

JUNE - JULY 2024

THE CHRISTIAN writer

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NZCW President's AGM Report

NZCW AGM 2024 Meeting Minutes

Book Reviews:

We're Going to Fly High
by Valmai Redhead

The Beak by Sherri Bee

Articles including:

My Publishing Journey
by Greg Maynard

New Christian Bookstore in Timaru
by Andrew Stirling

Poetry, Competitions and more!

A magazine of NZ Christian Writers



Mission: *Connecting Christian writers in New Zealand.*

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

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

President: Justin St Vincent: president@nzchristianwriters.org

Editor and Membership Secretary: Kathryn Paul: editor@nzchristianwriters.org

For magazine contributions, address changes and membership queries.

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

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1) Digital magazine: Full membership \$50/Student membership (up to 25 yr) \$30

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

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.

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This issue printed locally by

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

The Christian Writer

Jun – Jul 2024

ISSN 2537-8708 (Online)

VOL 41. No 3

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

President's Report



Welcome to our June-July 2024 edition of *The Christian Writer* magazine. If you are new to NZ Christian Writers, we want to extend to you a warm welcome. We are a creative group who love Jesus and enjoy writing. Many of us have published books. Some are professional authors and editors, and most of us are hobbyist writers who enjoy sharing stories and refining our craft in writing.

So, what can you expect from *The Christian Writer* magazine? Over the upcoming editions of *The Christian Writer*, readers can expect to see creative articles, writing competitions, poetry, details about our local writers' groups, book reviews and more. You'll also see in this edition my President's Report and minutes from our 2024 AGM, plus a summary of mid-year competition placements and current winners!

In addition, we publish an active directory of Professional Writing Services. These are contacts with members who offer services that you may find helpful on your publishing and writing journey. Feel free to reach out to them. Our team tries to keep content engaging and interesting so our writers can connect with other writers from details in our magazine.

Once again, a massive thank you to our magazine editor, Kathryn Paul, whose expertise and skill help support the content layout and article framework for *The Christian Writer* magazine. Also, a note of thanks to Debbie McDermott, our Competition Coordinator, who fulfils a remarkable role coordinating our competitions, and supporting our competition judges; Lesley Edgeler, Shirley Jamieson and Julia Martin. We're delighted they can all help serve NZ Christian Writers in this way. Thank you to each of you, plus the member writers who appreciate the work of this ministry to Christian writers. Our team trust you will find *The Christian Writer* magazine to be an encouraging and inspiring resource 'for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry' (Ephesians 4:12, NKJV).

We are grateful to our member and photographer, Max Carr, for providing the photo featured on the front cover of this magazine. It's a stunning photo that celebrates the upcoming season of winter.

Be blessed,

Justin St Vincent



Editorial: Liver of Life

by Kathryn Paul



I am a writer – a Christian writer – and I want to be doing that for the rest of my life. But recently I was pondering my lack of time for writing while leaning out of the back window of a tractor I was driving, watching kumara coming up the belt of a harvester.



I was making sure the belt was maintaining the correct speed for the hands of the harvesters who were frantically trying to grab the best kumara off the belt. They were putting the kumara onto a higher belt which then transported them into the kumara bin. My attention was on the belt, the hands of the harvesters and the bin-person at the back who would let me know when a full bin was ready to be dropped. Occasionally I would turn and glance ahead, to check what was going on in front of me, to see how close we were to the end of the row and stay aware of what other tractor drivers were doing.

I was enjoying the job but at the back of my mind was an awareness that nothing was being written on a page, emails were being delayed and magazine issues hadn't been started. I comforted myself with the reminder that this kumara farm was my current God-allocated assignment. I was connecting with people who He wanted to reach and encourage. *Plus* – I told myself – *this is all good material for future writing*. Oh, the interesting characters I met on this job who I know will inspire me with my characterisation during the years ahead!



I have concluded that rather than calling myself a writer I would be better to say 'I am a liver-of-life who sometimes gets to write about it'. If we get out and live our lives, do the experiences, step out of our comfort zones, meet new people, challenge ourselves to learn new skills – then we will never be short on ideas and authenticity for our writing.

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 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.

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

Increase to Subscription Fees

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



2024 AGM PRESIDENT'S REPORT

[Note: Some details of this report were featured in Feb-Mar 2024 The Christian Writer magazine].

Thank you for joining us at our 41st Annual General Meeting for NZ Christian Writers.

I'll begin by reading some scripture from one of my favourite books of the Bible, taken from Ephesians, Chapter 4, Verses 11 and 12, NKJV:

11 ... He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers,

12 For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ...

If anyone ever asks why does NZ Christian Writers exist?

I'd answer with Ephesians 4:12: "*for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry,*".

This is the primary reason why our members have shared with us how much they value that our organisation actually exists with a mission of: Connecting Christian writers in New Zealand, and a vision of encouraging and inspiring Christian writers throughout New Zealand.

I'm excited about what God will do through NZ Christian Writers throughout 2024 and beyond. Our board members continue to be brilliant guiding lights for our collective. Together we've focused on five key areas that help serve NZ Christian Writers: our competitions, local groups, magazines, seminars, and retreats.

These are the areas that our members tell us make the most difference to them. In addition, you'll notice two exciting updates during this new year: our Catalogue 2024, and our *Young Christian Writer* magazine.

First, our brand-new catalogue. A massive thank you to Fiona Murray and her husband, Alan, who have prepared the NZ Christian Writers Member Books Catalogue 2024, now available online. There are over 200 books in the catalogue. Our Catalogue 2024 is a free marketing resource to help you and other members sell their published books. Catalogue 2024 can be downloaded via our website for NZ Christian Writers.

Secondly, our 'new look' *Young Christian Writer* magazine. Graphic designer, Shing Stirling, has created a new layout for the internal articles and contents of our *Young Christian Writer* magazine. As you may know, this is a supplement magazine which is published three times a year for student writers.

The purpose of the magazine is to encourage and inspire a community of young Christian writers throughout New Zealand. Over the next editions of *Young Christian Writer* readers can expect to see a collection of competitions, giveaways, poetry, articles, short stories, puzzles, art, photography, book reviews and more.

At this AGM, I want to take the opportunity to thank each of our board members:

Janet Fleming, Kathryn Paul, Andrew Stirling, Julia Martin, Janette Busch, and Christel Jeffs.

Thank you for being the guiding lights for NZ Christian Writers.

We also extend our thanks to the many members that are part of our collective nationwide. It's why we exist. I'd like to finish with a few verses from Ephesians 4, where the Apostle Paul, is writing about walking in unity and spiritual gifts.

Ephesians Chapter 4, Verses 11 to 16, NKJV:

11 ... He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

13 Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

14 That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

15 But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—

16 From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

In closing, may you too be blessed, edified, and encouraged as it's faith in Jesus Christ that unites us all.

Be blessed,

Justin St Vincent

AGM 2024 President's Report

Monday 29 April 2024

The Christian Writer





AGM MINUTES 2024

NZ CHRISTIAN WRITERS | 41st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on 29 April 2024, 7:30pm - 8pm
Online Via Zoom Meeting ID: 813 534 2431

Chairperson: Justin St. Vincent chaired and took the minutes

Apologies: Verna McFelin

Minutes: from AGM 2023 read by Justin St. Vincent

Motioned by: Justin St. Vincent, seconded by: Kathryn Paul

Financial Report: read by Andrew Stirling

ASB Balance at 29/04/2024 is \$900.84. We have 315 members at present.

