

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2025

# THE CHRISTIAN writer

## SEE INSIDE FOR

Upcoming Christian Writers Retreat  
NZCW Flaxmill Retreat, Whitianga

### Book Reviews:

*Challenge to Change* by Dion S Tan

*Growing in Jesus* by Barry Jackson

*Paradise Renewed* by S J Beguely

*Adriel and the Great Escape*  
by Kay Peterson

### Articles including:

*Songwriting DIY – Part Two*  
by Felicity Logan

*Nelson Christian Writers Group*  
by Kay Peterson

*Teamwork Makes the Publishing Work*  
by Dan Balow

*Wild Side Publishing's Legacy Lives On*  
by Anya McKee

Poetry, Notices, Celebrations,  
Competitions and more!

A magazine of NZ Christian Writers



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

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

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

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

For magazine contributions, address changes and membership queries.

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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

Feb – Mar 2025

ISSN 2537-8708 (Online)

VOL 42. No 1

ISSN 1171-0098 (Print)

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

# President's Report



Welcome to our Feb-Mar 2025 edition of *The Christian Writer* magazine. I trust you've enjoyed a sunny start to the new year season. We are super excited for many of our members to be joining us at our Retreat 2025. These special retreats for our national collective only come around every two years. Our retreat experiences are a unique time for our members to connect in person, learn from several accomplished writers and enjoy an exceptional retreat at Flaxmill Retreat Centre in Whitianga on the Coromandel Peninsula. Great news! We currently have close to 40 per cent of our capacity already booked. Here are some additional details regarding our retreat so you, too, can join us. Online registrations are still available for our cottage and house accommodation options and we highly recommend you secure your place to avoid any disappointment. As it was in 2023, we anticipate another fully booked retreat for our members. Why not register your interest today by filling in our online form, available here: [www.nzchristianwriters.org/retreat-2025/](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/retreat-2025/)

Many of our members are choosing to connect and are sharing their writing journey via our Facebook group online. Feel free to like, comment and connect with our members. You'll find articles, contributions and inspirational posts from many active members available via our Facebook group. We currently have close to 400 online connectors who have chosen to be part of our online group. You are very welcome to like our page and contribute here:

[www.facebook.com/groups/newzealandchristianwriters](http://www.facebook.com/groups/newzealandchristianwriters)

May I also encourage you by asking what is your personal writing goal for 2025? For many of our experienced member writers, their writing goal for 2025 may be to publish their first or next book. As many of us will testify, it takes a significant amount of diligence, perseverance, skill, tenacity and, above all, time, to complete a book. Let's remember; it's your story for His glory. Be blessed in Jesus name as you write with and for Him. If you know other Christian writers in your community who may find value in joining our collective, simply point them to our website: [www.nzchristianwriters.org/join/](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/join/)



A special thanks again to member and photographer, Elaine Dixon for the photo featured on the front cover of this magazine.

Be blessed

Justin St Vincent

# Editorial: Connected to the Vine

by Kathryn Paul



Happy new year to all our readers. I hope you have made some plans for 2025 that you are looking forward to. I'm looking forward this year to improving my writing routine. I'm now living in a cosy cottage which will be my writing studio to spend my evenings in, working at my computer.

Have you set some writing goals for the year ahead? Or perhaps for those who are already further along their publishing journey, you are focusing on editing, or marketing and publicity? Being a writer is an ongoing education of learning. Being a Christian writer is a life-long journey of learning through a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Connection is so important – especially connecting with the Lord and connecting with other Christians who will encourage you. Connection destroys loneliness and boosts our mental health. Connection helps us stay on a positive, healthy track in many different ways.

Jesus described Himself as a vine for a good reason, we must stay connected to Him as our spiritual life-source. He will lead us with our writing along with every other aspect of our lives. It's all important to Him. You are important to Him.

I encourage you this year to take actions that will help you deepen and strengthen your connection with the Lord. Out of that source will come the life for everything else.

Remember not to reject yourself. Not you, or your abilities or writing. At my work where we grow thousands of flower bulbs, we have a bank where the reject flower bulbs get thrown away. These bulbs weren't considered saleable and were not expected to produce well. As the photo shows, just because someone rejected you, it doesn't mean it's the truth about you or your ability for your writing to bloom. The Lord promises to never leave you or forsake you. What you have to write about is important. Have your say, be heard and be read. God loves you.



With love in Jesus,

from Kathryn

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

# Notices

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

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

## **Local Writers Group Leaders Wanted**

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

## **Creative Writing/Article Writing Submissions Wanted Please**

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

## **South Island Christian Book Authors Network**

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

## **Raising Godly Mothers Magazine**

If you are an older mother who would like to write an article for future issues of *Raising Godly Mothers* or if you are a young mother who is struggling, please contact Shing at [rgm@rgm.co.nz](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.

**To locate and read past magazine issues visit [www.nzchristianwriters.org/magazines](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/magazines) and click on the relevant magazine cover.**

**MAY 1st-4th 2025**

**Flaxmill Retreat Centre | Whitianga**

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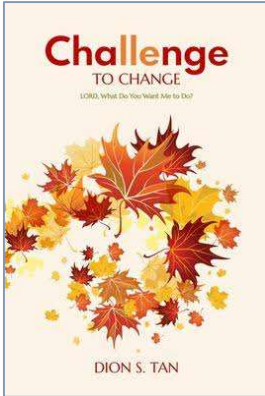
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## Book Review



### Challenge to Change

By Dion S Tan

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Cast Your Net Publishing 2024

As a professional change analyst in the corporate world, Dion draws on his knowledge and experience of change to write this Christian book.

Whether we like it or not, change is inevitable, but as believers in Jesus Christ we have, as Dion claims, 'entered into a life-changing relationship with Him and joined a life-changing journey of constant transformation.'

