

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2024

# THE CHRISTIAN writer

## SEE INSIDE FOR

### Upcoming Events

- Quiet Day at Waikanae
- Whakatane Christian Writers Mini Retreat
- South Island Christian Book Authors' Network
- NZCW Flaxmill Retreat, Whitianga

### Articles including:

*Two Books have Influenced Writing my Memoir* by Mary-Pat Ross

*Europe Adventure* by Karl Van de Water

*Reflections on a Writing Retreat* by Taylor Foster

### Book Reviews:

*Adriel and the Wedgeball Tournament* by Kay Peterson

Fiction, Poetry, Notices, 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.

**Treasurer:** For subscriptions and donations: [treasurer@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:treasurer@nzchristianwriters.org)

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

### **Book Review Requests:** (current members only)

Mail a copy of your book to our Book Reviewer, Julia Martin

286 Karapiro Road, RD 4, Cambridge 3496 or email: [reviews@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:reviews@nzchristianwriters.org)

**The Christian Writer** is our bimonthly magazine published by NZ Christian Writers and distributed to all members. Contributions from members are always welcome. If you have some advice, encouragement, or an announcement of an event of interest to members, do send it to the editor for consideration by the 10th of the month before the next publication date. Submissions should be emailed as a word document attachment and be no more than 500 words long, except at the discretion of the editor.

The editor reserves the right to condense and/or edit any contributions for reason of space. Ideas and opinions will not be edited but editing of a technical nature may occur to maintain a high standard of writing. Views and opinions expressed do not necessarily state or reflect those of the editor.

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# The Christian Writer

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**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 Oct-Nov 2024 magazine of *The Christian Writer*! We are so excited to share the highly anticipated details for our upcoming Retreat 2025. Please note the **NEW** date for your calendar: **May 1st to 4th 2025**. This revised date ensures we have availability from our entire team, including caterer, speakers, and venue, all now confirmed.

NZ Christian Writers are hosting our Retreat 2025 at Flaxmill Retreat Centre, 1031 Purangi Road, RD 1, Whitianga 3591. In this President's Report, I'm sharing booking details, plus our speakers and workshop leaders for our Retreat 2025. Our inspirational speakers will bring seminar sessions and practical workshops to encourage, inspire, and upskill each of us on our writing journey. Our six confirmed speakers are:

**Vicki Millar** | Seminars: "God's Gift of Story" and "How to Structure your Story"

**Murray Smith** | Seminars: "Discovering your Writing Lane" and "Writing to Reach the 'Unreached'"

**Sina Steele** | Workshops: 'Psalm Writing' and 'Social Media'

**Chris Bovill** | Workshop: 'Devotion Writing'

**Rachel Weston** | Workshop: 'Writing with Passion'

**Peter Anderson** | Church Sermon: 'God is Speaking: Are we Listening?'

Once again, NZ Christian Writers has qualified for a subsidised charitable rate from the Big Toe Foundation as a not-for-profit group staying at Flaxmill Retreat Centre. It is our intention to keep overall costs down while providing a quality and valuable retreat experience. As we are limited to 50 attendees, we anticipate our Retreat 2025 to be fully booked, so we encourage you to secure your space by booking and paying as early as possible. Please note the following payment preference. When booking, please use Internet Banking as the preferred payment option. This avoids any Debit Card or Credit Card fees that are applied per transaction. Bookings are now available at the same 'price-freeze' rates as Retreat 2023. Here's the weblink to book your place: [www.nzchristianwriters.org/retreat-2025/](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/retreat-2025/).

As a team we want to extend our heartfelt appreciation and thanks to our retiring Level Two Competition Judge, Lesley Edgeler. Lesley, our team applaud your excellent contributions as judge for our competition entries and thank you so much for being an amazing mentor to help our writers effectively develop their writing skills.

Congratulations and thank you to our member and photographer, Imelda Cruz Wood, for her amazing photo that features on the front cover of this magazine.

Best regards

Justin St Vincent

# Editorial: You've got the Edge

by Kathryn Paul



It's a rare occurrence for an individual to be published by an independent publisher in New Zealand and be earning enough money from their sales to be a full-time writer. It's rare enough to be an individual in New Zealand simply published by an independent publisher; I'm told the statistical probability is similar to winning an Olympic medal.

It's possible on the world stage to be an individual who has self-published and is earning enough from the sales to be a full-time writer. But in New Zealand that's rare. The most common situation is to be a writer who has self-published and who has to depend on another source of income.

It's possible to earn full time in New Zealand as a freelance writer covering journalism and magazine articles, but it requires a lot of self-discipline to keep on top of it. Keep in mind that usually magazine article payments are received quite a bit further down the track after all the work has been done.

However, nothing is impossible with God. The more you educate yourself in the craft of writing for your genre/s and marketing your product, the higher the chances become for your success. It's good to identify what you would consider a personal success. Not everyone is wanting to earn as a full-time writer. Not everyone is aiming for their book to go nationwide or worldwide. If you can identify what you would like the end result to be, this will help you work out the steps you need to take. It's important to be realistic and it's important to have faith.

