

If using **rhyme** there are some rules as to what a true rhyme really is. Of course, even the great poets of the past sometimes broke these rules. Necessity dictated a 'short cut'.

A. RHYMES

- True rhymes sound the same regardless of the spelling: e.g., *bed, said, read*
- Words that look the same but sound different are not true rhymes (though some well-known poets used them) e.g., *cough, rough, though*
- Words with a different number of syllables are not true rhymes: e.g. *intend and bend*
- Sometimes words with the same consonants and consonant blends are used as rhymes. Try not to. These, sadly, are common in religious verse. e.g. **Health, faith, death, depth**
- In the same way, words with similar vowel sounds but differing consonant sounds are not perfect rhymes: e.g. *rain and lame* **or** *weed and sleep*

Words also have different accents or stress. If a word has two or more syllables check which syllable is stressed. (Sometimes a word spelled the same may be pronounced with the accent in two different places thus altering the meaning of the word. Beware!)

e.g., **origin** and **original**
hypocrite and **hypocrisy**
invalid and **invalid**

Make sure the accent of the rhyming words comes on the rhyming syllables: e.g., **intend, end** NOT **shaken, pen**.

Last of all:

In most rhyming poetry the final syllable of a line is accented. If this is not the case then the rhyme is called a **feminine rhyme**, something poets usually prefer to avoid as it tends to weaken the poem. However, some choose a feminine rhyme for effect. In the following poem John Donne used both masculine and feminine endings to highlight a change in mood:

*Absence, hear thou this protestation
Against thy **strength**
Distance and **length**
Do what thou canst for **alteration**
For hearts of **mettle**
Absence doth join, and Time doth **settle**. (Note 1)*

MARKING YOUR RHYMING PATTERN

This is important if you have more than one verse or stanza in a poem. Each verse should have the same pattern.

At the end of the first line mark, at the side of the page mark the rhyme as 'a'.

At the end of the following line mark the rhyme 'a' if it rhymes with the first line. Otherwise mark it 'b'. For the third line mark the rhyme as 'a' or 'b' if it is the same as a previous line or mark it as 'c' if it is a new rhyme. (NB: Numbers can be used in place of letters.)

When all lines in the stanza are marked this shows the rhyming pattern. Subsequent stanzas should follow the same pattern.

Here is an example:

*At last Bishop Hatto appointed a day **a or 1**
To quiet the poor without delay; **a or 1**
He bade them to his great barn repair, **b or 2**
That they should have food for the winter there. **b or 2**
Rejoiced such tidings good to hear, **a or 1**
The poor folk flocked from far and near; **a or 1**
The great barn was full as it could hold **b or 2**
Of women and children, and young and old. **b or 2** (Note 2)*

Note 1: Quoted in *The Christian Writer*, Volume 8 No 4, August 1991

Note 2: From *Bishop Hatto*, a ballad by Robert Southey in *Poems Old and New* by A S Cairncross Australian Edition

The Star Men Travel

by Alan Crosby

Then we made headway,
Accepting our guide's unpredictability,
Its shifting course along the tar-black skyways.
We folded up our charts and waited out the day,
Until it peered above the earth line and we journeyed on,
Across the endless dunes, like giants' bellies draped in shadows,
From swinging lantern light.

Were they gifts we gave
...before turning back, some would say deceptively?
A caravan of dusty priests and stargazers.
Our nightly light had led us to a poor address,
...then, like a frightened fawn, was gone.
It seemed, entering, the phoenix dreams of all revived and rose,
By a wonderment of sight.



RGM
Raising Godly Mothers

ISSUE 1 WINTER 2023

NEW ZEALAND CHRISTIAN MOTHERS MAGAZINE

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



Northland Christian Writers Retreat

by: Kathryn Paul

Over Labour weekend we held a Christian Writers Retreat in the Far North at the lovely Coopers Beach Christian Youth Camp. Fourteen people attended and the event was catered for by our NZ Christian Writers Vice President, Janet Fleming.

Janet outdid herself and fed us with wonderful meals. We were all extremely grateful for her skills and obvious experience at catering for an event. Thank you, Janet!



Our workshops covered the topics: writing a first draft, self-publishing with illustrations, business and marketing, and writing a devotion. Many of us wrote a devotion to share while at the Retreat and some have been included below this report.

There was ample time for relaxing, writing and exploring the area. Some enjoyed a challenging game of scrabble.

On our final evening we enjoyed a talent night which ended with Althea Barr and Debbie McDermott (Debbie is our NZCW competitions coordinator) who sang the song, *Side by Side*. I felt these words were significant parting words to take away with us. Let's all keep doing our writing for Jesus, side by side. Be there to support one another and enjoy the journey together.



Devotional by Jenny de Vetter

The oyster shell lay discarded on the ground in the chicken run. It had run its course in life, protecting and sheltering its precious charge. Everyday it went through the normalcy of life, caring for its baby oyster, making room in the shell for it to grow. Storms tossed them here and there in the ocean, but, as we all know, stuff happens. One day a piece of grit came in through the crack of the shell and embedded itself in their nice comfortable home. It made them both uncomfortable. Totally unplanned. The shell was not able to prevent this from occurring. Inside the privacy of the shell, the oyster did all it could to calm the situation and God gave both the oyster and the shell relief from the the pain. He created something beautiful out of something that was sent to create turmoil. Sometimes we as parents, grandparents and great-grandparents may feel the same as this discarded oyster shell. We have cared for and protected our family and sometimes situations have arisen that we had no power to prevent. We did our utmost to protect our children and develop them into beautiful treasures for our Heavenly Father. As time passes, they no longer need us to parent them. We have served our purpose in guiding and protecting them. Together with God's grace and love, He has given us the privilege of growing some of His Pearls of great price.

But let us remember that God has not discarded us. He has another role for us now. We are very precious in His sight and He will unfold that purpose as the days stretch before us.