Moved that the Financial Report be received

Motioned by: Andrew Stirling, seconded by: Justin St. Vincent

President's Report: read by Justin St. Vincent

Moved that the President's Report be received

Motioned by: Justin St. Vincent, seconded by: Julia Martin

Board Update: All Board Members/Officers of NZ Christian Writers re-elected as follows:

Election of Board Members:

President: Justin St. Vincent

Nominated by: Kathryn Paul, seconded by: Julia Martin

Vice President: Janet Fleming

Nominated by: Justin St. Vincent, seconded by: Janette Busch

Treasurer: Andrew Stirling

Nominated by: Justin St. Vincent, seconded by: Julia Martin

Magazine Editor & Membership Secretary: Kathryn Paul

Nominated by: Janette Busch, seconded by: Christel Jeffs

Book Reviewer & Level 3 Competition Judge: Julia Martin

Nominated by: Andrew Stirling, seconded by: Kathryn Paul

South Island Representative: Janette Busch

Nominated by: Justin St. Vincent, seconded by: Julia Martin

Board members to stand as above.

Close: AGM closed with prayer by 7:48 pm.

The Accident

A short story by Clive McKegg

The bus picked up downhill speed as Johnathan frantically pumped the failing brakes...

Johnathan awoke with a start, his heart racing, and his face dripping with sweat. Why did he have to relive that moment again and again? It was five years since that dreadful day and the memory was still as strong and terrible as ever. He prayed silently, "Lord why? Why did that happen? Why did those young people have to die?" And stronger still, "Why did I survive to be tormented like this?" The response came – as it had each time since he had started calling out to God – the still, small voice saying, "Trust Me."

Johnathan had never prayed with any sense of purpose before the accident. He had been raised in a Christian home, attended Sunday School and church, but it was always just background noise to him. He lived pretty much like all his friends. He was good with people, but not great academically, so when a job came up driving a school bus he jumped at the chance. For two years he had loved his daily bus run, then he was offered the chance to drive the kids on a skiing holiday. It was picking his way up to the skifields that the accident had happened on a short downhill just before the ski-field car park. He remembered briefly waking wondering why he was in a helicopter, then waking again – much later – in a hospital bed.

It was there that he met Jack. Jack was an elderly man in the next bed, obviously failing, but with a buoyant spirit. Jack would tell Jonathan about his life. It seemed a bit ordinary when Jonathan thought about it, but he was so enthusiastic that Jonathan began to love his stories. Jack would ask Johnathan about himself, but the conversation would never last long. Johnathan's pain and guilt would shut down the interaction like a dark cloud covering the moon and stars. Jack would often squint at his large-print Bible, reading it out to himself in a quiet voice. He loved the Psalms and although some were vaguely familiar to Johnathan there was something about hearing them from Jack that made the words electric. Of course, Johnathan pretended he wasn't listening, but the words were sinking deep into his soul. Jack's favourite seemed to be Psalm 8. A portion of this lodged in Johnathan's mind:

*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,
What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?*

Then one day Jack's bed was empty. He had passed into those mysterious, starry heavens – or wherever God's friends go. Johnathan felt empty and alone, more desperate than ever. "Jesus, can I be your friend like Jack was? Can I share the peace that he knew? Can you forgive me for what I was responsible for?" Jesus heard his cry that day and finally Johnathan knew he would never be alone.

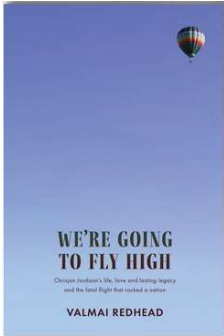
Yet five years later, he was still having the dreams, and the dreams would trigger the guilt. "Why Lord? I know you love me; I think I know that I am forgiven. When will this torment end?" "Trust Me" came the reply. Johnathan reached for his Bible – the one that had the note in the front from Jack that said "Johnathan – I want you to have this. I won't need it where I'm going." He turned to Psalm 8 and read again, "*What is man that You are mindful of him?*" And suddenly he realised "God knows me. He was with me, wanting me to know him, and I would never have bothered if not for that accident – and for Jack." Tears of gratitude welled up in his eyes as he thought, "Life and death are trivial things. True life is to know the One who made the moon and stars – and the mountains." He grieved again for those who had lost their lives that day. But it was clean grief, letting go of his guilt and shame. He would never wake to that dream again.



Southern lights
aurora as seen in
Maungaturoto,
Northland,
11 May 2024.

Photo taken by
Rowan Deacon
age 14, of
Northland.

Book Review



We're Going to Fly High

By Valmai Redhead

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Tom Curtain Publishing 2023

'We're going to fly high' was the adventure planned by the young couple, Chrisjan Jordaan and Alexis Still to celebrate their year-old relationship.

On Saturday 7th 2012, the pair joined nine other passengers on a hot air balloon flight over the Wairarapa countryside. Soon after, tragedy struck when the balloon became tangled in power wires and all eleven lives were lost in New Zealand's worst ballooning disaster.

Author, Valmai Redhead, was invited by Chrisjan's parents to write their son's biography with the wish 'that his story will inspire others and in some way continue his legacy of making a difference in the world, one person at a time.'

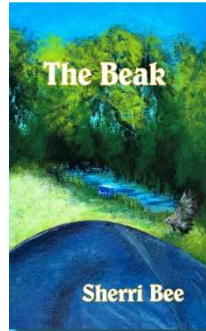
Born in South Africa in 1990, Chrisjan's faced serious health challenges early in life which led his mother to promise God: 'If Chrisjan were to live, he would belong to God forever.'

Growing up in South Africa, Chrisjan enjoyed a happy adventurous childhood, but the country was facing escalating racial tensions and turmoil which led the family to consider emigrating to New Zealand. Initially Chrisjan and his father moved, and it was a huge adjustment for them all.

At 13, Chrisjan faced challenges with a new language, culture, schooling, and friendships, but he survived and thrived due to his above average maturity and life values. By filling every moment of his life with purpose and intention, he developed leadership skills and a strong Christian faith underpinned everything he did.

This biography is a fitting tribute to an outstanding young man and his girlfriend and will ensure their legacy continues to impact others for many years to come.

Book Review



The Beak South Island Adventures

By Sherri Bee

Review by Kathryn Paul

Published by Sherri Bee Ltd, NZ 2023

This fiction story for youth is a light hearted and fun family adventure. The story is set in the South Island of New Zealand. A group of children have the opportunity to go camping and explore a fjord which is untouched.

Panning for gold, fishing and discovering rare wildlife are all part of the fun. But it seems some of the wildlife are stalking them! Mysterious shadows that move have the campers on edge.

This is the second book written by Sherri Bee in her *South Island Adventures* series, after her first one, *The Glint*.

If you're looking for family friendly reading with great kiwi content, this is a chapter book suitable for readers eight years and older. You can locate Sherri Bee's books at www.sherribee.com where they are available

as
paperbacks
and
ebooks.



My Writing Journey with Christian Writers

by Rod Hickman

I was introduced to the Christian Writers in 2012. I was 62 years old. Up until then I had no ambition to write anything, as a matter of fact the only subject I failed in school was actually English. But I did like to read and then it was mostly comics. I do love a good simple storyline. Give me a superhero and I am all involved. Star Wars, Dr Who, Superman, these intrigue me. The fact that Jesus Christ happens to be the ultimate superhero helps me to know all about him better.