Using the examples of seven Biblical characters – Abraham, Moses, David, Ruth, Peter, Paul and Jesus, Dion illustrates how God brought about changes and transformation in the lives of these people of faith.

Devoting a chapter to each of these characters from long ago, he draws out principles and truths from their lives that are surprisingly relevant and applicable to the experiences of believers facing change in the modern age.

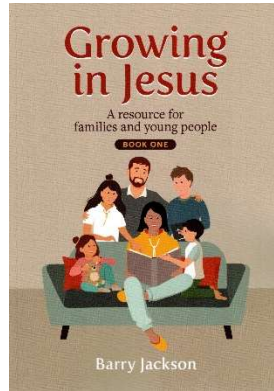
The writer also uses examples of challenges he's encountered in the business world, along with career changes and immigration issues.

In the studies there are useful charts, diagrams, maps, prayers, and a list of searching questions for the reader to contemplate and probe deeper.

The book is easy to read, is thought-provoking, and well-grounded in scripture.

I believe it would be helpful for personal study but also useful for a group study and discussion, especially for business or professional people.

## Book Review



### Growing in Jesus

#### Book One

By Barry Jackson

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Castle Publishing Ltd 2024

Years ago, as a parent of young children, Barry struggled to find suitable Christian resources to help raise and encourage their children spiritually.

Likewise, as a teacher, particularly in Christian schools, he found there was a lack of a biblical foundation available to help young people navigate life as believers in a rapidly changing world. He writes: 'A well-understood and well-lived faith in Christ is the best gift that you can give our children.'

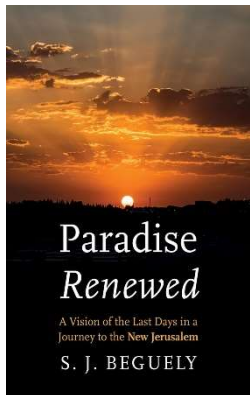
With that intention, Barry has written *Growing in Jesus (Book One of Two)* as a resource for families and young people both in the home and the classroom. With 52 engaging chapters on subjects such as: What is God like? How do we become more like the Lord Jesus? the author has produced a series of interactive lessons that help young people explore and understand the teachings of the Bible while also nurturing and encouraging them in the Christian faith.

The aim of the book he claims, 'is spiritual transformation and not religious information.'

Each lesson is accompanied by extra biblical references, questions to answer and discuss, practical fun things to do, followed by a relevant prayer.

*Growing in Jesus* is aimed at young people aged around 11-12 years, but I believe it is also suitable for older children or students of any age.

It's an excellent resource with good feedback from trials undertaken by parents and teachers in the Manawatu district. I confidently recommend it and look forward to Book Two due out later next year.



### Paradise Renewed A Vision of the Last Days in a Journey to the New Jerusalem

By S J Beguely

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Resource Publications 2024

As a serious student of eschatology (the study and theology of end times), Steve Beguely has produced this scholarly work based on the prophetic teachings of Scripture.

Written entirely in free verse, the long narrative poem follows the experiences of his fictitious characters who are involved and impacted by the extraordinary apocalyptic events of the future as predicted in the Bible.

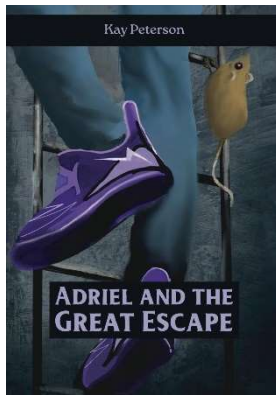
He writes: ‘...although the story is based on a close analysis of the Scriptures, it is fiction which adds flesh to the bare bones of the revelation of the Lord Jesus concerning the last days.’

The story begins in the future beyond the apocalypse in the year 2082. The main character, Paul Christopher, now lives as a fully redeemed and regenerated immortal during the millennial reign of Christ on earth.

Seeking answers to their spiritual and practical questions, a married couple named Jonathan and Sarah approach Paul and ask him to share his life’s story and the reason why his existence is different from their own. The couple eventually come to full faith in Christ and receive salvation and redemption.

In the back of the book, Steve gives a comprehensive narrative overview, including the rationale for the timing and sequence of last day events, plus a useful glossary.

Not everyone will agree with Steve’s analysis and interpretation, but it’s evident he’s delved deeply into the subject, and I can recommend his book to readers who have a serious interest in future world events.



### Adriel and the Great Escape The Adriel Series Book Two

By Kay Peterson

Review by Julia Martin

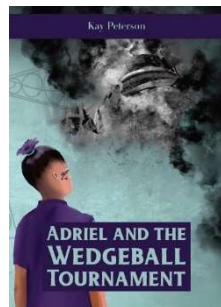
Published by Torn Curtain Publishing 2024

For younger readers of fantasy stories, Kay Peterson of Nelson has just released her second book in **The Adriel Series** entitled *Adriel And The great Escape*.

Her first book *Adriel and the Wedgeball Tournament* was reviewed in *Oct-Nov 2024 The Christian Writer* magazine.

Her third book in the series entitled *Adriel and the Journey to Nowhere* is due out early in 2025.

These books are highly recommended to readers who enjoy this genre.



## Change to Young Christian Writer issue dates:

Please note this year our YCW magazine issue dates will be changing to:

March-June 2025

July-October 2025 and

November 2025-February 2026.

# Nelson Christian Writers Group

by Kay Peterson

We are a small group made up of people at different stages of our journeys. Why do we meet? To get mutual support and encouragement. Three of us have published work so far, with another waiting for his first book to arrive. Another is keen to start writing. These five make up the core of the Nelson Christian Writers Group at present. Others come along to see if we can help them get started, or to find the best place to get their work in print. Some stay, others move on. One woman came to get help to have her late husband's poems printed.