Devotional by Val Robb

"Therefore, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" Matthew 6:25-26

Returning to Auckland after five years in China, I worried about where we'd find a home for our family of eight. Rentals were rare and expensive. One day as we strolled on the beach, my oldest daughter bounded up and announced, "Mom, here's a gift for you." She handed me a bumpy purple and white shell. On it she'd written, "Remember—if God so houses molluscs, will He not house you. Do not worry. Matthew 6."

Cupping the shell, I imagined the insignificant mollusc safely housed inside amidst wild ocean breakers. Surely I could trust such a compassionate Creator with our family's needs.

Just in time, God provided the house we needed. Many years and multiple moves later, the treasured shell sits on my dresser, reminding me of our faithful heavenly Father who delights to meet the needs of His children.

Devotional by Brian de Vetter

Write about an oyster shell

(Heb 4:12 NASB) For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Pounding waves and rocky coastline have ravaged the poor oyster's shell.
It lay in the cold sand, broken and bleached white.
Its sculptured edges jagged and sword sharp.

Jesus takes our ravaged lives and washes us white from our sinfulness through His cleansing blood. He uses His two-edged sword of the Word to separate our soul from our spirit so we can be a better workman for His Glory.

Let us allow Him to prepare us for the work He wants to use us for.

Devotional by Debbie McDermott

The Shell and the Pearl

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a pearl of great price" (see Matthew 13:45-46, ASV).

Although unattractive by worldly standards, Pearl was a beautiful 'pearl of great price' when it came to Jesus. She loved Him passionately and it showed in her conversation and actions.

An oyster shell is much like Pearl. Without the precious pearl growing inside it, the shell would only be an unattractive shell that is worth very little.

The same can be said of us. If our love for and relationship with Jesus isn't active and growing, then our lives will be as empty and unattractive as an empty oyster shell. But when our lives are full of Him, then we are transformed into His likeness—THE Pearl of Great Price.

To grow like a pearl and become more like Jesus, we must feed on His Word and stand on His promises. This keeps my faith strong and it will do the same for you.

*Help me, Lord, to be a pearl
That reflects You to the world.*

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

ASTUTE EDITING

Candice Hume

E: info@astuteediting.co.nz

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

CASTLE PUBLISHING

Christian and Family publishing services in New Zealand.

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

CAVIT ENTERPRISES

Proofreading and Copyediting Services

I offer assistance to enable your manuscript to be free of annoying mistakes, repetitions, wordiness, etc, so that it can be sent to a publisher as a 'clean' document.

Most genres considered.

Fees to fit your budget.

Brian Cavit Dip Edit

E: cavitent@gmail.com

CHRISTIAN EDITING

My name is Lola Goulton and I run Christian Editing Services.

I hold a Bachelor of Commerce Degree in marketing and have over twenty years' experience in human resources, including writing and editing a company newsletter, developing a government website, contributing to a textbook, and writing and proofreading more client reports than I can count.

I specialise in editing Christian fiction and advising pre-published and self-published authors on the business side of writing, publishing and marketing. Find out more at <https://christianediting.co.nz/resources/> or <https://christianediting.co.nz/blog/> and sign up for a free two-week course on revising and self-editing your novel.

Lola Goulton

E: igoulton@christianediting.co.nz

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
and www.selfpublishinginstitutenz.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:

- Submitting your manuscript.
- Proofreading and editing.
- Cover design and text layout.
- Printing quotes for NZ stock.
- Worldwide listing for print-on-demand paperback and eBook.
- Distribution to NZ stores and libraries.
- MailChimp and Facebook targeted marketing.

Visit www.wildsidepublishing.com/get-published/#publish or [print](#) and download the free guide to self-publishing.

Ray Curle: 09 439 5717

E: ray@thewildside.net

WORDWYZE PUBLISHING

Assisting Authors to Self-Publish

Services Offered:

- Professional Proofreading & Copy Editing
- Interior Layout and Design
- Cover Design
- E-book Conversion
- Upload to POD services for Global Distribution
- Local Print Preparation
- Photography and old photo retouching

Colleen Kaluza

E: 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 and, for example, I tell them that they do need to use mirror margins on their documents and no, the printer won't do that for you.

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

Janette Busch

E: WritingAnswers1@gmail.com

or Janette.Busch@gmail.com

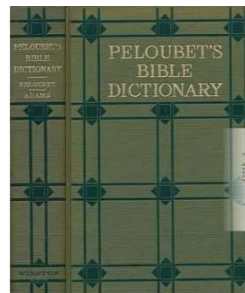
My path to the enriching world of Christian writing began many years ago on receiving a prize at the 40th Anniversary of the Assemblies Bible Classes.

The prize was a book entitled:

Peloubet's Bible Dictionary comprising 800 pages, written by F N Peloubet, assisted by Alice D Adams.

The competition was to write a story on Peter's life in the New Testament. I recall how thrilled I was to have had the opportunity to enter.

Frederick Swallow





How to Calculate Tax on Your Book Sales

(Article Two of Three)

by Andrew Stirling

Andrew Stirling is the Treasurer of NZ Christian Writers and Managing Director of St Andrews Accounting Limited.

In my last article, I explained that anyone who sells books in NZ must file annual tax returns with IRD. I also gave you some simple steps to record income and expenses for your book sales. Now I will teach you how to export your bank statements after 31 March and prepare the information to send to IRD.

Now there are all sorts of flash accounting software available for this task. Xero, MYOB, Reckon, etc. However, you only really need those if you are selling thousands of books. Assuming you aren't making a lot of sales, a spreadsheet will be enough.

Fortunately, most banks make this simple through internet banking. Here's how to do it.

After logging in to internet banking, select your business account. Depending on who you bank with, there should be an obvious option to 'export' the data. Perform an online search if you can't find it. Then export the transactions in a .csv file for the period up to 31 March. You can then download a spreadsheet showing all your business transactions.

Next open the file and save it somewhere safe.