I would say getting your book to the best standard possible and having it in a library somewhere, would be an excellent minimum goal. A library ensures it can be read again and again, without a huge outlay in printing costs. It pleases me when I spot a Christian writer's book in a library – what an excellent way to reach many people.

Whatever your goal is, I encourage you to believe in yourself and, importantly, to trust in the Lord who has called you to write. With Him you can be confident that He always succeeds. He won't have asked you to try if He wasn't backing you one hundred per cent. Therefore, you've got a serious edge! Have the faith and logic of Samson's mother. Remember how his dad panicked and thought they were going to die? Whereas she said words along the lines of, 'No, Silly, God wouldn't promise all this to us and give us all these instructions just to wipe us out before we can do it! Duh, lol.' So have faith and go for it.

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 in 2025**

Note the new dates for our Retreat in Whitianga: **Thursday 1 May to Sunday 4 May 2025**. Costs include accommodation, catering and workshops. Bookings are currently available at the same 'price-freeze' rates as Retreat 2023. Register your place at the Retreat now by clicking this link: <https://www.nzchristianwriters.org/retreat-2025/>

## **Whakatane Christian Writers Mini-Retreat 15-16 November 2024**

Our Whakatane group is running a Retreat at Titoki Christian Healing Centre. Click here: <https://titokichristianhealingcentre.co.nz/christian-writing-mini-retreat/> and join in.

## **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.

# Upcoming Event: Quiet Day

Our Wellington and Kapiti groups are having a combined day of learning and sharing, using the material, *Quiet Day Jesus' Prayers*.

- **Date:** Saturday, 9th November
- **Time:** 10:00 am to 3:30 pm
- **Venue:** 20 Reikorangi Road, Waikanae.  
(not too far out, on the right, down long driveway to sign River Pa & park area)
- **Cost:** \$20 (morning/afternoon tea/coffee provided; BYO lunch)

## A word from Jo, the facilitator:

Jesus had a habit of prayer and, on some occasions, He shared those prayers with His disciples. This quiet day offers an opportunity to spend a relaxed day reflecting on some of the prayers that Jesus prayed and their implications for each of us. My hope is that this day will provide a quiet, reflective space for you to connect with and hear from God. For those in the writers' group, there will be opportunities to write in response to what you are praying about—perhaps through journaling, writing a poem, psalm, or story. Each person's response will be unique, and I encourage you to explore your creativity during this time.

Please bring something to write with and on, and your Bible. A watch or other timepiece may be useful if you wish to take advantage of the venue's grounds for reflection and want to keep track of time. If you have any special needs (e.g., vision/hearing constraints), please let me know so that I can accommodate you and ensure your comfort during the quiet day.

The cost is \$20 per person:

- **Payment:** \$18 to Jo before the day, on the day or cash on the day. The remaining \$2 to be contributed as a gold coin donation to cover expenses for drinks and snacks.

If the cost is a concern, please don't hesitate to reach out to Jo ([mail4jo@xtra.co.nz](mailto:mail4jo@xtra.co.nz)) or Stephen for Christian Writers ([cwhuttvalleybeyond@outlook.com](mailto:cwhuttvalleybeyond@outlook.com)). We wouldn't want this to prevent you from attending.

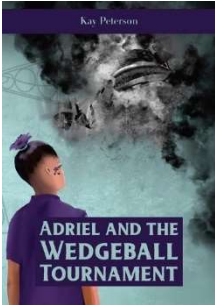
## Transport:

- **Pickup:** Waikanae rail station (Paul 0220533618)
- **Carpool:** From Waterloo railway station park and ride, 9:00 am (Stephen 027 2762028)

Looking forward to seeing you there!

## Wellington Christian Writers Hutt Valley & Beyond

Email: [cwhuttvalleybeyond@outlook.com](mailto:cwhuttvalleybeyond@outlook.com)



### Adriel and the Wedgeball Tournament

By Kay Peterson

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Tom Curtain Publishing 2024

On the inside cover of this book, the subject matter is described as: Juvenile/Young Adult Fiction, Fantasy, Technology, Dystopian, Sports, and Inspirational Fiction – definitely not a genre I would ever choose to read. Yet strangely, I was engrossed and would be keen to read the second in the *Adriel Series*. The *Adriel Series* is Kay Peterson's first published work for younger readers.

The young protagonist in the story is Adriel who is growing up in a strange dystopian society, unaware that he is actually a missing royal prince who will one day, hopefully, overcome the robotic enemies and rule over his country, thus saving his people from captivity and bondage.

The story contains conflict, mystery, intrigue, and romance, all set in a futuristic, bizarre, high-tech environment. Though forbidden in this society, a thin thread of Christianity survives in the form of prayer, scripture and good morals versus evil.

This type of fiction is immensely popular with younger readers. The book shops and libraries are full of such literature, but unfortunately there is often a sinister and occultic component instilled in these books (along with similar movies and video games) which occupy and influence the minds of young people.