I use the NZCW format as closely as possible. Devotions, writing exercises and homework assignments are taken from NZCW Magazines.

Most of our group are members of NZCW. I use my own personal journey as an example of the support I have received to encourage others to join.

I find it interesting that I first joined NZCW to get support and encouragement and now others turn to me for that support. I have become a mentor for one member who now lives overseas but still wants to be part of our group and I have found an accountability partner from within the group.

Kay Peterson  
Nelson Group Leader



Are you hoping to purchase a great book by a Christian author? Are you interested in viewing the genres in which our members have been published?

A massive thank you to Fiona and Alan Murray, who have, together, prepared the NZ Christian Writers Members' Books Catalogue. Click the image above to view over 200 NZCW members' books available for sale or go to [www.nzchristianwriters.org/catalogue](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/catalogue).

# Shame Eclipsed

by Jake Watkin of Mangawhai Writers Group

Poor beauty, she clings to this dilapidated barn.  
Plaything of a harsh wind.  
Sad and weak, you have become one with this lifeless valley.  
Hunched over, long awaiting the Carpenter's  
Compassionate eye.

Time pushes and pulls, testing my roots.  
Each patient creak reveals my willingness?

At long last my day has come.  
Even before the sun breaks from behind the horizon,  
I see my Carpenter arriving with a lantern in hand.  
How these floorboards have longed to kiss your holy feet.

Evil, you have been cast aside.  
Even the past has washed its hands of you.  
The sun has found a permanent home.  
Warm rays and timber embrace dancing with joy.  
At last your gentle and loving touch has made all things  
New

# When The Plants Spring Up

by Greg Maynard

When the air gets warmer and the Winter storms have faded away,  
as the new season approaches we begin to pray,  
New ground shoots appear, Spring blossom is in the air,  
some families scampering to their local Spring fair with their faces  
glowing with glee and cheer.  
Gardens are large or small, when weeds appear it can bring despair,  
we spray and pull until our heart's content, in with the compost, leave for a while  
then out with the rotary hoe to give it another go for the year.  
What will we grow this year? Potatoes, pumpkin or courgettes, tomatoes as they  
climb in time, or the sweet peas up the frame like a flame, the garden is never the  
same – I have grown lettuce, carrots that need thinning, beetroot, broccoli, choy,  
radish and cauliflower, silver beet, even tried chilli, that's not silly to give it a try,  
strawberries hidden under the netting, sweet and juicy good for your pudding.  
Don't forget the cucumber to stay as cool as one, out of the sun and into the fridge is  
the best place and to keep pace when you're lurkin', around to keep everything well-  
watered including the gherkin.  
Gardens are the best place to be to escape all busyness or frantic pace of our world,  
good therapy for our soul as we strive forward toward our goal, so stay and pray for  
the plants to grow and bring yield in each field in sun, rain hail, or snow.

# Songwriting DIY

New Column by Felicity Logan

## Part Two: Rhythm Pattern

Establish a **rhyme scheme** if you want one. I take a lined page and write the alphabet letters one per line (plus common blends such as ch-, fl-, br-, pr- etc.), and create columns of rhymes. Write the lyrics as a poem with the syllables separated by hyphens.

Note, syllables almost always start with a consonant (more emphasized than a vowel) and ends with a vowel (because these have more carrying power as you sing, benefitting from good sound quality).

Splitting up syllables will help you establish the best rhythm pattern. Tap your toes slowly as you read, and underline the syllables matching the down-taps (syllables to accent/emphasize). Musicians will recognize these as immediately following barlines in the written music (also maybe the halfway point in a bar), or the right place for percussionists to accent.

Find an old church Hymnal with a Metrical Index in the back. These categorize the “metre” which is the number of syllables in each line.eg. *What a Friend we have in Jesus* is 8.7.8.7. and then repeats so is classified as 8.7.8.7.D. So is *Come thou Fount of every Blessing* and *Love divine, all loves Excelling* so any of those words can use the same tune. Count the syllables of your lyrics and see if your metre matches any of the traditional forms. Old pre-existing melodies might give you ideas for starting your own. (Part Three due out Apr-May 2025).

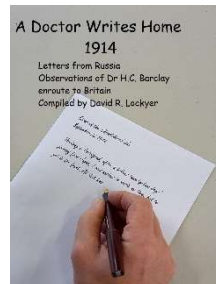


# Let's Celebrate!

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

Congratulations to David and Janet Lockyer! David published his second book in December 2024 and an informal book launch was held at Waimate Strawberry Fair. It is called *A Doctor Writes Home 1914; Letters from Russia Observations of Dr H C Barclay enroute to Britain*.

It is a collection of letters from Dr Barclay when he ended up working on the Russian front in World War I. It also contains some history of the Barclay family of whom the father, Rev George Barclay, was a prominent Presbyterian minister in South Canterbury. It has an additional appendix on Waimate's history. It's an interesting book with lots of insights of that time. The book is A5 size and has 68 pages, selling at \$23.00 plus P&P. Look for the book review, coming up in our April-May issue.



Congratulations to Torn Curtain Publishing who have acquired Wild Side Publishing. See the article on page 17 of this magazine issue.





*Ted Woudberg, convenor of North Shore Christian Writers, with guest speaker, Staci McLean*

## Staci McLean at North Shore Group

by Debbie Bennett

There was a very special guest from NZCW's previous retreat keynote speaker at 2024's final meeting on 23 November at the North Shore's Christian Writers group. Author, speaker and workshop facilitator, Staci McLean, delivered two compelling 40-minute lectures for the group at a member's home.

Staci's first lecture advised the group on how to write a book within weeks, which included editing, formatting and printing. Her second lecture covered the topic of social media; its purpose and how it can be used to promote your books and engage your audience.