Then you need to summarise the information. The simplest way (assuming you're using Excel) is to click on 'Data' then 'Sort'. This will enable you to group all the similar items together. You will need to spend a bit of time manipulating the data to ensure the correct transactions are grouped together. Then use the sum formula to give you exact numbers for all the categories.

You're not quite ready to file your return yet. There are still a few other items to include in your spreadsheet. These can be quite tricky to calculate so if you get stuck, let me know and I'll give you a hand. Just a reminder that I offer a 10% discount off my fee to NZCW members.

The first item to calculate is home office costs.

Grab a measuring tape and measure the area of your office (a lot of rooms are 3m x 3m). Then work out the area of your whole house (often this will be shown on your insurance quote). If your total house is 100m and office 9m, then you would be able to claim 9% of your house costs. Your house costs are power, phone, internet, rent/rates, insurance and mortgage interest (if you own your house). Record all your home costs then multiply them by the claimable percentage. I suggest creating another tab in your spreadsheet called 'home office' to calculate this.

You will also need to count how many books you have on hand at 31 March and their value. If you have the invoice from printing the books, you can work out the cost per book. Multiply this by the number of books you have on hand. This gives you a stock figure.

Finally in your spreadsheet you will need to create a formula for net profit. This will be income plus stock on hand (less any opening stock) minus expenses.

In my next article I'll teach you how to file a tax return with IRD.

Andrew Stirling. andrew@saa.co.nz

Note that the information provided in this article is of a general nature. I do not accept liability of any kind whatsoever to any person for losses incurred as a result of placing reliance on this information.

W E L C O M E New and Returning Members:	
Althea Barr Paihia	Leslie Kistan Auckland
Bronwynn McWilliams Auckland	Linda McKean Rotorua
Gail Fick Christchurch	Lisa Marie Preston Whakatane
Helen Sheat Nelson	Matt Froggatt Palmerston North
Jan Hutton Christchurch	Stephen Turner Auckland West
	Steve Beguely Auckland North
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	

Let Go Let God

Anecdote by Mel C Wood

It was New Year's Eve and thoughts about my good friend, Marilie, kept me awake knowing that she underwent chemotherapy the past few months for an ovarian cancer.

Before Christmas Day, I called on her landline number hoping to hear her voice. Sadly, it was not her voice that I heard but her house helper's, who informed me that my friend could not get up from bed to answer my call.

Christmas day passed by and my heart and mind kept reminding me to keep abreast of her health condition.

With a disturbed mind, I forgot about the first day of the new year that was about to start (11:30pm New Zealand, 6:30pm Philippines). I rushed out of my bedroom and made an overseas call hoping she'd be able to answer the phone.

It was not she, but her husband Danny who answered my call.

"Your friend is not doing well," were his first few words that stunned me. "Sad to say, her condition worsened even after several weeks of radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Those treatments as advised by her physician did not shield her from that intense pain."

After a few words, Danny went quiet and heaved a deep sigh. On my side, my mouth was agape in sorrow and disbelief.

"Mind you, she's so different now," he added. "We cannot even communicate with her because she's not responding. All she does is lie down and sleep all day. She hardly eats and we're finding it hard to convince her to take her medication. It's hard to accept the eventuality, but we have not given up finding ways for her healing and recovery. I know, all we can do is to pray hard and ask for God's mercy and a miracle to happen."

From his words, I could feel the pain he was feeling at seeing how his wife was suffering. I felt a lump in my throat and all I could do was listen to Danny's lamentation on how he and his family were dealing with a heavy trial that could eventually take his wife away.

It took a while for me to say words that I thought could alleviate Danny's distress. "Indeed, in the face of hard times like these, all we can do is to let go and let God do His will. We pray hard and beg for His mercy to give us more courage and strength to accept His plan. When our own time comes... 'we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.' *1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.*

Join a Writers Group

AUCKLAND NORTH SHORE
Ted Woudberg
Mob: (021) 0270 3011
tedw.hbc@gmail.com

AUCKLAND SOUTH
Margaret Paton.
(INTERIM CONTACT PERSON)
margaretpaton@xtra.co.nz

CHRISTCHURCH
Dave Palmer
Mob: (027) 209 4864
davepalmer@xtra.co.nz

HAWKES BAY
Debbie McDermott
Mob: (027) 769 2321
deborahmcdee@gmail.com

NELSON
Kay Peterson
Mob: (027)-547-6777
kaypeterson4@xtra.co.nz

NORTHLAND
Kathryn Paul
editor@nzchristianwriters.org

PALMERSTON NORTH
Rodney Hickman
Mob: (022) 676 3640
rodneyhickmanpoet@gmail.com

Join a Writers Group

TARANAKI
Judy Kibby
Mob: (027) 712 4390
judydfeetnshoes@gmail.com

TAURANGA
Cathy Harris
Mob: (027) 235 3919
cathy@blueskydata.co.nz

WAIKATO
Colleen Kaluza
colleen@wordwyze.nz

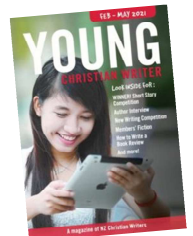
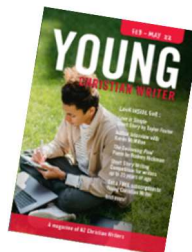
WELLINGTON
KAPITI
Paul Devereux
Mob: (022) 053 3618
pauldevereux@xtra.co.nz

WELLINGTON
LOWER HUTT – HUTT VALLEY & BEYOND
Stephen Douglas
Mob: (027) 276 2028
cwhuttvalleybeyond@gmail.com

WHAKATANE
Julie Collins
Mob: (027) 261 5572
jacollins1156@gmail.com

Join the NZ Christian Writers Group on Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/newzealandchristianwriters>

Young Christian Writer magazine is out now! Sign up for a **FREE** digital subscription today! (Note this special offer doesn't include *The Christian Writer*.) Click here to sign up to *Young Christian Writer*: <http://eepurl.com/hSQOhX>



SILENCE

by Stephen C Douglas

*The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts:
Therefore, guard accordingly, and take care that you entertain no
notions unsuitable to virtue and reasonable nature.*

- Marcus Aurelius

Silence – an

Intentional

Letting go to

Embrace stillness.