Now the trigger for me to even consider putting pen to paper was the sudden death of my wife in 2011. This sent me into a searching for answers or maybe trying to escape the fallout, that I discovered poetry. My first poem came one sleepless night. My counselor suggested this was a way to diffuse the trauma and I should continue to pour out my heart this way. It ended up in a published poetry book, which at the time I thought might be helpful for others navigating emotional turmoil. Funnily enough it did the job. I was able to make sense of pain and still the poems kept coming, so I kept writing.

Now in 2024 I have self published 14 poetry books. Will there be more? God knows! My writing and editing skills are poor but I do thank all the members of this organization who have encouraged and given such wonderful helpful tips.

Since Covid I have dipped into writing short stories. Now two books are completed and these are mostly fictitious tales. I felt the target audience for these tales was for non Christians or those perhaps seeking but not yet sure about this person called God. I try to put a twist in them which could shed a light on a deeper truth about Him.

For those technically minded I had decided to keep costs to a minimum. Print cheap. I am not after quality or quantity. Each print run is 100 to 150 and some books have had reprints already. I used to write 'copy write' on everything but no longer do that. Just copy it right! My sales come from word of mouth and facebook posts. Deb Mc Dermott is well known to you all and I appreciate her comments when she reviews any submissions. Thank you Deb. One comment she made to me about my writing was, "Rodney, your just a story teller". I took that as a great compliment. In closing please realise whatever you write is God inspired and will outlast you once you are gone from this planet. I do believe the Holy Spirit can get our words into the hands of those who need them. Trust Him and keep those pens filled with ink.

Blessings to all the members.

The Kiss

by Julia Martin

It's usually a mark of endearment
A gesture of friendship or love.
But this was a kiss with a difference
A traitorous act, pre-arranged.

There in the garden that evening
Alone with His loved ones in prayer,
A murderous mob came with weapons
Led by Judas, their leader and guide.

"The one that I kiss is the culprit.
Arrest him and take him away!"

Then Judas stepped forth from the shadows
And greeted the Lord with that kiss.
'Twas a treacherous sign of betrayal,
Hypocrisy, malice, and shame.

So what was his motive we wonder?
A craving for status and power?
Bad choices or misunderstanding?
That led to his hideous crime.

By selling his soul to the devil
He was tragically destined for hell.
Thus doomed for destruction and judgement
He ended his life in despair.

Obituary

We were sad to hear of the passing of John Massam. John was mentioned in an article by Marie Anticich in our Apr-May 2024 issue. He was the managing director of Castle Publishing.

Kia ora koutou.

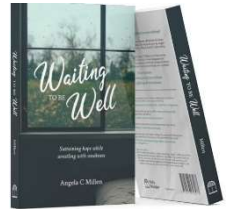
John passed away unexpectedly but peacefully at home. He fell asleep on the couch and left us. We appreciate the many messages of love and support received. His life was enriched by many people and we thank you all.

Kua hinga te Totara o te Waonui a Tane.

The loss leaves a space in the canopy of the forest and may the many seeds, saplings and trees nurtured by his life continue to grow.

Diamonds Conference Session with Angela C Millen

Author, Angela C Millen published her first book last year, *Waiting to be Well: Sustaining Hope while Wrestling with Weakness*.



Angela says, 'In my book, *Waiting to be Well*, I share the story of God's sustaining grace through my three years with chronic fatigue and subsequent recovery. Through my book, I got connected with the Diamonds Conference.'

Angela spoke during March 2024 at the online Diamonds Conference. This is a free online conference for Christians with chronic illness and those supporting them.

For those interested in watching Angela's session,

"Wait for the Lord: Trusting the Author with our unfinished story"
by Angela C Millen,

here is the link to Angela's Diamonds Conference talk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WkiEFfMTH4?app=desktop>

You can find out more about Angela's book here www.holywonder.co.

My Publishing Journey

by Greg Maynard

I remember when I was in Primary School, I was one of five sent to the headmaster's office to receive reading lessons because I was such a slow reader. I had difficulty learning because I found it a bit hard to concentrate. So, now to have a finished book published which the world can see is a major achievement for me; thanks be to God.

I would encourage anyone to sign up to Christian writers because without being a member I wouldn't be where I am today.

I got involved with the writing competitions at beginner's level for almost a year and even had one of my poems printed which meant the world to me. I even went along to a local writers' group that had successful writers partaking and took my Christian Writers magazine along to recommend to them. My girlfriend supported me all the way and was surprised when I dedicated the book to her.



Prior going to the writers' group someone asked me what genre my book was and at the time I didn't even know what that meant. When they said my book wasn't a book but a memoir this left me dumbfounded. I felt like giving up!

I have been a member of Christian Writers for two years now and before I signed up to the magazine, I didn't think it would help me that much. Boy was I in for a surprise, to say the least!

Then I came across Graham Pedersen and contacted him and he supported me all the way. After more than a year paying the editing off, still doubting whether it would progress to the publishing stage, God let me persevere. I even had to persevere with several publishers who weren't interested in this book.

After several years of heartache and sometimes pain, God never gave up on me and I discovered a publisher that backed me all the way and never gave up on me. My first contact with them was a man who knows God, so it was a huge relief to have the support from all who helped. My publisher is Xlibris.

Three Prayers of a Tragic Love Story

by Tishani Vanniasingham



Jesus,
Thank you for your sacrifice.
I'm sorry.
I'm sorry we still shame you.
I'm sorry we are ungrateful.
I'm sorry for what the cross
has become.
But I still love you.
My heart, my soul aches at
the thought of your death.
How did you remember each
and every one of us when
we spat on your pure body?
As we placed a crown of
thorns on your head?
A tragic love story, indeed.
I shed tears for you, my
Lord.
The burden you bear.
The most perfect, powerful
being,
Still shunned. Still hated.
John 15:18



Father,
Judge the Jews dread.
I weep for you too.
Powerful but misunderstood.
How did you do it?
Why did you?
How can you love us that
much?
Seems... senseless.
The overwhelming, reckless
love of God.
I'm sorry people think you've
changed. When you've
always been the same –
amongst all the change.
Why do you let us do this to
you?
I will never understand.
Father, you are LOVE.
You made the sacrifice.
I weep for your loss.
Your story.
A tragic tale of love and loss.
Over and over again.
But I want to stand with you.
I love you too.
But why, Lord?
Why your son?
Why us?
I really cannot fathom.
The burden of your love
would break me.
It hurts too much.
Even to think of it.
Father, I'm so sorry.



Holy Spirit,
So quiet,
So peaceful,
Comfort me.
My heart aches.
I cannot bear this pain on my
own.
What do you think of all this?
What was the sacrifice like
for you?
Please help me understand.
Did you mourn?
Easter really is no holiday.
It hurts to love like you.
So why love at all?
Why is love so hard to
understand?
Because you are Love – the
most complex being in all of
existence.
Be with me, Spirit.
Be with me, Lord.
Because even though I am
fickle,
I am flesh,
I am human,
I still love you.
My heart aches for your
story.
Your tragedy.
I am in love with you.
My spirit is yours.

Four Keys to Flow from Your Strengths

by Stephen Whitwell

You've heard it before. "*You can be anything you want to be, if you just try hard enough*". Well, it's a myth. It's not possible. AND, it's not Biblical!

The following four keys, apply to many things in life, but very much to our writing. I've found them to be a huge help.

1. Know what your strengths are

When we say 'strengths' we're meaning a talent, ability, skill, something we can do we love doing, we can do easily, something maybe we can do better than others. It is the unique way we're wired up. And we are all wired differently.