The meeting included time for writing-related questions during Staci's enlightening lectures. As a token of their appreciation, Staci was presented with a bouquet of flowers from the group.

## Be Still

by Lorraine Dittrich

O you of little faith  
How you miss out  
On the riches promised  
All those moments of doubt  
Does He hear when I pray  
How can I do better  
Maybe guard more what I say  
Work harder for Him each day

Then it came to me clearly  
Trust Him with all my heart  
Only then doubts disappear  
Hope and faith appear  
It is His gift to me  
Unconditional and free  
Received only by grace  
Given to be still  
Resting in His embrace

# Professional Writing Services

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

## A WORD ABOUT EDITING

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

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

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

**Graham Pedersen:** 027 440 5851

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

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## JEFFS EDITING SERVICES

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

Services I offer:

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

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

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

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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)

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## WRITING ANSWERS

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

I work with authors to prepare their work for self-publishing. I make sure their documents are print ready.

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

### Janette Busch

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*Any questions?*



# Teamwork Makes the Publishing Work

by Dan Balow

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

One hundred years ago, Christopher Tolkien was born to Edith and John Ronald Reuel (JRR) Tolkien. He was the third of four children and the youngest son.

Christopher was deeply involved in his father's work, editing it and drawing the maps used in the Lord of the Rings (LOTR) books. At one point, his dad invited him to join the famous writer's group The Inklings.

Christopher was integrally involved in Tolkien family affairs his entire life. After his mother, Edith, passed away in 1971 and his father in 1973, he led the Tolkien estate, weathering the LOTR film processes and managing the immense financial and legal implications. He passed away in 2020.

By the way, just like about 99 per cent of authors who see their work put into film and are disappointed, he was not a big fan of the LOTR films.

There has never been a successful book author anywhere who didn't have a support system to encourage, challenge, and help with the work. While there are significant periods when writing is a solitary task, the overall life of an author is filled with people who stand with them. It's why books have an acknowledgments or dedication page.

There is no one way to be successful as an author. If you self-publish, you are the de facto CEO of your publishing company, with all the duties, responsibilities, and ups and downs accompanying being in charge. But you still need more people than just the CEO.

Every author needs to take these actions in relation to other people to be successful:

- Gain the support of family and friends. If someone close wants to help, let them. Ask for help. Pay them if you can.
- Maintain close personal friendships to keep grounded.
- Take part in a writers group—small or large. Authors need to be around those doing the same thing they are.
- Think of ways to help other authors, making introductions and recommending other authors' books. This also helps to keep the author emotionally and spiritually grounded.
- Go to conferences (both writers and those related to their topic) to continually grow. Stop doing this, and your skills and professional edge will wither away.
- Maintain professional relationships to keep being challenged. This includes subscribing to blogs, podcasts, newsletters, journals, or anything that will push the author.

- Be active in your church. (Work in the early primary Sunday school to make certain you stay humble.)
- Read other writers' material.
- Write regularly. It's a job. You don't go to work only when you feel like it.
- Look for opportunities to contribute words to your church, school, community, profession, etc. (Do this for free.)
- Look for any opportunities to monetize your work in commercial channels.
- Write unique and encouraging notes to friends.
- Write the best condolence note your closest friend has ever read.

Every one of the above actions will help keep your life in balance.

Finally, don't be in a hurry. Worthwhile things take time. Maybe a hundred years from now, someone will write about how you helped someone else be successful and encourage them to do the same for someone else.

And so on and so on.

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## **Wild Side Publishing's Legacy Lives On**

by Anya McKee

For over a decade, Wild Side Publishing has blessed and facilitated countless Christian authors across New Zealand. Founded by Ray and Janet Curle in 2014, the imprint's journey has been marked by dedication, passion, and a deep commitment to empowering authors to get their message into the hands of as many readers as possible.

As many of you know, for the past few years, Ray and Janet have felt a clear call from God to minister healing and hope through their work with Arapohue Trust. In December 2024, Wild Side Publishing was acquired by Jeff and Anya McKee, with a heart to see Janet and Ray fully released into this new season of their lives.

Jeff and Anya are delighted to continue the legacy of Wild Side Publishing. They, along with their dedicated team of industry professionals at Torn Curtain Publishing, have extensive experience working with Christian authors in New Zealand, Australia, the United States, and around the world. Their vision is to meet the modern demands of the Christian publishing industry and to contribute to the wider conversations that lead to a deeper faith.

As the Torn Curtain Group expands, it will be on the lookout for talented and experienced individuals who share their heart for this ministry. In line with their passion for raising up a new generation of Christian publishing professionals, they will also be expanding their training program for aspiring editors, designers, and publication managers. This will ensure Wild Side's legacy and the future of faith-based publishing in New Zealand remains strong.

As always, new and established authors are invited to get in touch or book a call to discuss their writing projects. As one of New Zealand's leading Christian publishing companies, the Torn Curtain Group offers a full range of services including manuscript planning and mentoring, manuscript assessments, developmental and copy editing, proofreading, and a wide range of publishing options. They value your prayers, partnership and ongoing support of their wonderful authors during this exciting transition.

[www.wildsidepublishing.com](http://www.wildsidepublishing.com) | [www.torncurtainpublishing.com](http://www.torncurtainpublishing.com)

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## Here are some helpful writer/reader websites:



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

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

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

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

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



**RGM**  
Raising Godly Mothers

ISSUE 1 WINTER 2023

NEW ZEALAND CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S 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.

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For more info and subscription details:  
**[www.rgm.co.nz](http://www.rgm.co.nz)**

# Steppingstones

by Kathryn Paul

My life's destination  
Is not here on Earth  
I'm designed, not by chance  
Since before my birth.