I congratulate Kay for attempting this genre. It's refreshing to see a Christian writer offering an alternative for readers who enjoy this kind of fiction, and I wish her well with future books in the series.

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

Dear Kathryn, I have had the most amazing experience today and I thought it a lovely experience to share with you about the power of prayer and how God works in His mysterious ways.

I received an order this morning for a copy of my latest book from someone living in New Zealand. I duly posted the book and sent an email to the purchaser to let her know that the book had been posted this morning. I have a few copies of my books to sell in New Zealand and pray each day that God will provide the buyers here. Here was her reply:

*Thank you for the speedy shipment. I am very much looking forward to reading your book. It might sound strange to you but I woke up this morning with your name on my mind after having a dream about teen issues. I have recently started helping out at our church with the intermediate aged kids and had many times sent up SOS prayers to God about how to connect with them. I have never before heard of you so God literally put your name on my mind, it must be His answer to my prayer :) Thank you again.*

Onward and upward!  
Blessings, Robin Cox  
Mentoring Matters  
[www.yess.co.nz](http://www.yess.co.nz)

**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**

  
NZ CHRISTIAN  
**writers**

**RETREAT**



**VICKI  
MILLAR**



**MURRAY  
SMITH**



**SINA  
STEELE**



**CHRIS  
BOVILL**



**RACHEL  
WESTON**



**PETER  
ANDERSON**

[www.nzchristianwriters.org](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org)

Recently some of the Northland Christian Writers group each completed an optional writing assignment. The instructions were to write a book review and share what he or she gleaned from the book as a writer. Following is the assignment written by attendee, Mary-Pat Ross, which leads on nicely to an excerpt from her current writing project.

## Two Books have Influenced Writing my Memoir

by Mary-Pat Ross

Writing my book in the public library has had many advantages. Not only is it a space for me to be focused but it also has free WIFI. My editor advised getting connected to Google Docs in order to share comments in the editing process. Recently, another advantage revealed itself. Stretching my legs, I found a book being displayed that caught my attention.

The bright colours on the cover were attractive with a simple yellow hut, a red Danish flag flying from the roof, and two thirds of the cover portrayed a clear blue sky. But the title caused me look more carefully. Different fonts, sizes, and colour were used that seemed eye-catching, the title being:

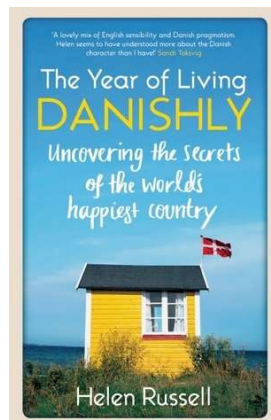
*The Year of Living **DANISHLY**. Uncovering the secrets of the world's happiest country.*<sup>1</sup>

The fact that it was a memoir type of book created more interest. *Maybe I could find out some new literary techniques?* I was not disappointed. I found dialogue explaining her story much like I had been trying to do in order to 'show not tell'. I could see it was more extensive and with some surprising humour. *Good idea!*

She also used italics for special Danish words, which assured me that this was a good idea to use with my memoir using Portuguese words. Then I noticed she inserted her thoughts into the story and used italics as well. I was excited to see that as I had been wondering how best to present my thoughts. *Now I know!*

The table of contents had chapters divided into months of the year, with a short title. Interesting. *I wonder if this would be useful for my book or books?* It makes sense for her book as the title defines it by 'The Year'.

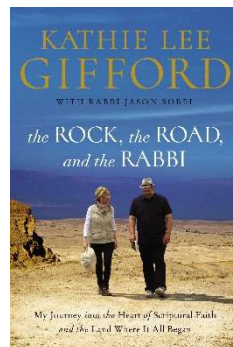
Then I spied an updated edition (2020) with a new chapter at the end. It contains a lot of humour of her changed lifestyle still living in Denmark. Quite an enjoyable read though secular in content.



I needed to find another book with Christian content to influence my memoir writing as it has a Christian perspective. It wasn't until a week later that a second book brought more answers to questions I hadn't even asked yet. I found it in my own book collection! Interesting that this book cover also has two thirds blue sky and one third ground with two people walking. *I wonder if this 2/3 and 1/3 divisions on a page is somehow an artist technique, making it visually appealing?*

This Christian book definitely had content that appealed to me as well as some ideas for structuring chapters: *The ROCK, the ROAD, and the RABBI, My Journey into the Heart of Scriptural Faith and the Land Where It All Began.*<sup>2</sup>

I noticed it had many short chapters, 30 in fact. Each title page had a black and white photo, with the title (if it's long) presented in different fonts. Shorter chapters break up the story into chunks that, for a lot of readers these days, is preferable. I will review my writing with a more confident look at breaking up the story into smaller chunks with specific titles.



She also had a Bible verse that applied to each chapter under the title. I think that could be useful in my book too. I noticed how she referenced Bible verses and passages within the text.