A weakness is not a failure, or an ability that needs attention. It is just an area that we are not as strong to function in as others.

Phil Pringle says, "*Whatever you are good at, is probably your gift*".

2. Resist the temptation to 'train our weaknesses' into strengths

When we know our strengths and weaknesses it is tempting to try to strengthen our weaknesses. We think we should attend a seminar or get some coaching to 'make us better' in that area.

And while that may help, it can only lead to more and more frustration because we were never designed to be strong in that area.

Resist the temptation to train our weaknesses into strengths.

3. Encourage, invest in and follow the desire to 'train our strengths' to become better

When I discovered that my strengths lay in administration, writing, reading, study, thinking, introversion, it released me from loads of self and culture-imposed baggage. I then knew why it was I loved to read, write, teach, think, philosophise, and be on my own.

I have discovered over the years that any investment in time and money into training and enhancing areas of my strengths and talents, pays huge dividends. I'm engaged, interested, passionate, and will stay up late easily at the thought of learning and growing in my strong areas.

So, don't be afraid to spend the time and money in growing in your strengths.

4. Outsource or delegate tasks in our weak areas

I thoroughly believe that in the short (actually really very short) term, we can do things outside of our strengths. When we do, it is a demonstration of our true character.

There are some jobs around the house I know I can do, but others I know it is best to call in an expert, pay them the money, and let them loose! The money paying them is money well spent. I am happy, the tradie is happy, the family are happy because the job was well done.

Successfully working and living out of our strengths means we will be comfortable to outsource and delegate tasks we know are not our strong points.

Just think about how those four things can help us find the flow in our writing!

So; “*You CANNOT be anything you want to be – but you CAN be a lot more of who you already are,* “.

Please Don't Send me to Africa

by Sandra King



After thirty years in China, where I opened three orphanages and saved over 670 babies, I arrived home in Whangarei, New Zealand at the end of the Hong Kong riots. During covid, I wrote my books. These were printed and I sell them myself. Last year I launched my books in France while staying with my adopted ‘baby’.

The Spanish translation is completed except the photos and cover. Hopefully they will get printed in September this year. I am still waiting for the Chinese translation to be started.

Before I first went to China, I was in Hawera when the Lord said to me, “You go to Africa and open an orphanage.” I laughed, as I was a new Christian and did not know what to do with this information. I started singing the song, “Please don't send me to Africa ... I'll serve you here in suburbia in my comfortable middle-class life...”

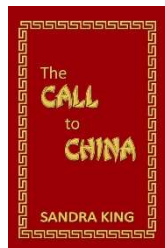
So, he sent me to China for thirty years.

What the Lord said to me when I first came back to New Zealand in early 2019: He said, “Do you think that what you did in China was big?”

“I suppose so, for me,” I answered.

“Well, it's nothing compared to what I am going to do with you next. It will be bigger than you could ever imagine.”

I got excited.



Here is the back story: In 1991, I met Robert Chan from Malaysia who was living in the Nurses' Home in New Plymouth—he was studying there. We had our photo taken on an outing. About twenty years later, I was in China in my orphanage when I received an email from a Malaysian man who asked if his family could come to see my orphanage. He duly arrived with his wife and adult children. He and I were upstairs standing on the balcony overlooking his family playing with my children outside, when he said to me, "If I said, 'Nurses' Home, New Plymouth' to you, what would that mean?"

I said, "Yes, I know that place."

"If I said Robert Chan...?"

I looked at him and said, "It's you!!!!"

"Yes!" he said. We hugged.

I said, "We got old!" We are now both about sixty. He laughed.

As we stood there, the Glory of God came down heavy over us both, and we were in awe of our Lord God. After a while, he said, "I want to ask you, what is it you want? As I want to give you anything. Just ask."

I said, "An orphanage to build."

He said, "Do you know what I do?"

"No," I replied.

"I'm an architect."

This was huge, I scribbled down on a brown paper bag what the Lord had shown me and gave it to him. A week later, he brought a scroll and handed it to me. It was the plan to build an orphanage. I never saw him again, even though I tried to contact him.

I was in China for a further fifteen years before returning home in October 2018. On the 7th of Jan 2024, as I was sorting out my Chinese containers stored in the toolshed, I found the scroll and design of the orphanage. I went inside and said to the Lord, "I know what you give us is nothing wasted. Why now? I thought it was for China! But no, it's come into my hands again."

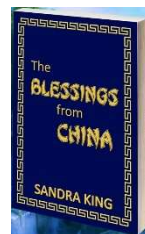
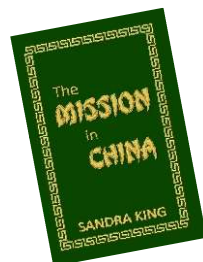
"YOU ARE GOING TO AFRICA TO BUILD AN ORPHANAGE."

"YES LORD, I WILL GO"

There are talks in place with an orphanage in Tanzania. As I wait... I ask you all to please pray that the door will be wide open and that the things I need will be prepared in advance.

Currently God has opened the door to go to Uganda, in Kampala 45 minutes' drive into the country. The pastor has his own church and oversees six churches. He has a school and an orphanage of 45 kids from 3-14yrs. I'm going on 9th June for three months to see about doing a well for them and buying land for the orphanage to be built on.

If you would like to receive newsletter updates you can subscribe via my website or email me to let me know. If you can help with anything or would like to donate to Africa the details are as follows: Account Name: SJ KING Account Number: 06-0493-0566562-07 Please use reference: LOVEGIFT. Contact: kingsandrajane@gmail.com www.sandraking.org.nz



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A WORD ABOUT EDITING

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

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

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

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

Services I offer:

- Manuscript Assessment
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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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Angela Curtis

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Dear Valued Writer,

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

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I'm looking forward to connecting with you.

Kathryn Paul

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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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or Janette.Busch@gmail.com

Any Questions?



The Story of Billy Gray

by Ted Berg

Verse 1

My name is Billy Gray, and I've just turned four,
And I live in a house that they built for the poor,
I stay with my mum 'cos dad went away,
With that big policeman on that cold rainy day,
"Where's daddy going?" I asked with surprise,
Mommy looked at me and narrowed her eyes,
"To go and pay for his sins, Billy, 'cos he really hurt me,
On that day he came home drunk and disorderly."

Verse 2

So I went to my room, and closed the door,
I didn't understand, 'cos I was only four,
I loved my dad, he was always gentle to me,
But there were fights with mom that I never did see.

Verse 3

So, the days went by, and I went off to school,
Where I made lots of friends and my teacher was cool,
And every day when the clock turned to five,
I waited at the gate for my mom to arrive,
She would grab me, hug me and put me in the car seat,
I was so happy, 'cos now my life was complete.

Verse 4

Then came that day, I was still standing at the gate,
By half past five – "Mom was very late!"
The teacher came and took me to her car,
And said: "Come with me Billy, I don't live very far."
We came to her house and her children ran out,
To greet their mum with a great big shout,
"This is Billy Gray," my teacher pointed to me,
Please take him inside and make him some tea."
"But what about my mom?" I asked my teacher,
She took out her phone and said: "I will reach her."

Verse 5

Mom's phone was off, so we just drank our tea,
And I thought to myself – "What's going to happen to me?"
Then eventually mom came, and she really smelt funny,
And in the car, she was showing me money,
"I won all of this, Billy, and that's why I was late,
They don't give you lucky cards every night on a plate!"