No chatter – a

Contemplative prayer

Experience

Repeat the mantra 'Ma-Ra-Na-Tha' with each breath and sense the
blessing return again and again. Becoming friends with silence and
stillness can lead to a deeper inner consent to God.*

Earlier this year, I finally attended the local Christian meditation group. The challenge for me was whether I would be committing myself to a controlled situation.

Anyway, there was no control and it was literally learning to take 20 minutes to still one's being and be silent. After a number of weeks and discussion on silence, the idea of creating an acrostic poem occurred. The poem takes the reader through the process of learning to still the body and mind by using each letter of the word – silence.

My reference to a mantra is repeated silently in the mind as a means to allow the mind to gently rest in one physical location rather than wander here and there. The Maranatha Mantra is recalled separately as 'Ma-Ra-Na-Tha', coordinating nicely with each breath. Allow it to arise rhythmically in the mind at whatever speed comes naturally. It will probably slow down on its own.

More poems may be found at Stephen's website: [Poems - Kiwi Poet](#)

Christmas Message

by Lesley Edgeler

Immanuel, God with us
Born on Christmas night,
One day He'll return,
To make everything right.

A precious new Babe
Born of Mary's obedience,
To an angel's declaration,
In godly allegiance.

His parents were poor.
With a donkey they came,
They named Him Jesus,
Such a beautiful name!

In a smelly cattle stall,
In a hay-filled manger,
He came down to earth,
To a world filled with danger.

To teach us and show
What we can learn from above,
God's one and only Son,
The epitome of love.

The angels sang, the shepherds ran,
To see the Babe so small,
Wise men came on their camel train,
The star had them enthralled.

Just look to our Saviour,
The great I Am,
The Lion of Judah,
The spotless Lamb.

So, love Him, adore Him,
The Christ born to die,
He's the message of Christmas,
For both you and I.

So you Want to Publish a Book?

by Angela C Millen

“How’s the book going?”

Do you get asked this question? My friends ask me this regularly, ever since I embarked on writing a book nine years ago. My responses have varied.

“Pretty well, thanks. I brainstormed my outline and am now starting on the first chapters.”

“Oh, it’s just sleeping at the moment. But do ask me again. I intend to finish it one day!”

“I just sent it off to my editor. Should get it back in a week or two, and then I can start revisions. We’re getting closer!”

“I feel kind of weird. I’m so close to being published, but I’m not sure I want to make it so publicly available.”

“We’ll see. Things keep taking longer than expected. Sometimes I think it will never be finished.”

“My sample copy arrived today. It looks like a real live book!”

I discovered that publishing a book is a long journey that demands perseverance. Here are five ‘C’s to sustain you on the way.

1. Clarity of purpose

Know your why. What is your goal?

My primary motivation was obedience. God cared for me through three years of chronic fatigue and subsequent recovery, and Psalm 40 inspired me to testify of what he had done. Secondly, I wanted to encourage others persevering through their own hard times. As someone who savours words, creating a book offered an ideal way to multiply my ministry to others.

2. Confidence in God

Recognise that your project depends on God’s guidance and provision. Meditating on Scripture and submitting the project to God in prayer sustained my resolve. I invited others to pray with me and shared updates to fuel their prayers.

3. Community support

Who will cheer you on? Who can you ask for help? Friends and family offered me encouragement, reminders and ideas. Beta-readers and survey responders gave constructive feedback. Professionals explained publishing options, edited my work and designed my cover.

4. Creative management

Writing a book requires varied skills. You are the “boss” who manages schedules and resources. You are the “writer” who crafts outlines and words. You need to zoom in to adjust fine details, and then zoom out to see the big picture.

Sometimes, before you go too crazy, you need to give both “boss” and “writer” a complete break. Bake cheese scones. Entertain children. Visit the beach. Taste a chocolate truffle. Sleep. Return to work with fresh vision and verve.

5. Collection of resources

It can take time to find good ones, but there are so many resources available to inspire and equip writers. Books, websites, podcasts, courses, etc. Look around, ask other writers for ideas, and try some yourself.

Recommended resources:

John Piper’s interview on writing books:

Part 1: <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-john-piper-prepares-to-write-books>

Part 2: <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-john-piper-writes-books>

Emily P. Freeman’s course “Create and Complete”:

<https://www.theschoolforcreativedirection.com/create-and-complete-1>

Joanna Penn’s e-book “Author 2.0 Blueprint”:

<https://www.thecreativepenn.com/resources/>

Reedsy’s online writing tool for formatting files for ebook and print ready files:

<https://reedsy.com/write-a-book>

Bookprinting.co.nz for helpful advice on printing:

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

And you already know about the New Zealand Christian Writer’s network for local support.

About the author: Angela C Millen, and her first published book, *Waiting to be Well: Sustaining hope while wrestling with weakness*, can be found online at www.holywonder.co.



Helpful Topics in The Christian Writer and Young Christian Writer Past Issues

Financial Side of Publishing

October-November 2023

Andrew Stirling – How to Calculate Tax on Your Book Sales

Using Social Media

August-September 2019

Kathryn Drinkwater – How Writers can use Facebook and avoid Scams

April-May 2020

Kathryn Drinkwater – Hot Tip – Networking with Newsletters

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

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

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

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

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)

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

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 40th 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?