My life's short assignment  
Is fleeting and fast  
It's not for my pleasure,  
Nor about my past.

The goals of my journey,  
Are these simple two;  
Bringing God His glory,  
To home remain true.



*Piroa Falls, Waipu Gorge, Northland*

Home is where my heart is,  
Paradise, Heaven.  
That's where I'm aiming for,  
I'll meet Thunders Seven.

I'm a soldier of sorts,  
Navigating stones.  
Stepping forward, steady,  
Rippling water tones.



Keeping my life simple,  
It's not about stuff.  
It's not worldly success,  
I have quite enough.

I'm not satisfied here,  
Nor expect to be.  
This place doesn't compare,  
To what I will see.

My tactics written down,  
His commands obeyed.  
This soldier is winning,  
And I'm not afraid.

So I'll keep on stepping,  
To finish my task.  
It won't be much longer,  
To do all You ask.

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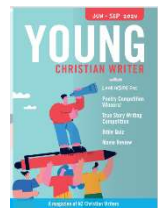
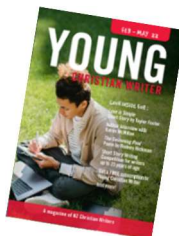
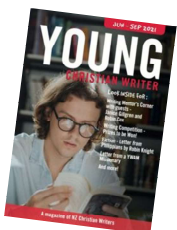
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## Join the NZ Christian Writers Group on Facebook

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

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

**Aiden Meerman**  
Wellington

**Christina Persico**  
Auckland

**Colin Shilston**  
Tauranga

**Elena Dimcea**  
Morrinsville

**Faye Griffiths**  
Palmerston North

**Gogo George Ntor**  
Wellington

**Harriet  
Omondiagbe**  
Auckland

**Jacob Watkin**  
Waipu

**Jared Thomsen**  
Opotiki

**Joel Shadbolt**  
Auckland North

**Jess Mcleod**  
Gisborne

**Lynne Stehlin**  
Gisborne

**Michelle Morrell**  
Auckland

**Sarah Chamberlin**  
Hamilton

**Sarah Prem  
Manogarom**  
Auckland

**Trish Spooner**  
Richmond

**Yvette Bate**  
Reporoa

**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)**

## Have you Heard?

by Frances Hall

Have you heard that you are loved?

In the noise of life catapulting feelings over vaults of uncertainty?

Have you heard when grief breaks you to wreckage or injustice pancakes you into silent submission?

Have you heard the whisper, the still small voice booming from an overwhelming compassion?

You are loved ...in, over, through, under.

Regret is smashed to smithereens, despair slinks away to lick its wounds and hope slides into the gaping holes and the niggling gaps.

Have you heard that you are loved?

You, of the bravado, you of the pain played out through a broken heart.

You, the victim, the victor.

Rebuke your deafness and listen for that love.

And you will hear the voice of God.

*(Picture on right courtesy of the Bible Colouring App.)*





# Introducing Magazine Volunteer, Debbie Bennett

My real name is Deborah Bennett. I feel fully kiwi, yet ethnically I'm half Singaporean and half kiwi, due to Mum being born in Singapore and Dad born here. I was raised in a Christian family where I came to faith at Easter Camp at Mystery Creek near Hamilton age 13.

I've always wanted to be a writer. I did a Bachelor of Communication Studies from AUT university, followed by a Diploma in Freelance Journalism from the NZ Institute of Business Studies. Over the years I've written blogs and special pieces for various publications. I also did a six-month internship for *My Wedding Magazine*.

I've long discovered a passion for writing poetry, even dabbling in performance poetry. I also enjoy creative writing, especially short stories. I find writing is a lovely art form. Unusual, quirky characters tend to surface in my short stories. On another note, with articles about people, I enjoy highlighting the best and most interesting things about them.

It is my pleasure to be able to help others with writing tasks, editing or English in general. May I do more of that in years to come.

## 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 10 pt:** 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 18 pt:** The heading should be in Arial type font:

## Heading

Highlight it and make it bold 18 pt 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 per cent 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 Begins Again

Level One		Level Two		Level Three	
Verna McFelin	15	Robert Prins	15	Elaine Dixon	15
Renee Tavita	12	Stephen Douglas	12	Sandy Miller	12
		Christine Platt	9	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 Jun–Jul 2025 magazine edition.

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

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

# Competition Results

## Level One

**Judge: Debbie McDermott**

**Requirement:** Write a comical story with a Christian takeaway message using the following homonyms (words that sound the same but have different meanings) at least once—week | weak : find | fined : foul | fowl: bawled | bald : bare | bear : sight | site : here | hear (500 words).

### General Comments

*A warm thank you to the three contestants who made the effort to enter this competition during the Christmas and New Year festive season.*

*As it can be difficult to make time to write during busy holiday periods, a full list of the Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 competition topics for the year is provided on the NZCW website (<https://www.nzchristianwriters.org/competitions/>) as well as on the printed reference sheet sent to subscribers of the hard copy magazine. Knowing the topics ahead of time enables contestants to methodically work on, check, edit and submit their entries well in advance of the deadlines, rather than dashing them off at the last minute or not entering at all because they have left it too late. Working on topics ahead of time does require careful planning but it is a good discipline to develop—not just for entering competitions, but also for making progress with your own writing projects.*

*Of the three contestants, first-time entrant Verna McFelin is to be particularly commended for planning ahead and submitting her entry two weeks before the competition closed. Her story, which is well-written, comical and unpreachy earned her a well-deserved First Place. I awarded Second Place to first-time entrant Rennee Tavita for her nicely written, amusing schoolroom anecdote and providing her reader with a thought-provoking takeaway message. Well done!*

*Sadly, I was unable to place the third contestant because they failed to include any of the stipulated homonyms at least once in their story. Not meeting this key requirement resulted in a significant loss of marks—which is a great pity as their writing is very good and they would have definitely been awarded a winning place otherwise. I hope their story will be published in our magazine at some stage.*

*(NB: Do remember that meeting ALL the requirements of the assigned competition topic is vital if you want to do well. If you don't understand those requirements, do feel free to ask for clarification.)*

# First Place



Verna  
McFelin  
of Christchurch

## The Great Sheep Escape

---

I lived on a small farm in North Otago on the site of the old Ardgowan Homestead, for several years, keeping a small flock of sheep. Among them was Sam, our pet sheep, who was as clever as he was stubborn. No matter how green the pasture we provided, Sam was convinced the grass was greener on the other side of the fence.