I love how she included in the middle of the book a few coloured photos for the reader to see her story visually. *I wonder how expensive that would be?* Opposite the contents page at the beginning is a full page of a map of Israel. I think that is helpful for locating where sections of her story occur. I will definitely have a map of Mozambique but in black and white. *I love maps anyway!*

On the back cover is a brief summary of what the book includes with another Bible verse at the top of the page. Her endorsements by others takes up two pages at the very beginning of the book. Kathie Lee Gifford is a well-known author and has many people endorsing her book. So that makes sense to include them that way. On the other hand, I am a beginning writer, hoping to have this memoir published, so I may have only a couple of endorsements. Possibly they will be on the back cover along with a brief explanation of each book.

I have seen how another writer, who published her mission story of China, resulted in three smaller books. I like that idea and envisage my story to be printed as three thin books which encompass three time periods.

However, as I progress in stages of this writing process some ideas will stick while others will fall away. I trust God to lead me step by step, providing everything I need to share His story through my journey.

(1) Russell, Helen. 2015. Published in UK by Icon Books Ltd. London.

(2) Gifford, Kathie Lee. 2018 and 2020. Published in Nashville, Tennessee by W publishing.

# The Angel at the Bus Stop

## Excerpt from Mozambique Missions Book

by Mary-Pat Ross

Finally, the day came for goodbyes, bittersweet yet part of the journey. A few close friends and family members clustered around me in town. After hugs and blessings, I hopped on the bus to the Auckland hotel where bus transfers occurred. Somehow, I needed to find the downtown bus-stop from the hotel to where the airport shuttle bus departed from. Packing for what I thought I would need for the next 10 months in two countries – first Portugal and then Mozambique – I was laden with a large and heavy suitcase, a carry-on suitcase, a backpack, and my ukelele.

I offered up a prayer, one of those quick “help me find the bus stop Lord!” prayers. As I made my way through the hotel, burdened with bags, I didn’t have to wait long. Almost immediately after my prayer, an hotel attendant came to my rescue. As I explained that I needed to find the bus-stop where the airport shuttles departed from, he kindly grabbed my bags. I noticed he was a large strongly built Pacific Island man with a friendly face. He said the bus-stop was across the busy downtown road, and while we walked, he asked me where I was going.

I shared with him my calling to missions in Africa. He smiled, saying he and his family from the islands prayed and supported missionaries. His smile and encouragement touched my heart. I was thinking how remarkable it was that he should be helping me cross the busy street with my many heavy bags. As he deposited my belongings, explaining when the next bus was to arrive, he walked off up the hill back towards the hotel.

As I was pondering how extraordinary this encounter was, I tried to see him walking through the crowds. But the surprising thing was that I could not find him. I looked and looked, scanning the road to see if he crossed over to the hotel but it was as though he vanished! I felt it was an unusual encounter and wondered if it was in fact an angel sent in human form to help me. My eyes teared up as I contemplated how much God loves and provides for my every need, even just to get from one bus-stop to another.



A massive thank you to Fiona and Alan Murray, who have, together, prepared the NZ Christian Writers Members' Books Catalogue 2024. Click the image on the left to view over 200 NZCW members' books available for sale.

## “Psalm of the Disenchanted”

by Christel Jeffs

*This poem came from a place of overwhelm, doubt, and lingering hope. The extremes of belief and action in the world were consuming me. Add to that my own seeds of suffering, my cries of longing, and the fraught expressions of truth that divide us all...I had to write a psalm that reflected that lament, the turmoil of living with so many voices and burdens. And, as Jesus so often does, He took me back to the cross. His blood and body, enough to sustain me. I may feel disenchanted at times. But I shall never be enchanted beyond hope.*

Tell mercy to me, O God,  
because of your unfailing love.  
I have doubted Your existence,  
confounded by all the ways  
we try to understand You.

How we create schemas,  
frames to admire,  
handholds to cling to.

How we try to make sense of a world  
with none.

We paint You in our skin colours,  
images  
graven on our hearts.

What suits and tickles the ear,  
we spread in worldviews,  
doctrines.

We try to live with them all,  
but perhaps we only want one.

I have asked questions  
that were met with  
silence.

I live with patterns repeating  
on loop;  
no chariot or horse  
can break these chains.  
I have doubted Your ability  
to break them,  
still do.

O Lord, tell mercy to me,  
for your unfailing love is  
bread and wine,  
body and blood.

I taste You there  
in the dry ache of desert in my mouth,  
on my tongue parched  
till I drink deep.

## Seasons' Surprises

by Barbara J Harry

*Blasting blizzards  
crippling chill  
ferocious fires  
whitened wheels  
curtailed cogs  
frozen fingers  
muffs and mittens  
fun-filled frolics*



*Icicle necklaces  
sparkling spider's spin  
burdened boughs  
rugged ranges  
hibernation habitats  
dormant dreamland*

*Awakening song*



*Crackling creeks  
raging rivers  
bursting branches  
budding, birthing  
cribbed creation  
casting camouflaged coat  
Winter's wrap—wrinkled, wilted...*

*Season's surprises  
stir my soul!  
Spring has sprung!*





*Karl at a medieval mountain town, Minerve in the Occitanie region of Southwest France*

## European Adventure

by Karl Van de Water

Hi all, herewith a summary of my recent trip to Europe. It started about two years ago with my cousin Peter inviting me to his place in the south of France. He said, "You can come any time and stay as long as you like."