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



The Craftsman

by Rodney Hickman

'Twas a slab of rough sawn timber,
hands moved slowly cross the grain
Feeling knots and texture, his eyes were fully trained
To look at it from many angles, look deeply along each side
What could he make from it? These thoughts ranged far and wide

Each piece he's ever made was crafted and unique
By using every type of wood from mahogany to teak
Behind him hung a range of tools, their own place upon the wall
Every tool had its purpose and he was expert with them all

And as I looked around there was shavings on the floor
Many pieces already started and in a corner I saw more
He never used a pattern, never made two things the same
Could be a table for a house, a wooden toy or picture frame

Some pieces he made quickly, some took many years
Some he made with happiness some he made with tears
The funny thing is this, he gives each piece away
But all those pieces still belong to him, I heard him say

Then I saw a smile come from his face: I reckon that he knew
What he was about to craft from that wood that he held new
And as he slowly planed the board with hands that seemed so tough
It was the gentle way he did it, his actions were not rough

This scene that is before you I think you clearly see
That timber could be anyone, could be you or me
So please don't fight the carpenter let him have his way
And be thankful that your beauty will be on show one day.

Writing Competitions Points Winners

Level One		Level Two		Level Three	
Elaine Dixon	30	Felicity Logan	42	Jean Crane	30
Stephen Douglas	21	Rachel Larkin	36	Janet Fleming	24
Rachel Batten	21	Fiona Murray	21	Eion Field	18
Lisa Preston	15				

Congratulations to our end-of-year prize winners! Also well done to those being promoted to their next level: Elaine Dixon, Stephen Douglas, Felicity Logan, Rachel Larkin and Fiona Murray.

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

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

Please note published competition entries have not been edited.

Competition Results

Level One

Judge: Debbie McDermott

Requirement: Write a devotion with Christmas as its central theme. Include a Bible verse at the beginning and finish the devotion with four lines of poetry, preferably original. Don't forget to give credit to the writer if using someone else's poem and give your devotion an appropriate title. (400 words)

General Comments

Congratulations to the 10 people who entered this competition. You all made such an excellent effort that I had a tough job choosing the first, second and third place winners. I finally made my decision on how well you fulfilled the criteria of the genre in which you were asked to write. Please note that some of you would have scored slightly higher than you did had you included the version of the Bible you were quoting from after the verse reference. This is a standard requirement that should not be overlooked.

So what exactly is a devotion? It is a short inspirational piece of writing, often referred to in some circles as a meditation. While a devotion is usually Bible-based, it is not a Bible study, Bible commentary, doctrinal treatise or a sermon. Rather, it is the sharing of an insight that the writer hopes will touch and change the heart of the reader.

Some years ago, Julie Belding (past President of NZCW) wrote an excellent article titled 'Let's Write a Devotional'. Below are some indented excerpts from it:

A good devotional consists of four elements:

- *A personal story or experience*
- *A theological reflection on that experience*
- *A Bible verse, or possibly two, that speaks to your theme*
- *A word of encouragement for your reader*

Are you looking for inspiration? You could find a Bible verse (e.g. a Proverb) and then think of a personal story to illustrate it. Or you could start with an interesting experience you have had and see if you can find a Bible verse that applies to it.

Lisa Preston (first place) and Robyn Wylie (third place equal) did particularly well in starting their devotions with their personal stories, while Rachel Batten (second place) and Sandra Miller (third place equal) began with a theological reflection on their chosen Bible verse/s and ended with their personal story and what Christmas meant to them.

First Place



Lisa
Preston
of Whakatane

Choosing Presence over Presents

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever. Psalm 16:11 (NLT)

The weeks leading up to Christmas had been busy. I was juggling full-time university study with parenting two daughters aged four and five and a son about to turn three. As a child, Christmas had always been a magical time for me and I wanted the same joy for my children. So, despite the sleep deprivation caused by the extra work, I spent weeks planning, shopping, decorating, baking and wrapping.

Since my children were the first and only grandchildren, the extended family wanted to celebrate Christmas with us. This meant piling the children and presents into the car and spending Christmas Eve, morning and afternoon at the homes of different relatives, all of whom wanted to see the children open their carefully selected gifts.

At each home we ate, chatted, laughed and opened scores of presents. With so many gifts to unwrap there was no time for the children to stop and play with any of their new toys. At the “third Christmas”, without his customary nap and being the age when he would have preferred to just play with the boxes and ribbons, my son crossed his arms in frustration and shouted, “No more presents!”

Rather than risk a two-year old’s full-blown tantrum, I scooped my son up and brought him to a borrowed bedroom for some quiet time. As I cuddled and rocked him, I reflected that the magical and joyful Christmas I had planned had actually been exhausting and overwhelming. Instead of simply celebrating the birth of Jesus and the gift of salvation he brought to the world, Christmas had become a complicated marathon of family expectations and materialism. I heard the Holy Spirit whisper, “You’ve chosen presents over my presence.” I prayed for forgiveness and asked for God’s help to never make that mistake again.

Has your holiday season become more stressful than joyful? Christmas celebrations and the exchange of gifts are meant to remind us that God gave us the best gift he could offer - his only son. Perhaps it’s time to choose his presence over presents.

A manger is filled with holy perfection;
God’s love revealed by the gift of his boy.
Christmas’ truth found in quiet reflection;
Life in his presence is love, hope and joy.

Second Place



Rachel
Batten
of New Plymouth

An Unexpected Christmas Gift

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1 - 5, NIV)

At this point you may be asking, how does this bible verse relate to Christmas? Where are Mary and Joseph? The shepherds? The angels?

Excellent questions. But here is another. What do we commemorate and celebrate at Christmas time?

The presence of God coming in the likeness of man, in the form of a baby. Jesus Christ, God himself, existing for ages past, through whom every living thing came into being, making tangible contact with humanity in the form of a new born babe, who at first glance you'd assume, knows nothing. How ironic?!

In the time when Jesus grew to become a man, the Israelite nation yearned for a king, a saviour, and a rescuer. Their oppression was great and they wanted political clout. Then came Jesus, who did not meet their expectations. He associated with sinners. He made broken people whole on the sabbath. He forgave sin. And in the process of exposing the man made constraints that put God in a box, Jesus showed that the thing he desired most was and is relationship, again blowing every expectation out of the water because everyone thought he wanted behaviour modification instead.