No fence—electric or not—could contain him or the flock he led. Whenever they escaped, they would charge down the road toward the nearby town. One week, I went outside and saw no sheep in sight. Frustrated, I bawled, “This is too much to bear, they’ve escaped again!” My husband and I searched the roads but could not find them anywhere.

Unbeknown to us, the flock had wandered into Mr. Anderson’s prize rose garden, leaving behind nothing but bare stems and a very foul mouthed neighbour. When the Animal Inspector arrived, flock in tow, his stern expression made my heart sink.

“I’ve just returned from the Andersons’,” he said. “Your fowl, sorry, your sheep ate every last rose bloom. Do these belong to you?”

I hesitated, glancing at my husband. Admitting ownership would mean we would be fined and we couldn’t afford it. So, I lied. “No,” I said, trying to sound casual.

The Inspector raised an eyebrow making his bald head crinkle on top and smiled. “Fair enough,” he said with a knowing wink. “I’ll leave them here for now, but if I hear of another incident, you’ll be in trouble!”

As he drove off, relief flooded me, but so did guilt. I had lied to escape the consequences, and I knew it was wrong. My husband muttered, “These sheep will be the death of me,” while Sam was already eyeing up another weak spot in the fence.

Later, as we repaired the fence, I reflected on my actions. Sam’s stubbornness mirrored my own heart. Like Sam, I often stray from my Shepherd, chasing after things that seem better but ultimately lead to harm. Yet, God never gives up on me. His grace, like the Inspector’s leniency, spares me from the full weight of my actions, though I don’t deserve it.

But God’s grace also calls for repentance. That evening, I prayed, “Lord, forgive me for the lie I told. Help me to make it right.” I knew I needed to apologise to the Inspector and Mr. Anderson. Admitting the truth and seeking their forgiveness wouldn’t erase my mistake, but it would honour God’s grace.

The lesson was clear: God's grace is not an excuse to continue in wrongdoing but a call to turn back to Him. Just as the Shepherd restores the lost sheep, He restores us when we repent and trust Him.

As for Sam, he was already plotting his next escape. But for now, the flock was home, and I was reminded to rely on God's strength to do what is right—even when challenges arise.

## Second Place



Renee  
Tavita  
of Whangarei

## FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

---

A teacher used to teach five- and six-year-old aged children. There were many times the children accidentally used the wrong words thinking they were saying the words correctly. One day a girl was late for class, she normally wasn't late. She came to the teacher and said, "Sorry I'm late, my mother was at her Choir". This confused the teacher as she didn't think the mother had musical talents. The mother was a personal trainer, worked at a gym, had a husband who was a rugby player. The teacher thought to herself "I haven't known this mother very long, maybe she has musical talents I don't know about yet." When the mother came to collect her daughter, the mother said, "sorry she was late this morning". The teacher replied, "don't worry she was only five minutes late and your daughter explained to me you were at choir practise." The mother frowned, held her belly, started laughing and said, "No we weren't at choir, I was at the Chiropractor!"

The teacher had daily writing lessons where the children wrote by themselves, and the children brought their writing to the teacher to proofread their writing. One day a girl wrote in her story that she was going on holiday for a weak. The teacher corrected her writing as she meant 'week'. Another day a boy wrote his father was coming to visit him hear. The teacher also corrected his story as he had meant 'here'. The same day another little boy said his father now had a bawled head. The teacher corrected his writing as he meant a 'bald' head. Another girl said there was a 'fowl' smell at her house she meant foul, so the teacher corrected this. A little girl wrote that her nana was losing her site, so the teacher put the correct word in her story (the word 'sight').

Daily news time was another time to teach correct language. One day a girl came to class with a bandage on one leg. She said it was there to protect her bear wound. The teacher corrected her using the right word 'bare'. A boy said she his family had find a treasure. He meant they had 'fined'- past tense so the teacher corrected his speech.

We display a lot of the fruit of the Spirit when children use the wrong words (Galatians 5:22, 23 – the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.), mostly patience, kindness and gentleness. But are we as kind to adults who use the wrong words or do we sometimes show our ‘fleshly’ nature and show the works of the flesh (Galatians 5: 19-21) thinking they should know the right words to say. Next time an adult says something wrong stop and clarify what they mean. Maybe they have used the wrong word or doesn’t know the right word to use.