Well, how could you turn down an offer like that? It took me a while to get around to it, but on 27th May this year, I found myself at Auckland airport at 6 am.

I've always had more than a bit of trepidation about all the logistics of travel. Will I find the right departure area, where do I check my bag in? What if I miss a train? Etc., etc. By the time I was back home many weeks later, I knew all this worry was unnecessary. Funny how you can let false fears rob you of much joy in life.

I had a bit of money saved up, so decided to go premium economy. If you haven't heard of this, it's like halfway between economy and business class. In price too – thousands more than economy. Anyway, first leg (to Singapore) was Air NZ. And... it was really good! Definitely a step up from economy. Much bigger seats, more space, really good food and more attentive service from cabin crew. I did feel a bit of a snob – first time I've ever indulged myself in this way. But I was calling to mind a long-haul flight (16 hours), a few years ago. No sleep, little kids wailing, discomfort, cramped seating, very near neighbours. *This is much better!* I thought. *And I've got three more ahead!*

Soon enough I arrived in Singapore where I had a hotel room booked. I got a taxi, arrived at the hotel, checked in, found my room and flopped onto the bed. When choosing a hotel with the travel agent in Auckland, she told me they were expensive in Singapore – around \$500 a night. *Far out*, I thought, that is expensive. Eventually I chose one at about half that. So I was expecting to fetch up in a grotty place, a long way from anywhere, in a disreputable part of town. Not a bit of it. It was less than ten minutes away, a very nice building, nice area, quite acceptable room, nice outlook and quiet; no problem at all mate! There was even a big tree outside with a Hornbill perched on a branch.



The main attraction for me in Singapore was a magnificent hotel building I'd seen on a TV doco. called the Marina Bay Sands. But first the obligatory wander around the area in which I found myself. It turned out that the area (Changi) was the site of an abandoned RAF base. There were several very large 3-4 storey buildings in the vicinity, all derelict, grass growing in gutters and grounds overgrown. It seemed a waste of these substantial buildings. Also of note were the really big, very green trees everywhere.

Anyway, a taxi from the hotel dropped me off at the airport to put my main bag in storage. From there I took metro trains here and there and eventually to Marina bay and this very distinctive hotel building. It did not disappoint. The seemingly boundless creativity of mankind astounds me. The photos do not do it justice. Between this hugely impressive building and the harbour was another Singapore landmark called Gardens by the Bay. From very high up on the observation deck of the Marina Bay Sands, it was clear these extensive 'gardens' were worthy of further investigation. The photo here gives some indication of these magnificent green constructions.



From the Marina Bay area, it was direct to the airport via the metro trains. Finding the baggage storage place took a little while, these airports are just so huge, it's easy to get disoriented [or is it just me...]. Anyway, after checking my big bag in and getting the boarding pass, it was the first of many long waits. In this case it was a three hour wait for a Lufthansa flight to Frankfurt. There were two five-hour transit waits ahead, Five hours! You feel really guilty for wasting so much of the precious time God has given us.

All these words above have covered only the first two days of a six-week trip, so I think a curtailing of verbiage may be in order. I'll give you a short summary. The rest of the journey was Frankfurt to Toulouse, where I met Peter; four weeks with him which included six days in Normandy [a drive the length of the country from south to north], for the 80th anniversary of D Day celebrations. That was really something. We had many other excursions in the remaining weeks – a very generous man, my cousin.



*D Day Celebrations*



Then I took a high speed [300 km/h] train trip to Paris and a long bus trip to the Netherlands, where I stayed with equally generous and gracious cousins for two weeks. I just loved the Netherlands [ancestral home for me]; spent almost every day cycling – some long distances too. One highlight was the discovery of a museum hidden in the middle of a very extensive wooded reserve which contained the second largest collection of Van Goghs in the world! Ninety paintings! That was a long bike ride day with a fellow enthusiast [another cousin].

I wrote a fairly comprehensive daily journal of this trip, so if anyone is interested, an interrogation will not be necessary, you can borrow the notebook.

Cheers, Karl.

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## **Here are some writer/reader websites you may not be aware of:**

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/>

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Recently we featured author Sandra King's story of starting a new orphanage. Here is a link to Sandra's video update: [Sandra King\\_Uganda.mp4](#)

# Reflections on a Writing Retreat

by Taylor Foster



In June, Tauranga Christian Writers held a writing retreat for members in and around the Tauranga area. It was held at Jan Pendergrast's home in Oropi. After missing last year's retreat, I was determined to make this one. So, the morning of the retreat weekend, I hastily packed all my writing things (two bags – I am possibly an over-packer), grabbed chocolate muffins and set off.

The drive was the beginning. In the freezing morning, with the sun glowing sharply through my windscreen, I felt like I was going somewhere else, far away from busy Tauranga. My car wound around the country roads and eventually turned onto a gravel driveway. After double-checking my directions, my car slowly rumbled along among fields and farms. I couldn't help but smile as I saw the green hills, coated with a semi-mist and cold dew. It was peace and beauty. God was present among every twitter of the birds and glinting of the sun.