Verse 6

This carried on until that awful day,
When mom took me aside and said: "Billy Gray..."
We have no more food, and the rent is due,
I stole from my boss, and he's fired me too.
That night, still hungry I cried myself to sleep,
I knew that mom and I were now both in trouble deep.

Verse 7

I told my teacher the very next day,
Her sad eyes looked at me and she said: "Billy Gray-
"You're coming home with me 'cos there is no doubt,
If your mom has no rent, they will surely kick you out."

Verse 8

I grew up with my teacher and life was just great,
She taught me about Jesus, I was baptised when I was eight,
She put me through college together with her sons,
You might say that I was a fortunate one!
One day my mom called from a state rehab home,
And together we talked for hours on the phone.

Verse 9

She said: "One day in prison someone came to me,
And told me about Jesus, who could set me free.
So now I'm saved Billy, and so are you,
So, bring up YOUR kids honest and true.
Work hard, love God and poverty will flee,
And so now Billy Gray, you don't have to be like me!"



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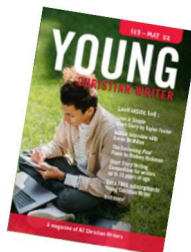
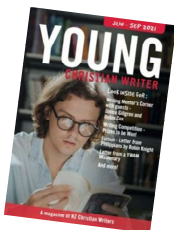
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New Christian Bookstore in Timaru

by Andrew Stirling

Treasurer of NZ Christian Writers



You may be aware that many Christian bookstores around the country are closing their doors due to the current economic climate. In Timaru, the Christian Bookstore that had been operating for many years was one of those stores which closed at the end of 2023. Many people in the Christian community were upset by this as it meant there was no Christian Bookstore between Christchurch and Dunedin.

Around this time my wife and I were shoulder tapped and asked whether we could do something about this. This was not on our radar at all. We are a home-schooling family with four children, so it would be a tremendous undertaking for us to run a bookstore. I already run an accounting business, my wife is incredibly busy teaching our children and we have no retail experience whatsoever! However, the more we prayed about it and consulted wise counsel, the more we realised that God was leading us in this direction.

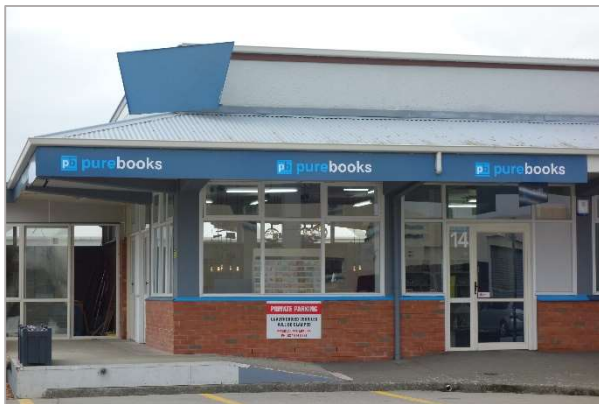
We figured that if God was leading us to this work, He would help us along the journey.

That certainly turned out to be the case. Over the past three months we have had a stream of volunteers helping us with the renovation of an old train station building. We have also had generous financial support from a local trust as well as the timely sale of our motorhome.

We are pleased to announce that a new Christian Bookstore is now open in Timaru. It is called Pure Books and you can check out the range on our website at www.purebooks.nz.

We now need your help. We are looking for more stock. Our store's bookshelves are currently approximately 60% full. We are especially low on stock in the following categories:

Biographies
Children's books
Discipleship
Family



If you have written a book in any of these categories and would like to see your book sold in our store, please send an email with the digital version of your book to andrew@purebooks.nz. Also answer the following questions (answers to all questions should contain fewer than 100 words):

- Why did you write this book?
- Who is this book targeted at?
- What price are you currently selling your book for and through what avenues?
- Which part of NZ do you live in, and do you ever travel through Timaru? (Note that this is for potential book launches to be held in-store).

After receiving your digital book, I will decide whether we are prepared to stock it in our shop. I will contact you directly to advise of my decision and provide details regarding prices.

It is important to note that we are limiting the books we sell in store to mainly non-fiction Christian books which will help people grow in their faith. Please DON'T send in any fiction or secular books. Children's books can be fiction but only if they teach a clear Biblical message.

Get in touch with me if you have any questions.

How to Format your Competition Entry

by Kathryn Paul

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

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

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

Heading

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

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

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

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

Writing Competitions Points Board

Level One		Level Two		Level Three	
Lisa Marie Preston	45	Elaine Dixon	42	Pat Kerr	27
Robert Prins	27	Stephen Douglas	27	Taylor Foster	27
Sandy Miller	21			Felicity Logan	24
Rachel Batten	18			Eion Field	12
Denise Gunn	12			Kathryn Paul	12
				Fiona Murray	9
				Janet Fleming	9

Congratulations to our midyear prize winners! These people are now promoted to the next level: Lisa Marie Preston, Sandy Miller and Elaine Dixon. Well done to Eion Field who has been promoted to the Honours List.

In each magazine, place getters receive points: 15 points for first, 12 points for second and 9 points for third. At the end of May and November, those with the highest points in Levels One, Two and Three will be awarded monetary prizes for first, second and third. Prizes up for grabs are: **\$60 for First Place, \$50 for Second Place, \$40 for Third place**. These are usually awarded as Manna Christian Store vouchers. Our next prize winners will be published in the Dec 2024–Jan 2025 magazine edition.

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

Please note published competition entries have not been edited.

Competition Results

Level One

Judge: Debbie McDermott

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

General Comments

I received seven entries (two of which were from first-time entrants) and congratulate each contestant for giving the competition topic a go. Writing a good mystery story is not half as easy as reading one, so it was pleasing to see how well each of you met the key requirements of the topic.

While each contestant made a great effort, four of the entries stood out from the other three. Not only were they very well written and full of the mystery and associated suspense I was looking for, but they each concluded with an unexpected, highly amusing and satisfactory twist in the tale. Based on their high standard of writing and the impact their stories had on me, I awarded Lisa Preston and Robert Prins first place equal, first-time entrant Denise Gunn second place, and Rachel Batten third place.

It should be noted here that a mystery story is not the same genre as a suspense story; neither does it need to include a criminal or illegal act in order for it to be classified as a mystery story. However, when writing a mystery story, it is nonetheless important to build at least some low-level suspense by keeping your reader guessing as long as possible, and ensuring the tale is reasonably fast-paced and does not belabour the point or become too detailed. The prime objective of a mystery story is to keep your reader engaged and reading because they want to discover the answer, solution or explanation of the mystery. This can be achieved by:

- *Providing just enough information for your reader to work on solving the mystery themselves.*
- *Misinforming or misleading your reader to follow a wrong line of enquiry; then bringing them back on track with a new snippet of information.*
- *Surprising your reader with a solution or conclusion they hadn't thought of.*

Most importantly, your mystery story must always have a clear and satisfying ending. If it doesn't, you run the risk of the mystery still remaining a mystery and upsetting your reader as a result.

First Place Equal



Lisa Marie
Preston
of Whakatane

Morris' Tale

The clock struck midnight so loudly that the surprise of it nearly made Morris lose his footing while he ran. A mistake like that would mean certain death. He ran faster than he had ever run before. A primal fear overtook him and gave him an adrenaline boost of extraordinary energy. Being smaller than his enemy and unarmed, Morris' best chance of survival was to use his speed and agility. He felt exposed out in the open so he zigzagged closer to the borders while trying to spot a hiding place. In the dark he could see a wooden structure he might be able to squeeze behind. He exhaled and reduced himself as small as possible and wriggled blindly into the crevice. Eyes closed tightly in terror, he tried desperately to quiet his breathing. He concentrated on each breath. He could feel his heart still thumping wildly in his chest.