At the risk of sounding cliché Jesus is the greatest gift I have ever received. He bore the consequences of all my sin, sacrificed himself so I can be sinless, and in right relationship with Holy God. And he, my saviour like no other, came in the form of a humble, helpless infant. It defies all human logic and understanding.

And yet I am grateful. What present under the tree can compare to the peace and joy that comes from knowing that I am a child of God, restored to relationship with him? What a precious baby king and saviour we celebrate at Christmas?!

A new born babe, his skin so soft,
Our saviour and our king,
The one through whom the world was born,
For whom I'll praise and sing.

Third Place Equal



Sandy
Miller
of Auckland

God is One Step Ahead of Us

Now when they had departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him” (Matthew 2:13).

The arrival of the King of the Jews presented a threat to Herod the Great’s throne and to the corrupt religious and political leadership in Jerusalem (Matthew 2:3). But God was one step ahead. He knew what Herod was planning to do when he saw that he had been outwitted by the wise men (Matthew 2:16). God sent an angel to warn Joseph in a dream and instructed him what to do.

Have you ever wondered, what if Joseph refused to obey God? If Joseph had disobeyed God there would be no Christmas, no hope for our salvation and no redemption. However, because he obeyed God, Jesus was protected from being killed by Herod and was able to live a life fulfilling His Heavenly Father’s will.

In my early 20s, I felt the call of God to do a Discipleship Training School with Youth with A Mission in Hawaii for 6 months. After the 6 month course, I returned to my hometown in Mt Maunganui, Tauranga. I struggled for a month to get a job and when I couldn’t find one I headed up to Auckland. Within two weeks I was able to get a job working for a law firm. I have learnt that obeying God can be life changing. Had I ignored God, I would never have met my husband, had two amazing children, completed a degree in Business Management and have made lifetime friendships.

During the Christmas period, it is a time for us to reflect upon how we can develop our relationship with God. Is there something that God wants you to do in the New Year? Perhaps join a bible study or prayer group or to go to church. Maybe, you have not yet made a decision to follow Christ, “now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). As we prayerfully consider, what God wants us to do in the New Year, just remember that:

God is one step ahead of us
He knows what the future will hold
Listen, follow and abide in Him
And watch your journey unfold

Third Place Equal



Robyn
Wylie
of Tauranga

A Discovery

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; ...
You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Luke 2:11-12

John waited until Mum and Dad were at the cowshed doing the afternoon milking.
He grabbed my arm.

“C’mon Robyn, I want to show you something.”

He took hold of a dining chair and dragged it into Mum and Dad’s bedroom. Placing it beside the wardrobe, he opened the door, climbed up and pointed to the shelf above.

“See, I told you Santa wasn’t real!”

On the shelf above John’s head was a Spirograph set, a beach towel, a bucket, and a spade. In my letter to Santa, I had asked for a Spirograph set, a beach towel, a bucket, and a spade. What were they doing in Mum and Dad’s wardrobe?

Christmas morning arrived bright and sunny. John and I sat cross-legged under the Christmas tree waiting eagerly to open our Santa sacks. Freshly scrubbed after the morning milking, Mum and Dad sat down on the couch.

“Okay kids, you can open them now!”

I reached in and pulled out the Spirograph set. Next came the bucket and spade followed by the beach towel. John was right – Santa wasn’t real! I did my best to act surprised, knowing that we’d be in all sorts of trouble if Mum and Dad found out we’d been snooping in their wardrobe.

Later, friends dropped in for cake and a glass of Christmas cheer. We ate roast goose for lunch and Christmas pudding with brandy sauce. So yummy! Dad played Christmas carols on the stereo. My favourite was “Away in a Manger”. We’d been learning about baby Jesus in Sunday school.

As I tumbled into bed that night, I saw my Christmas presents on the spare bed. And then I remembered! Santa wasn’t real! Beside the bed sat my bedtime prayer reminder. It had a white cross on a dark blue shield, and it glowed in the dark.

Our Sunday school teacher told us that God loves us and he wants us to pray to him every day. Would God be angry at me for sneaking into Mum and Dad’s bedroom? Could I ask him about Santa?

I put my head under the covers and started to pray.

A child's whispered prayer glides heavenward
A loving Father is waiting there.
His peace sprinkles down upon the little soul
"Rest precious one, I will never let you go."

Level Two

Judge: Cindy David

Requirement: Imagine hosting a Christmas event dedicated to the homeless in your community, most of whom haven't heard about Jesus. As a host, you will be required to open the event with a prayer. Compose an encouraging prayer that will convey the true meaning of Christmas and incorporate the words 'Spirit' and 'hope'. (300 words)

General Comments

Choosing a winner for the NZCW competition proved to be a challenging task, given the exceptional quality of all four entries in effectively conveying the Christmas message to the homeless through prayer.

Among these entries, Felicity's submission particularly stood out. Rather than merely providing a description, Felicity crafted a concise and compelling narrative of Christmas right from the beginning, employing the 'show not tell' approach to writing. She skillfully painted a vivid picture of the night of Jesus' birth.

What set Felicity apart was her ability to offer profound encouragement in her prayer by staying focused on the true essence of Christmas, cleverly steering clear of emphasising the challenging circumstances of homelessness. Instead, she delivered a potent message with the following impactful line:

"In the same way, Lord God, be a home to me; regardless of where I lay my head and wherever my shelter may be, may I find in you my Home and my Shelter."

Despite the requirement for the incorporation of 'Spirit' and 'hope', Felicity went above and beyond, making 'home' the central theme that guided the entire prayer towards a powerful and resonant destination. Her entry not only met the criteria but exceeded expectations by encapsulating the true spirit of Christmas in a unique and heartfelt manner.



First Place



Felicity
Logan
of Feilding

Party Prayer

Father God, we rejoice in the birth of your Son Jesus many years ago, whose teaching made possible a richer way to communicate with you. In that same spirit of rejoicing, we thank you for today's special event; for the combined skills of those who planned venue and entertainment, and those who ordered and cooked food. May you bless all for their efforts and especially bless those whose attendance has made it worthwhile today.