Finally, I made it to Jan's house. Unsure of what to expect I tentatively made my way up the stairs. Immediately I was welcomed by Jan's dog. Each person there came and greeted me with warm embraces and my muffins were quickly taken to the kitchen.

I spent the day at Jan's, listening, talking, learning and watching. We were graced with a seminar by Tauranga author Sharon Manssen who taught us how to enhance our fiction writing through better use of point of view, dialogue tags and description. However, if I'm honest, I did not get any writing done. I wanted to but it was just one of those days when writing eluded me. With the people, noise, and the different environment, words on paper seemed to drift far away. However, I gained something else – many things actually – something greater than penning a few words.

The first was a small moment in Jan's garden. Slipping out over lunch (I sound very anti-social) I made my way to view a nearby field. In the chilling air and cool sun, I watched.

Birds flew overhead, a giant falcon being chased by two smaller birds, tall trees stood strong, and the fields glistened with moisture. Here, I got to talk to God and just be with him. The writing retreat may not have given me writing but it gave me time to be.

Secondly the small, still conversation with Cathy. After the seminar I made my way into the front room, sitting watching a few silver eye birds dancing around Jan's deck. After a while, Cathy came to join me. She sat down and asked me how I was and what was going on for me. This was truly a gift. I had been going through a hard time and being able to share this and talk about my faith was like a breath of fresh air. Cathy was kind, patient and understanding. The writing retreat may not have given me writing but it gave me openness and a gift of being understood.

As we talked, more and more ladies joined us. Asked about what I was working on, finally, after months, years of keeping my little ideas to myself, I could finally share. It felt scary, exposing, I was afraid of many things. But I talked about my ideas and where I had planned them to go: books, series and all my things I had lingering inside.



My precious little treasures were shown to others and to my absolute joy, I was encouraged. Each person listened patiently, asked questions, offered suggestions. This was truly such a gift. Here, I got to share about moments in my life and how they'd shaped my faith. Some of these parts are hard to share, because very few people understand, but these ladies understood and then shared some of their own moments. Thank you.

That evening, I drove home with the sun slowly setting in front of me. I was tired but I'd gained so much. No, the writing retreat didn't result in me writing. But it gave me time, encouragement and people to learn from and be inspired by. I am so thankful for the opportunity to have gone along. Thank you to everyone who made it possible.

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

### **Summary of Report by Verna McFelin**

The South Island Christian Book Authors Network held its sixth quarterly meeting on Saturday, 27 July 2024. The meeting saw a turnout of twelve people, with fourteen sending their apologies. The meeting was held in the board room at the Beckenham Library, which is available free of charge to community groups. The venue is well-suited to our needs.

The meeting commenced at 9:30 am with informal chats over coffee and muffins. Verna opened the session with a prayer, followed by a brief welcome and an overview of the next two hours. Each member introduced themselves and shared their current stage in the writing process. Special attention was given to the new members, addressing their book-related questions and encouraging them to connect with other network members. The meeting included an open conversation segment, allowing attendees to ask questions about any aspect of book writing. Of the 12 who attended: 21 books have been published, 24 books have been written and not published, four books are in progress, while seven have a book inside waiting to get out.

Our guest speaker for the meeting was Dave MacManus, joint owner of CopyPress based in Nelson. Dave was recommended by Carol Duffy, a member from Nelson. Dave and Philippa purchased The CopyPress in 2003, inspired by the vision of the previous owner. Dave brought valuable skills from his experience in the communication and process industries to the printing and publishing environment.

Dave is passionate about helping everyday people achieve their dream of seeing their stories in print. He takes great pride in his role within the Nelson community and the quality printing services they provide to businesses and individuals. CopyPress employs twelve staff members who cover all aspects of the publishing process, from editing and design to the finished product. Additionally, the team includes Rio, a rescued Poodle Terrier Cross, who helps relieve stress and support the staff.

## Presentation Highlights

Dave's presentation covered the process from submitting a manuscript to holding the finished book. Key points included:

- **Ownership:** As an independent publisher, you retain ownership of your book.
- **Registration:** It is crucial to register your book with Nielson Book Data, the depository for all books.
- **Editing:** Never edit your own book. To meet commercial market standards, professional editing is essential; otherwise, the book is suitable only for friends and family.
- **Purchasing:** Authors only need to purchase books for personal sales at the author's rate. Distributors handle printing and selling to bookstores as needed.
- **Illustrations:** CopyPress can organize illustrators for children's books.
- **Layout and Approval:** CopyPress provides the total layout and a physical book proof before final sign-off for publishing.
- **Distribution:** CopyPress handles distribution to bookstores but does not provide public relations or marketing services. However, they can refer you to appropriate providers.
- **Online Listings:** CopyPress ensures your book is listed on Wheelers and other online bookstores, including IngramSpark.