Thud. Thud. Thud. Thud. S-c-r-a-p-e. S-c-r-a-p-e. Morris almost shrieked but stopped himself. Hearing the sound of the same enemy and the same weapon that had killed Grandpa six months ago was horrifying. Living in enemy territory is dangerous. Only Morris' Mum and Dad ever dare leave their hidden encampment. Even then, it's only for food and water so their family of ten can survive. *S-c-r-a-p-e. S-c-r-a-p-e.* Morris thought he could see the edge of a weapon in the darkness. 'Can it reach me in here?' he wondered. He shrank further back into the narrow, dusty space.

'Will I ever see my family again?' he worried. 'If only I had listened to Mum and Dad and stayed at home watching over my brothers and sisters like I was told to do. I only wanted to explore a bit. To prove I'm not a kid anymore. I wanted to help by doing more than just babysitting.' Morris adored and respected his parents. He thought of the many times they taught him Bible verses. An appropriate one came to his mind easily, even under his current fear and stress: 'Honour your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you.' Morris' eyes were glassy with tears as great regret and sadness pierced his heart. Morris knew his parents would be disappointed but he knew he was loved and he would be forgiven. He must find a way to get home safely.

Thud. Thud. Thud. Thud. Click. The night suddenly became day. The enemy seemed to have control of the sun! Morris' dark corner was now filled with light and he winced as he adjusted to the glow. His hiding place was no longer safe. Morris wriggled to the edge of his hiding place, peeked quickly to ascertain the enemy's location, calculated his best escape route, and began running at top speed. *Thud. Thud. Thud. Thud.*

Thwak! The broom slammed on the tile floor but it just missed Morris' tail as he ran under the grandfather clock, through the mouse hole in the skirting board and safely into his family's nest in the wall, where his mother welcomed him with a forgiving cuddle.

First Place Equal



Robert
Prins
of Auckland East

Stakeout

The clock struck midnight. Michael woke with a start, instantly alert. He mentally reprimanded himself for dozing off and scanned the area for signs of activity.

Sergent Michael Christopher had been with the police force almost fifteen years. Now was not the time to sleep. His senses were on high alert as the chime of the grandfather clock faded away. Silence descended, broken only by the ticking of the pendulum. A minute later he heard the telltale beep of a wristwatch alarm. It stopped almost as soon as it began.

The house was in darkness, the curtains closed. Two doors led off the lounge where he sat on a second-hand couch: one led outside and the other into the hallway. He stood up and moved silently into the darkest corner of the lounge where he crouched waiting between the television and a bookcase. From there he could see both doors, the couches and the coffee table, without being seen himself. It was time.

Stakeouts were commonplace for Seargent Christopher, but this one had him on edge. It was not the darkness or the silence that got to him, not even the fact that he had no backup, it was the unpredictable situation. This was one of his most delicate operations ever.

A noise. Barely perceptible. Footsteps on carpet. Right on time, barely three minutes past midnight. He strained his eyes and ears to see and hear more. The footsteps stopped. Did they suspect he was waiting? He could not see far past the doors to tell what was going on. The sound of whispering was heard over the ticking of the clock. There were two of them. This was not what he was expecting. One sounded nervous and the other was obviously leading. The stakes had been raised.

He listened as footsteps came toward him. Faint torchlight sent shadows shooting down the hallway. A door gave a slight squeak and then clicked shut.

On edge, Sergent Michael Christopher rose from his hiding place and crept toward the door leading to the hallway. He peered around the corner. The hallway was empty. All the doors were shut – even the kitchen door which had been left open.

He edged toward the kitchen door and listened. They were in there. He had to make a move. If he opened the door, they would either flee into the dining room or ... he hated to think of alternative scenarios.

Very quietly he turned the handle and opened the door a crack. He could see them both. Cupboards were open and goods were being removed. He took the chance while they were both distracted and opened the door to catch them red-handed.

“Caught you!” he called. There was a blood-curdling scream and a crash as a tray dropped to the floor. Running over to the still screaming culprits, he scooped his eight and 6-year-old daughters up for a hug. The midnight feast was over and the marshmallows were safe.

Second Place



Denise
Gunn
of Foxton

The Clock Struck Midnight

The clock struck midnight when Shelley heard the sound again. It seemed closer this time. A shuffling noise accompanied by the occasional grunt.

She pulled the duvet up further while clutching the edge, tightly.

Sneaking a quick glance over at her Labrador, Shelley saw Peggy curled up asleep in her dog bed. Peggy was rescued by Shelley several years ago and never had the best of hearing. At first, Shelley thought her hearing was rather selective, especially when the old dog only seemed to appear whenever the fridge door opened. But as age caught up with her, Peggy was now completely deaf. Shelley had to use hand signals to give commands. And that was no help in the dark.

Shelley heard the noise again. It was definitely near the house. Isaiah 54:17 came to mind *'No weapon formed against you will prosper.'* She wondered if that applied in this situation.

Suddenly a loud thump hit the side of the house. Shelley looked at Peggy. The old dog was now snoring.

As different scenarios ran through her mind, Shelley planned how she was going to make a mad dash for the phone. Then all went quiet. There was no more shuffling, grunting or banging against the house. Perhaps whatever it was had given up and left?

Shelley let out a huge sigh of relief. Had she been holding her breath all that time? She looked at the digital alarm clock. The screen read 12.05am.

Rolling over in bed, Shelley snuggled back into a more comfortable position. She had an early start in the morning for work at the cafe.

Just as Shelley began drifting back to sleep, there was another thump against the side of the house. The shuffling and grunting noise returned too.

In a split second, Shelley was sitting up in bed. And this time Peggy stirred in her sleep, stood up, turned around several times and then curled back up in dog bed.

Shelley threw off the duvet and crept quietly into the lounge to use the landline. Coverage for her mobile phone was always dodgy out in the country. She dialled 111 then heard the operator ask which emergency service was required.

“Police,” whispered Shelley.

Another operator came on the line and enquired about Shelley’s situation.

“I think there’s someone prowling around outside my house,” replied Shelley.

After asking for details and her location, the operator assured Shelley that a patrol unit was on its way.

She waited quietly while the operator kept her on the line until the police arrived.

Eventually, there was a knock at the door.

“Police,” called a voice. “We’ve been called to this location with reports of a prowler. We’ve found something out here that may be the cause of this disturbance.”

Shelley opened the door to find two grinning police officers. Beside them was her pet pig Harry, covered in dirt and flowers. Harry grunted as he pushed past her in a rush to enter the house.

Third Place



Rachel
Batten
of New Plymouth

A Bump In The Night

The clock struck midnight. Its vibrations echoed down the hallway, obnoxiously reminding Mindy that whether she was asleep or not, the evening was advancing. Nasally snores rattled from the other side of the bed.

‘Typical!’ Mindy thought, *‘Up until 11:30pm talking about his development plans and I’m the one whose still awake!’* She padded out to the kitchen in her dressing gown and opened the fridge. As Mindy rummaged around, she thought about their meeting with the mortgage broker. Her husband dreamed of property development yet their garden was littered with trenches, dug for the creation of a retaining wall yet to be completed. Scaffolding, as yet unused, surrounded their house so he could fix the spouting. Mindy stabbed at a piece of meatloaf until she had eaten it all.