We know, Father, that Jesus' parents were away from their current home as their baby's birth drew close, because of the national census. In urgent circumstances they found no accommodation. Where they got for rest that night was nowhere near a worthy birthplace for a future king, but instead a place for the most humble, a place reserved for animals. And although a heavenly throng of angels illuminated the sky to declare his birth, it was humble shepherds who investigated to confirm it.

In the same way, Lord God, you be a home to me; regardless of where I lay my head, and wherever is my shelter, may I find in you my Home and my Shelter.

Father we thank you for those who accepted today's invitation, and for your investment in each of us. May we respond to your Spirit who wishes to live in and through us; may we always remember that the creator King of the Universe took on a simple human form in his son Jesus, to live with us. Thank you Father for the hope of a forever home with you, if we accept that much more important invitation of a life in Jesus.

In the name of Jesus, and in the spirit of that hope, we pray Lord for your blessing on this meal and this company present.

Amen.



Second Place Equal



Fiona
Murray
of Lincoln,
Canterbury

A Christmas Prayer

God, we are all here today to celebrate Christmas.
To hear about your Son born on this festive, holy day.
Jesus, we ponder on your very ordinary birth.
Your life began in the dust and dirt of a stable.
You came to those who had been forgotten and looked down upon.
Your glory was revealed to the rejected and lonely.
The despised. The ignored.
The hope you gave to humankind came in the form of a baby.
Helpless. Weak. Vulnerable.
This is Christmas.
The truth that many have forgotten.
We have abandoned your story.
Why you came.
How you came.
The rich cannot see You as King.
Yet the poor have revelation.
They will inherit the wonderful riches You have for them in the World to Come.
You have promised endless life, walking with You in the paradise to be.
The Spirit of Christmas has been lost to the things of this world.
But they are temporary. They will not last.
The gifts. The food. The decorations.
All these will blow away with the breath of the wind.
Blessed are those who know You as their Saviour.
Blessed are those who love others the way You do.
For no greater love has ever been known:
That our Sovereign Lord entered this world as one of us.
Humble and pure He lived his life.
Then forgotten, naked and alone on the cross.

He invites us to believe and follow Him.
Death could not hold him down.
And one day He will raise us up to live with Him forever.
In perfection and peace.
Everything will be stripped away.
All we will have left is Him.
So now we dedicate our time together to You.
Remembering Your saving love during Christmas.
We pray in the name of our servant King.
Amen.

Second Place Equal



Christine
Platt
of Red Beach,
Auckland

Christmas Prayer

A warm welcome to all of you who have come to share this Christmas meal with us. We are very glad you are here.

Before we eat let's talk to God. I'll firstly read from God's book which explains the meaning of Christmas.

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

Dear Father God

We are here today to celebrate Christmas together. We are so thankful that you sent your son, Jesus, from heaven to be with us here on earth to give us hope.

Many of us here have been unfairly treated in life, just as you were. Some of us have made bad decisions which have brought pain to ourselves and others. You know all this. You know the circumstances of our lives. You are not shocked or disgusted. You understand human weakness.

Jesus, you provided a way out of hopelessness and sorrow. All we need to do is to ask for your forgiveness and to come into our lives by your Holy Spirit. This gives us all hope.

Please give comfort and peace to those who are hurting here today. Help us all to forgive those who've been mean to us. At this Christmas time may we all experience what it means to have you as our Friend, our Father and our Helper.

You are a Father to the fatherless. You are a friend to the lonely and bereaved.
You are a helper to those who feel lost and abandoned.

Lord, as this delicious food nourishes our physical bodies, may you also nourish us spiritually as we experience your generosity in providing this food and inviting us to eat it with you and with each other.

Thank you, Amen.

Third Place



Rachel
Larkin
of Auckland

A Christmas Prayer

Father God, our community welcomes you into this space.

We join together to celebrate the birth of your son, Jesus.

Who is your gift to our hurting world.

Who brings us peace, hope and love.

Who is called Immanuel, God with us.

O Father, I thank you that we are never alone. You are with us, through Jesus.

May your Spirit embrace each one here and may we feel a sense of connection.

That no one would feel like they are doing life on their own.

Just like your Son had no place to lay his head, we have people in our community doing it hard.

May your Spirit impart a deep sense of “being at home” in their hearts.

That wherever they are, sleeping in a doorway, walking the streets, searching for food.

That they feel loved and at peace with Jesus.

May everyone in our community feel welcome to the table.

Not everyone welcomed Jesus and he suffered for loving us.

But he never gave up and he knew who he was fighting for, all of us.

May we all know that abundant life that Jesus came to give.

May we all fight for everyone to have a good life.

Thank you God for our homeless brothers and sisters,

They show us what true courage and grit is.

May we recognise their courage and listen to their stories.

May their needs be met and their desires fulfilled.

Father God, thank you for loving us so much that you sent your dear son, Jesus.

Who offers us life giving water so we will never thirst again.

Who loves to hang out with everyone regardless of their status.

Who is called Immanuel, God with us.

Be with us today.

In Jesus Name,

Amen

Level Three

Judge: Julia Martin

Requirement: Write a poem in any format on a Christmas theme incorporating all five senses. (Up to 24 lines)

General Comments

Creativity is a gift from God. In creating male and female in His likeness, God bestowed on them diverse talents and abilities in areas such as art, music, design, and literature – including poetry.

Poetry has been described as ‘a type of literature or artistic writing that attempts to stir a reader’s imagination or emotion. The poet does this by carefully choosing and arranging language for its meaning, sound, and rhythm.’

A poem can make the reader experience something – not by telling them what to feel, but by evoking feelings directly. It’s a condensed form of writing and can come in a variety of forms – ranging from traditional rhyming poems such as a sonnet or ballad, to poems with a set format such as a haiku or limerick, or contemporary free verse with no consistent pattern of rhyme or metre.