The South Island Christian Book Authors' Network is strengthening as we get to know each other better and enjoy our time together. The collaborative spirit is growing, with everyone contributing to the success of our meetings. A venue has been booked for our next meeting on Saturday, 9 November 2024. See notice on the right.



South Island Christian Book Authors Network

**LEARN HOW TO  
PODCAST  
For Kingdom Impact**

Hosted by Tracy Glatz  
[www.tracyglatz.com](http://www.tracyglatz.com)  
Saturday, 9th November, 9.00 am –  
12.30 pm. Venue: Christchurch South  
Sydenham Library, Board Room

Cost - A  
Koha

Food can  
be  
purchased  
on-site  
from Vily's  
Café

Please RSVP by Monday 4th November to  
Verna McFelin - [verna.mcfelin@gmail.com](mailto:verna.mcfelin@gmail.com)

# Professional Writing Services

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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.

**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
- Copy-editing
- Proofreading

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

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

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

021 238 9234

E: [christel.jeffs@yahoo.com](mailto:christel.jeffs@yahoo.com)

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**Angela Curtis**

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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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Visit <http://wordwyze.nz>

## WRITING ANSWERS

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

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

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

**Janette Busch**

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*Any Questions?*



# Winter Rain and Floods

by Geraldine Crow

Part of Tarai Station is on a flood plain. Weather always plays an important role on a farm, especially when part of that farm tends to flood. Recently we experienced a cold, wet nor'easter which can bring flooding. This time it didn't (praise the Lord) but the weather always inspires poetry. Here is a poem I have shared online via the platform, *Substack*.

## New Song 2023

Cyclone Gabrielle passed our way  
this year,  
Causing a mud-slide  
to run down the gut  
between two hills of our Orbell's Paddock.  
The mud hardened  
Around ancient rocks  
unmasked from their primeval sleep.  
And now,  
in today's rain,  
a waterfall of many steps  
sprinkles white,  
carrying a new song  
out from the land.



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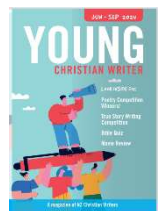
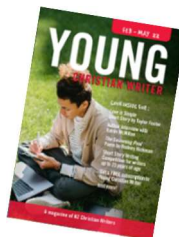
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# Sharing Writing using Platform: *Medium*

by Robin Cox

I have been exploring different avenues to market my [books](#) which have been published during the past five years.

I have about 100 blogs linked to youth mentoring, parenting and educating teenagers – a niche area. I was looking for an outlet with the thought that I could recycle, update and tweak them and share years of research with a different audience. At the same time, I can market my books. That's how I stumbled across Medium.

[Medium](#) was set up in 2012 by one of the co-founders of Twitter. It is a blog host described as 'an example of social journalism, having a hybrid collection of amateur and professional people and publications, or exclusive blogs or publishers in Medium.'

It has a built-in audience of over one million. Medium does not release too much detail. According to US blogs, Medium had 60 million monthly visitors in 2016, and 25 million users in 2015.

I am still finding my way, but here are some pointers that might be helpful:

- You can choose to have a free Medium account or a paid membership with unlimited access. I took the latter for a year.
- You can distribute your blogs/stories to your followers and other social media posts as you publish them on Medium.
- You can download free images from Unsplash directly to your blog.
- You can apply to join publishers for whom you are interested in sharing your blogs.
- Once you are a member, you can opt to submit your blog behind the 'paywall' and you will be paid when people read your blog and press the 'claps' image. Your payment is determined by the number of claps. When I enjoy an article, for example, I will give fifty claps. It's only a few cents per read, but the sum of money adds up if you write a number of blogs. I am being published by two Christian and four 'general' publishers at the moment and was surprised to see after a fortnight that I had already earned a few \$US, though I had not joined Medium to make money.
- You can copy and paste your blog directly onto your Medium writing page within your profile, publish it immediately or store it for further editing. It's incredibly user-friendly.
- The first task is to create your profile, which is also straightforward when you follow instructions.
- Blogs appear under topics, not the author's name.

Medium suits my requirements and I'll probably be an active participant for the next twelve months and see how things go.

There are numerous website for bloggers which can be found on Google, but this is the best one for my requirements. Other popular sites are [Substack](#) and [Hubpages](#), but I have not done thorough research on either of these.

# One Blink

## Flash Fiction by Taylor Foster

One blink. It was over. You called out it was finished, and life was never the same.

We lost you for three days. It was like living in a shadow. Your brothers, your sons, hid in the upper room. Upon the floor, they held onto your promises. I wandered in the garden, among the figs and olives. I tranced at the rock holding you in. Pale, sandy.

It took me to the day you were on the shore, teaching. The water lapped at your ankles, the hem of your robe dark with water. You called to some fishermen, rowing in with no catch.

“Let down your nets for some fish,” you commanded. The boat bent as they tossed. Everyone squealed and clapped as thousands of fish tore the net. Even I helped them pull it in, my head scarf soaked with sea spray.

I smiled as I remembered your eyes that day. Deep brown, wrinkled round the sides. So happy.