## Level Two

### Judge: Shirley Jamieson

**Requirement:** Write a poem with a rhythm to show the natural beauty of New Zealand’s coast, bush or mountains. Describe how it draws you to the Creator. (Maximum 20 lines)

#### General Comments

*In New Zealand we don’t have to travel far to experience the beauty of God’s creation. Writing a poem about one of our natural treasures, and how it draws us to God, gives us time to reflect how amazing he is. The diversity of birds and plants here, his attention to the finest details of structure, and his mind-blowing imagination to create scenery is all here for us to enjoy. All of it draws the believer to him in worship.*

*Poetry with rhythm develops skills in discerning which syllables to stress and which ones are unstressed to create the metre. The words should flow well. Like all skills it takes practice.*

*I think the first step as a believer is to pray for inspiration before writing anything. After choosing the subject, write the first verse. Read it aloud. How does the metre sound? It is sometimes helpful to write beneath each line where the stressed and unstressed syllables are.*

*The word rhythm comes from the Greek word *rhythmos*, meaning regular recurring motion. Imagine a train travelling along a track. Can you hear it?*

*The words you choose in the poem dictate the metre, so have fun playing with them until you feel the rhythm flows.*

*It often helps to read it aloud to someone you trust to be objective, or ask the person to read it aloud to you. Any phrases or lines with an irregular metre should stand out.*

*I received four entries to the competition. Some had more success in keeping to a rhythm than others.*

*Robert Prins’ descriptive poem, *God at the Beach*, won first place. He brought in the five senses to showcase God’s creative beauty, to feel at one with God, to give him glory, to stand in awe. His poem flows well with a good rhythm, and his choice of rhyming blends the words in a natural way.*

*Stephen Douglas’s poem, *Lake Hawea Otago* describes the mountains, lake and pastureland, calling for them to praise the LORD the way they inspire him to see God’s mercy and love.*

*Christene Platt won third place for her poem about the pohutukawa tree. She describes its beauty and, after the red blooms fall, needle-like seeds fall which, in turn, can grow into other large trees. God's creativity awes and humbles her to bow before him. Christine did really well with both her rhythm and rhyme throughout the poem.*

*If you haven't tried writing poetry yet, have a go. There are many styles to try. You might enjoy it.*

## First Place



Robert  
Prins  
of Auckland East

## God at the Beach

---

New Zealand's stunning beaches are the place to be  
To find ourselves at one with God, and his glory see:  
From grains of sand like promises of Abram's chosen seed,  
To thund'ring waves of majesty, God's power in word and deed.

The beach fills up my senses, Of God I stand in awe;  
The taste of salt, the smell of sea, the sights that I could draw.  
I hear the crashing waves, the wind blow in the trees,  
I feel the sun and sea spray floating on the breeze.

Pohutukawa red with flower, guards the sandy bay,  
And Tuis in the flax seed flowers sip nectar, call and play.  
Dunes of sand are piled high, white tussock holds them strong,  
And dancing balls of tumble weed, by the wind are blown along.

A pair of long legged Dotterels dash across the sand,  
While black and orange Oyster Catchers like a statue stand.  
Screeching Seagulls soar the sky in search of scraps of food,  
And Sparrows chirp their cherry song, revealing their good mood.

God's imagination in creation I've seen around the beach  
Shows the glorious perfection His creation's here to teach.  
If this piece of creation, like the rest, is very good,  
Then as part of his creation, let us do the things we should.

## Second Place



Stephen  
Douglas  
of Wellington

## Lake Hāwea, Otago

---

As I walk the undulating Lake Hāwea Track,  
I pause to write this psalm:

Shout to the LORD you snow-capped mountains,  
break into praise and singing.  
Sing your praise you rugged ancient hills,  
break into joyful clapping.

Waters of the lake repeat with sounding joy,  
the wonders of the LORD's love;  
And you lowlands, where animals graze,  
delight in the LORD's favour.

Keepers of the earth, be reverent and still.  
You who chase the sun, you who ski the snow,  
You who fish the deep, you who trek the bush,  
be mindful, what's on show is preserved.

Long ago, in Noah's time, in my anger,  
I let a flood cover the earth—never again, is my vow.  
Though mountains move and hills disappear,  
my creative love remains firm and sure,  
says the LORD, who has mercy on you! \*

\*See Isaiah 54:9,10

## Third Place



Christine  
Platt  
of Hibiscus  
Coast

## Scarlet Blooms

---

Out of my window I can see  
A gorgeous Pohutukawa tree.  
Its mighty branches give dense shade  
For children's games and picnics made.

In Summer flowers burst out red.  
"A Christmas tree" the children said.  
Scarlet blooms adorn each twig  
Against the sky the tree looms big.

All too soon the wind blows strong.  
Flowers tumble all day long.  
A carpet spreads along the ground  
Red needles scattered all around.

Each tiny needle is a seed.  
Water and sun are all it needs  
To become a shoot, a leaf, a twig  
And finally a tree so big.

So when I feel so very small  
God speaks to me, I hear his call.  
He shows his creativity  
And I can only bow the knee.

# Level Three

**Judge: Julia Martin**

**Requirement:** Write a review (suitable for *The Christian Writer* magazine) of a Christian book or film produced within the past three years. (300 words)

## General Comments

*This competition involved writing a review of a recent Christian book or film.*

*A review is a critical assessment from one person's point of view and can help people decide whether it's something they would choose to read or view. While the methods are similar for a book or film review, there are obvious differences, so I'll deal with each separately.*

### Book Review

- 1. Read the book thoroughly and take notes as you go for future reference.*
- 2. Mention the genre and briefly summarize the book.*
- 3. Highlight parts of the book that you consider important.*
- 4. Evaluate the book's qualities including its strengths and weaknesses. Be honest but constructive in your comments.*
- 5. Include relevant quotations especially ones giving the author's intentions for the book.*
- 6. Avoid giving too much away.*
- 7. Give your recommendations and suggest the type of reader this book would suit.*
- 8. Give publishing details and dates.*

### Film Review

- 1. Unlike a book, a film is visual and is the product of a range of people with different roles.*
- 2. Watch the film more than once if possible and take notes.*
- 3. Give basic information about the film including genre, plot, acting, special effects, cinematography.*
- 4. Share your opinions of the film including what worked well and what didn't in your view.*
- 5. Don't give too much away.*
- 6. Summarize your overall impression and offer a recommendation as to who might enjoy and appreciate the film.*
- 7. Give relevant details of the key people and company involved in the making of the film.*