She was halfway through a slice of lemon meringue pie when there was a THUMP. She paused.

'It's the meatloaf talking,' Mindy thought. Before she'd had another mouthful, a second THUMP rattled the window pane. Images of shadowy figures with terrible intentions filled her mind. Lemon meringue pie in one hand and a kitchen knife in the other, Mindy tiptoed to the back door and peered out from the deck. Cat's eyes shone in the shadows. Crickets chirped and moths fluttered.

'Overactive imagination!' Mindy thought, shaking her head. Halfway through the pie an almighty clatter sounded. Mindy dropped her plate and globs of meringue, lemon curd and shortcake flew everywhere. Mindy banged open a cupboard door as she grabbed her rolling pin. Anger from missing out on her pie and creating a mess, obliterated the fear that had gripped her earlier.

"Who's there?" She shouted, marching down the deck steps, "Show yourself!"

There was a rustle from a bush by the garden shed.

"Get lost, or I call the cops!" Mindy yelled as she moved towards the bush, "Get LOST! Aghhhh!"

Quite suddenly Mindy went from being above ground to well below it as she fell, landing with a thump, into a long, rectangular hole.

Mindy rubbed an egg, shaped bump on the back of her head, trying to erase her feelings of stupidity. "I've fallen into my husband's trench!" she muttered. A clatter nearby put Mindy on alert until she heard a series of scrapes and clangs on the deck and a metal, scaffolding pipe rolled to a stop, inches from the edge of the trench. Meanwhile the rustling continued. Mindy scrambled to find her rolling pin. She stood, feet apart, rolling pin held above her head, waiting for the intruder. The rustling escalated until, with a flurry of movement, a tabby cat leapt from the bushes and sauntered over to inspect Mindy's trench.

Mindy sat down gingerly in the trench and looked up at the stars, the cat nestling into her lap.

Suffice to say that the next morning her husband was most surprised to find her cuddled up with a tabby cat in trench. And that evening Mindy enjoyed another cuddle with Tabby on the couch while her husband worked late into the night filling in all the trenches in their back yard.



Level Two

Judge: Shirley Jamieson

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

General Comments

Micro fiction is the term used for stories written with only 500 words or less. All stories need a setting, characters, theme, a conflict or problem to be resolved, and a satisfying ending. A micro story needs all these criteria in a compact package. Every word counts.

The requirement for the competition this month has provided the setting. In a rest home/hospital environment, much of the daily activities and care necessitates following a regimented routine.

A diversional therapist organises activities, entertainment, outings for those who are able to participate, and involves residents to celebrate events throughout the year. Many do a wonderful job in encouraging residents to join in, have fun and socialise.

Despite this, many residents grieve their loss of independence, and miss their pets they had to give up because they were no longer able to care for them or themselves. They miss the companionship and the warmth of the touch of a furry friend.

This is where the trained visitor dog service comes in.

In this month's competition, the characters in the story help to set the scene. The main characters are the resident and the visitor dog. Secondary characters would be the dog's owner and maybe another person to keep the story flowing.

The theme ties it all together, gives the message of the story, the purpose, and is stated clearly in the 'take away' at the end.

The problem needing to be resolved here is the lack of connectiveness with a furry friend. Many studies have proved that pets relieve stress, lower blood pressure, and enhance the health of the people who love them. Despite being surrounded by people in a rest home, animal lovers miss pets a great deal. Longing for a loving touch is another. The clinical touch of a kind carer cannot nourish the soul.

The satisfying ending in this month's story needs to be one of sensitivity and warmth, echoing the theme throughout.

*I have awarded Elaine first place. Her story, *Molly Makes a Difference*, sets the scene well, and her description of Ellen is realistic. The reader wonders how Molly, the visitor dog, could possibly get through to someone who has lost so much from Alzheimer's disease.*

The story is well thought out and flows well, carrying the reader on to an unexpected and touching scene, showing Ellen's reaction to Molly. Well done, Elaine.

First Place



Elaine
Dixon
of Tauranga

Molly makes a Difference

Ellen sat in her recliner, staring out the window at the park-like grounds of the rest home. It was a blank stare with no comprehension behind the watery grey eyes which had served her for over ninety years. In the latter stages of dementia, Ellen no longer interacted with her family or carers, apart from brief moments of lucidity when her memory was triggered by music, a photo, a smell or a touch.

Ellen had outlived her husband by a number of years, and her four children were almost at retirement age themselves. The busy life she had led as a farmer's wife was a distant memory, tucked away in an inaccessible part of her brain, or perhaps lost altogether to the ravages of Alzheimer's disease.

On a shelf in her room, there were photos of the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, so many descendants marking the years. But pride of place went to two larger photos depicting golden Labrador dogs, alert and intelligent animals that were obviously well-loved.

Living a few kilometres from the rest home was a young farmer's wife named Ashleigh. Part of her time was spent breeding Labrador puppies, an activity she loved with a passion. She also owned an older Labrador named Molly who was past her breeding years. When she was out walking with her she began to notice how many older people 'lit up' when they saw Molly. After making enquiries in her area, she got in touch with a pet therapy organisation whose members made regular visits to retirement villages and rest homes.

Soon Ashleigh and Molly were making weekly visits to Ellen's rest home. Although no one had suggested it, Ashleigh noticed Ellen's small lonely figure sitting by the window and decided to take Molly over for a visit. Molly seemed to sense Ellen's condition and quietly went and sniffed her hand, gently licking it to get Ellen's attention. The response was immediate. Ellen stopped her blank gazing and looked down at Molly, smiling and stretching out her hand to stroke the golden fur on Molly's head.

"You've come back to me," she whispered. "I've missed you so much." Molly rested her head in Ellen's lap as she continued to stroke her fur. Ashleigh looked on with tears in her eyes. This was why she was here. The spark that lit Ellen up remained

for some time. She continued to be animated, speaking softly to Molly and smiling. One of the carers came in and saw what was going on. She gasped at the sight of Ellen talking and stroking Molly.

“Oh, how wonderful,” she said to Ashleigh. “This is the first time I have seen Ellen so responsive. You will have to come back!”

Now Ashleigh visits Ellen with Molly every week. While there is not always a response, Ashleigh knows that the comfort Molly brings to Ellen is a gift that cannot be measured.

Level Three

Judge: Julia Martin

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

General Comments

A travel article suitable for a magazine, newspaper, blog or website normally gives factual information about places, people, culture, customs, history, along with the writer's experience and evaluation.

The article should be well-researched, informative, and entertaining. It can be the result of a first-hand visit to a place, or the account of an armchair traveller who can transport the reader to a different place or time.

While there are numerous wonders in our modern world, the following are recognized as the official seven: Chichen Itza in Yucatan, Mexico, Coliseum in Rome, Taj Mahal in Agra, India, Petra City in Jordan, Great Wall of China, Machu Picchu in Peru, Christ the Redeemer in Brazil.

From this list, members had to choose one and write an article describing their experience using their imagination and ability with words to arouse the readers' interest in this place and even encourage them to visit the wonder for themselves. With a 350-word limit, the writing needs to be selective and succinct.

Points to consider in writing a travel article.