Poetry has the power to communicate a message or release emotions such as anger, grief, fear, love, joy, or elation like no other form of art.

In this assignment, I asked for a Christmas poem in any format, religious or non-religious, serious or light-hearted, but it had to incorporate each of the five senses – sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell, within a maximum of 24 lines.

I was delighted to receive seven diverse entries. All but one dealt with the Nativity, but they all covered the five senses explicitly or implicitly.

I awarded first place to Janet Fleming for her simple but effective poem in which she assumes the role of an onlooker. Each stanza deals with one of the five senses and she ends the poem with a powerful personal response.

Second place goes to Pat Kerr for her free verse poem. She includes plenty of references to the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches associated with the Nativity story. I like the single rhyming line that follows each stanza and gives the poem unity.

I awarded third place to Eion Field for his novel rendition of the Christmas story as told by Joseph in the style and language of a cowboy. While this approach may not appeal to everyone, I commend Eion for his ingenuity. I'm sure if his poem was recited in the appropriate setting, it would be well received.

The other entries were highly commended, and I hope all the members get the opportunity to share their poems this Christmas.

First Place



Janet
Fleming
of Kaeo

I'll Not Forget

I'll not forget the sound that night,
I heard the angels singing,
They came from heaven down to earth
The news of Jesus bringing.

We went to Bethlehem to see
Just what they had been showing,
And found that tiny baby boy
With cattle standing lowing.

His mother, she was sitting there
The little baby touching,
She picked Him up and held Him tight
His precious body clutching.

There was a smell of animals
We noticed on our entrance,
But even with that rotting smell
There also was a fragrance.

The wonder of that tiny babe –
With tears my eyes were filling,
I tasted then their saltiness
As soon those tears were spilling.

My heart was filled with gratitude
I knelt beside the manger,
To think that God should come to earth
And care for me a stranger.

Second Place



Pat
Kerr
of Roxburgh

Emmanuel

Travel-weary, Joseph, the donkey, me
We're desperate to bathe, eat, rest...alone.
"No room in the inn!", crowds in Bethlehem.
Unlit stable- quiet, clean, sweet-smelling straw;
Warm, snickering cud-chewing company.

All is calm at early evening light

Sponge-bathed, fruit-fed, thirst assuaged, we snuggle-
Our straw bed, clean, cosy and so comfy...
The pains bore down; our promised son appears
He cries, whimpers, is cleansed, gently suckled
No time to panic, fear...our son is here!

All is calm: Emmanuel -here tonight

A lone star lights the whole evening sky
Humble hill shepherds gaze in awe, gob-smacked,
Hearing angelic voices fill the air,
They abandon their flocks, crowding the yard
Bathed in light. A stable, our baby boy...

All is calm: stable, sky, hill; all is bright

Jesus wakes, gurgles, blows milky bubbles
Grown men bow, worship our special child
Adoring, uttering words of praise
Returning humbled, love-filled to their flocks
Unkempt, respectful God-worshippers all.

All is calm this special God-planned birth night

Third Place



Eion
Field
of Waikato

A Cowboy's Christmas Tale

“Ben, I’m saddling you for a journey today, ‘cos we’re leavin’ early to go a long way. I know you been haulin’ bricks all ya life; this time you’re gonna be takin’ my wife. These crazy rules of the governor, y’see, compel us to travel; you, Mary an’ me. Mary has to ride while I walk beside ya, Ben. It’s nigh on sixty mile to reach Bethlehem.

Ben, I don’t understand what’s happenin’ complete, as we battle the dust and the heat, But Mary’s expectin’ a baby, yessir! Durn me if I know how this can occur. . . And this special babe is due about now, so we gotta get where we’re goin’ somehow. Sure it’s a heatwave an’ the flies are a curse, a sandstorm’s stingin’ to make things worse. And the trail that we’re trackin’ aint no easy run, hour after hour in the blistering sun. Yet, Ben, you been toiling without a complaint, I should be like you (but I actually aint...) Yeah, you’re doin’ fine, my helper and friend, but – it’s thirty more mile to Bethlehem.

Ben, you been trampin’ all day on the road – best little donkey I ever knowed, Though it’s sure been a mighty hard track, my sweetheart’s traveling fine on your back. So here’s food an’ water; you guzzle it, Ben, ‘cos it’s twenty more mile to make Bethlehem.

Now pressing on through the night inky black, durn me if I know how you still see the track. But this here snowstorm will soon be past. Ben, I reckon we’ll make it at last See that big star up there, shines like a gem, an’ points to the lights of dear Bethlehem.”

Well late that night we arrived safe in town, but there seemed no place for us to bed down ‘Cept a cattle shed, (had a strong smell inside), but pretty soon y’know a new baby cried. There weren’t no proper crib to lay that baby in. Me an’ Mary used a cattle feeding bin. All heaven opened up over Bethlehem that night. Angels – thousands – in a blaze of light Praising the Almighty at baby Jesus’ birth. We heard their anthem ring across the earth. Then Ben joined in; laughed as donkeys only can. Yet that screech was special to a man. Yep, old Ben, my helper and my friend, had battled on and got us all the way to Bethlehem.



Competitions for February 2024

Due by 1 January 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

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: In the Bible, Jesus is referred to as a lamb and as a lion (e.g. Revelation 5:5 and 22:3). Research this topic, then write an essay on both aspects—what they signify and what they mean to you. Bible references and quotations should comprise no more than 25% of total content. Include a brief bibliography. (500 words, excluding bibliography)

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org



Debbie

Level Two—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Describe an interesting place you have visited on holiday in New Zealand. Show the reader the fun or adventure you had so that others will plan to visit the site as well. Include a photo. (400 words)

Email entry to Shirley Jamieson at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

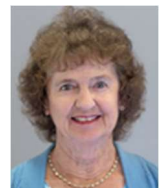


Shirley

Level Three—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Write a new National Anthem for New Zealand in modern language while still retaining a Christian influence. (4 verses maximum)

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org



Julia



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

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