*Of the six entries received, four were reviews of books and two of films. I awarded Elaine Dixon first place for her excellent review of a thought-provoking and intriguing book. A new member for Level Three, Sandy Miller, was awarded second place for her film review and third place went to Taylor Foster for her excellent film review.*

*Another entrant wrote a quality review of a book, but unfortunately, I could not give her a placing because her review failed to mention any Christian content, and that was a requirement of this assignment. My thanks also to the other two entrants who wrote interesting reviews.*

## First Place



Elaine  
Dixon  
of Tauranga

## A Review of *The Return of the Gods*

Jonathan Cahn's book *The Return of the Gods* (2022) explores the spiritual forces influencing western culture. Published by FrontLine Press, it draws parallels between the ancient gods of the Old Testament and their modern equivalents. His claims are thought-provoking yet backed up by historical evidence.

As the Jewish leader of a large New Jersey congregation and author of eight New York Times bestsellers Cahn blends prophetic gifting with careful research. He shows how the coming of Jesus into our world resulted in the placement of the gods on the fringes of society, as Christianity became the prevailing religion in the Roman Empire.

The book's 52 short chapters examine the traits of ancient gods such as Moloch and Baal and connects them to the rise of transgenderism, abortion, worship of nature and demonic possession. He links these developments to the decline in the influence of Christianity, tracing patterns he refers to as 'mysteries'. Some people may question these patterns, but his research and comprehensive bibliography back up his claims.

The book is fast-paced, simply written and set out clearly with many subheadings so the non-academic reader can easily follow the developing theme. Any reservations about the so-called 'mysteries' are swept away as the changes in our 'secular' society are convincingly shown to be influenced by evil forces.

There are broad implications for Christians, particularly for those who have been perplexed by the rapid cultural changes that have taken place in recent decades. The stories of recent events which seemed to open the gates to these evil gods were most compelling,

In summary, *The Return of the Gods* challenges assumptions about how change takes place in society. Whether or not one agrees with Cahn's interpretation, the book will broaden one's understanding of the spiritual dimension as it relates to our western culture

## Second Place



Sandy  
Miller  
of Auckland

## *Unsung Hero*



The Christian drama film *Unsung Hero* (2024) was written and directed by Richard Ramsey and Joel Smallbone. It was released by Lionsgate Entertainment Company, which has distributed other Christian-themed films such as *I Can Only Imagine* and *Jesus Revolution*. Coincidentally, the film was released on David and Helen Smallbone's 49th wedding anniversary, which depicts their life-changing experience.

When David Smallbone's successful music company fails, he relocates his family from Australia to Nashville. David (Joel Smallbone) and his pregnant wife Helen (Daisy Betts) travel to the United States to begin a new life with their six children and a shared love for music. However, when the family arrives in the United States, David loses his job, leaving the Smallbones in a financially difficult situation. This causes tension within the family as they struggle to pay their rent, bills and groceries. The film revolves around Helen, who has a strong Christian faith. She encourages her seven children to hold on to their faith and to trust God when they face adversity.

This is an inspiring and uplifting story that is very pro-family. It is a movie that will encourage you to follow your dreams and shows how a family can work through challenging situations together when there is forgiveness, honesty, and perseverance.

If you are a fan of the band For King & Country and Rebecca St. James, you will enjoy this movie. For me personally, I have always been a fan of the incredibly talented Rebecca St. James since the late 1990s, and, recently, I have come to enjoy the music of the band For King & Country, who are equally talented. The movie *Unsung Hero* gave me insight into how their family life situation shaped their lives before they became well-known Christian artists.

## Third Place



Taylor  
Foster  
of Tauranga

## A Review of the Film *I Heard the Bells like Never Before*

Church bells are rare nowadays. Their ring, peeling through the night at Christmas, is a noise we no longer hear. But the film *I Heard the Bells* showed me the majesty and power of that ring. For central character and historical poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, they symbolised that God was alive.

Sitting down over Christmas, I randomly spotted this movie on Shine. How glad I am that I did! Produced in 2022 by faith-based company Sight & Sound, *I Heard the Bells* carries profound messages about God, faith, and the tragedies of life. The film follows American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807 – 1882) as he grieves over the tragic death of his wife, Fanny. Henry suffers deeply, losing his faith, joy and desire to write.

But, like all things, the light can shine again, even in the darkest places. Henry's faith begins to be restored as he finds Fanny's journal and hears his son's story of hope from the Civil War. His life is not easy, but from friends, family and events around him, his hope is renewed. Then, on Christmas day, as the Church bells ring, Henry pens the famous poem "I Heard the Bells" and discovers that God is truly alive.

Not all films impact, but this one did. I felt so blessed by Henry's story of faith. It reminded me that though life is hard, God will always shine a light. Also, I felt inspired to write. Henry's poetry was important for himself and others, just like our words are. *I Heard the Bells* gave me hope, reminding me God is richly alive, and his light is all around us, including in our pens. I recommend this movie to anyone wanting to be moved and reminded of the power of faith.



# Competitions for April 2025

Due by 1 March 2025

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

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

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

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

**NB: If you are not sure which level you're on, email Debbie McDermott at: [level1@nzchristianwriters.org](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:** Is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the real location where Jesus was crucified, or was it on the skull-shaped hill outside Jerusalem? Research the topic, then write an article on your findings. Citations from your research may comprise up to 20% of the wordcount and you must include a brief bibliography. (400 words, excluding bibliography)



*Debbie*

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

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

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

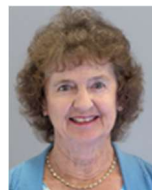


*Shirley*

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

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

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



*Julia*

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



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**writers**

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