1. *Write in the first person using a conversational style.*
2. *Start with a catchy heading and an opening paragraph that summarises what the article is about, but don't give too much away.*
3. *Research thoroughly using all resources available. The article however must be your own original work. (See article in April-May's magazine 2024. Is AI allowed for Competitions?)*

4. *Organize your article with a strong introduction, main body, and a conclusion that summarizes your experience and recommendations.*
5. *Provide facts, tips, or insights while being creative with sensory details such as sights, sounds, tastes, and smells.*

I was pleased to receive five entries. Surprisingly, four were based on actual visits to the sites. Sadly, one entry had to be disqualified because the member chose a wonder from the ancient world which is on a different list from the official seven of the modern world.

Another entry was well-written but was more suited as a devotion rather than an article for a travel magazine. I do hope, however, that she gets the opportunity to use it in that context.

I awarded first place to Pat Kerr for her article concerning the Christ the Redeemer statue in Brazil.

It's an interesting and entertaining article, full of facts and information along with her personal experience, reflections, and recommendations.

Second place goes to Taylor Foster for her experience and reactions to her visit to the Taj Mahal in India. I awarded third place to Felicity Logan who wrote about her visit to Petra in Jordan.

Some members are still struggling to format their entries correctly as laid down by our editor on page 20 in April-May's magazine (2024). Marks will be deducted if these rules are not adhered to in the future.

First Place



Pat
Kerr
of Roxburgh

Up Close to Christ the Redeemer

I feel like I am on top of the world. I am up close to Christ the Redeemer on a beautiful cloudless day.

He is a colossal soapstone statue, 30 metres tall with a span of 28 metres. I am dwarfed by the base which is eight metres high. The view he shares with me is spectacular- a full 360 degrees panorama over Rio de Janeiro, the party city in Brazil. In front of me I see Tijuca National Park, endless blue sea, Sugarloaf Mountain in the foreground and Guanabara Bay in the background. Rio's famous Ipanema and Copacabana Beaches are not visible from here.

There's a brisk breeze. I hold my hat. I could not imagine being up here in fog, strong winds, tropical downpours or electric storms. In 2008 and 2014 lightning damaged fingers. Scary...

The crowd starts shouting. What is happening? Everyone goes silent as we watch a coasting, descending, albatross-like airliner glide past, wings outstretched like Christ's arms. Awesome.

This is icing on my cake!

I am on a 'shoulder-season' tour in Rio. This means comfortable weather, fewer tourists, shorter queues, cheaper costs, reliable transport and a Portuguese guide. Everything, including this visit to Christ the Redeemer, is pre-booked, prepaid, insured and guided. It may seem expensive but it is worry-free. We enjoy booked seats on the train, instant admittance to the elevators, escalators and stairways to the top, guiltily passing long queues. We shared our train carriage with a bridal party about to be wed in the small chapel in the base of the statue.

We move like obedient school children sticking to the teacher, our guide, who warned us of pickpockets, muggers, and getting lost. None of us speak Portuguese.

If you suffer from phobias- acrophobia (heights), basophobia (falling) or acrophobia (crowds)- then visiting this huge statue, situated at 700 metres (2,300 feet) above sea level at the top of Mt Corcovado in Tijuca National Park overlooking Rio de Janeiro, is not for you.

Intrepid me, however, has just crossed it off my bucket list. It's fantastic.

Second Place



Taylor
Foster
of Tauranga

Standing the Test of Time

It had been an effort to get here. Mission trips weren't easy. We'd barely stayed alive, stumbling among Delhi's poorest regions, cramping with "Delhi Belly," and almost fainting in India's fiery heat. But we were finally in Agra, standing at the foot of one of the wonders of the modern world: the Taj Mahal.

When my family and I first entered the grounds, the Taj was all I saw. Its white marble sides were blinding, and its dome seemed to float among the clouds. Four minarets stood resolute. Taking 20 years to build, the Taj was made by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan for his deceased wife, Mumtaz Mahal. A symbol of his undying love.

Lisa, my sister, craned her neck to the 73-metre-high Taj. "I can't believe we're here."

I shook my head. “Same. It feels odd. Like it’s a moment in our lives that won’t be repeated.”

Lisa nodded. “Come, let’s see inside.”

The inner sanctum was a maze of arches and patterns. Every tile, floor to ceiling, was inset with gemstones. Squinting in the dim light, we tiptoed into a small chamber holding two gold cenotaphs. The room of respect. The place that confirmed this majestic architecture was a tomb made for and housing two lovers.

After a 20-minute meander, I gasped back into the open air. I was out the back of the Taj, alongside the churning Yamuna River. As I gazed at the hazy sky and murky water, I realised I was standing where Shah Jahan had stood over 350 years ago. How are we still drawn to something so ancient when our lives are so modern? Perhaps we’re drawn to things that stand the test of time. Things that have seen every shape and shade of humanity and still seem to stand secure.

As I stood there, I realised that that is just like God. A wonder standing the test of time, seeing every change in humanity, but still never failing to invoke reverence from us. Perhaps our love for these wonders is revealing our deeper yearning for God – an ancient piece of history that’s so compelling and secure in our chaotic, modern world.

Third Place



Felicity
Logan
of Feilding

Petra, Valley of Wonders

Welcome to Petra, a destination showcasing ancient technology, halfway between the Gulf of Aqaba and the Dead Sea. Being within Jordan’s border, it’s to be hoped the unrest in Israel will never endanger this magnificent site!

Originally Raqem, this first-century Nabataean city was on the main trade route from Arab countries to China or Europe. Greeks renamed it Petra. It’s now a national park but some local Bedouin squat there in caves.

We purchased tickets and currency at the Visitor Centre, and our hotel with all amenities is beside the valley’s entrance (with numerous others within 8km). Your guide conducts you through the extremely narrow opening accessing 4km of cliffs elaborately carved with what are not simply facades. In a spectacular array, columns, pillars, carvings and stairways lead to chambers which were premises possibly of commerce, worship, entertainment, accommodation and law – certainly of burial.

For this Wonder of the World you require good shoes, camera, hat and loose-fitting clothing. Walking is easy. You wander past facades which include the 'Silk Tomb', the 'Palace Tomb' and many more, and are amazed by the genius design of the famous 'Treasury'.

'The Dam' is reconstructed to show how ancient technology provided effective flood protection. Its cisterns and reservoirs turned a dry landscape fertile. 'The Theater' once accommodated 4,000 spectators!

As you explore designated areas, the sun's path changes the colours of the rocks. To photograph all facets of each facade, stay until exit time at sunset, and return for the 'Petra by Night' tour by candlelight.

On offer are cooking lessons, and massages at the Turkish Baths. But Petra's highlight is the Light Festival held each year starting late April. We stood or sat, entranced by live music, narration and the play of lights over the majestic facades of the 'Red Rose City'. Words fail...

Preparing for this trip, view the Facebook site 'Visit Petra' to download videos and information. You'll read also of the Wadi Rum desert with overnight stay in the Desert Camp, and perhaps plan to visit Suez and Cairo.

However Petra is sure to prove the biggest delight



Photo courtesy of Why Jordan Tours: www.whyjordantours.com

Competitions for August 2024

Due by 1 July 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: Select a poem with a biblical theme and write a story based on the poem's main message. Your story must be in prose. Give it whatever title you like, but your subtitle must be: 'Based on the poem [title of poem] by [name of poet]'. A copy of the poem must also be provided so the judge can compare it with your story. (450 words, story only)



Debbie

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org

Level Two—for members 16 years old and over

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

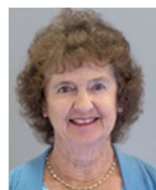


Lesley

Email entry to Lesley Edgeler at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

Level Three—for members 16 years old and over

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



Julia

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org



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