I fell to my knees as I looked upon your grave. Your eyes were weeping, bloodshot on that final day. And mine were cloudy, wanting to trick me.

But it was not the end. It never is with you. In a shine of light, my eyes were blinded. A rumble resounded from your grave. I saw things I cannot speak of.

And then you. Your eyes: brown, warm, heavenly. You blinked and I fell to my knees. You'd risen.

One blink nearly ended it all but another one saved humanity.

# Artificial Intelligence

by Janet Fleming

Artificial Intelligence, is this the way to go?  
To have a brain that works for me when mine is going slow;  
Before I had a monkey brain, was swinging in a tree,  
And suddenly a man-made tool will help the likes of me.  
What will be next - I hate to think that man will try to do,  
And will it really come to help the likes of me and you?

There is a book that tells us that man's knowledge will increase,  
That he will travel everywhere, that there will be no peace.  
Man's heart will fail him for fear, he'll turn to drugs and crime,  
And he'll not know what he should do at such a dreadful time.  
I think I'll keep the brain I have, forgetfulness and all,  
And trust the God who made my brain if AI comes to call.

There's one thing sure, it won't be long that this will bother me,  
I'll leave this world and travel on into eternity.  
No artificial brain for me, I'll know as I am known'  
The questions that I asked down here will then to me be shown.  
And as I walk the streets of heaven and see the Saviour's face,  
I'll thank Him for the wondrous plan that brought me to this place.

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

**Gary Ellis**

Bay of Plenty

**Kelsi Zwies**

Timaru

**Peter Wilson**

New Plymouth

**Philip Stewart**

Auckland West

**Raewin Hayes**

Whanganui

**Renee Tavita**

Whangarei

**All NZCW members are invited to share a Writer Profile and Book Feature(s) on our website. For details email our NZCW president, Justin St Vincent here: [president@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:president@nzchristianwriters.org)**

## How to Format your Competition Entry

by Kathryn Paul

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

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

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

### Heading

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

4. **The next four instructions** are all found under 'Home' and 'Paragraph'.
5. **Line spacing Multiple 1.2:** Under 'Paragraph' locate the drop-down menu for line spacing. Select the word 'multiple'. Next to it is the measurement for it, select or type in 1.2.
6. **Spacing Between Paragraphs 6 pt:** Under 'Paragraph' locate the 'spacing' 'before' and 'after' boxes. Mine is usually set by default to 'before' 0 pt and 'after' 10 pt. Change it to 'before' 6 pt and 'after' 0 pt. This changes the measurement of the space between the previous paragraph and your first sentence, and the space after the last sentence before the next paragraph.
7. **Paragraph Indentation None:** Under 'Paragraph' by default it's usually already set at 'none'.
8. **Alignment Justified:** This is where you can change your text to align on the left margin, or be centered, or align against the right margin or be spread evenly against the left and right margins (justified). This option is found in icons above 'Paragraph' and it's also found under 'Paragraph' in a drop-down menu.

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

## Writing Competitions Points Board

Level One		Level Two		Level Three	
Kerryn Levy	15	Sandy Miller	30	Jill Clarke	21
Denise Gunn	15			Jean Shewan	15
Robert Prins	12			Elaine Dixon	15
Robyn Wylie	12			Felicity Logan	12
Debbie Bennett	9			Pat Kerr	12
Lynne Leppard	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 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:** Think about someone who influenced your life when you were a child growing up or as an adult. In what way did they encourage and inspire you to become the person you are today? (400 words)

### General Comments

*I received seven nicely-written entries to this competition and thank each contestant for sharing in depth about the person who influenced and helped you (consciously or inadvertently) to become who you are today. Each of your testimonies are truly inspiring, but I want to particularly commend those who wrote openly and honestly about who they once were and who they are now as this makes their transformation stand out strongly and adds credibility to their narrative.*

*While it is not always easy or prudent to be quite so transparent, a testimony highlighting both the things we regret and how we have overcome them will engage an audience far better than a testimony that only focuses on the things of which we are proud. In other words, our transformation only becomes obvious when we tell or show others what we have been transformed from.*

*While not specifically stated, the main objective of this competition topic was to show the importance of godly influence and/or mentorship in a positive and safe environment that enables faith to grow and relationships to blossom. I am pleased to say that most of the entrants achieved this objective very well and—were it not for the odd mistakes with grammar, punctuation and formatting that resulted in a slightly lower score for some—it would have been very difficult to choose the winners of this competition.*

*I finally awarded First Place to Denise Gunn (96%), Second Place to Robyn Wylie (94.5%) and Third Place to Lynne Leppard (94%) for their excellent writing and for meeting all requirements to an exceptional standard. Including the percentages here shows just how close the marks were—not just between the winning three, but between the other four entrants as well.*

*In closing, I want to remind contestants to ensure they include their name and their location in their entry. These are for publishing purposes should they be one of the top three winners of the competition they have entered. Thank you.*

# First Place



Denise  
Gunn  
of  
Manawatu

## My Coach, my Mentor

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I call her Coach.

From the moment I first walked into church, Coach welcomed me with a huge smile. She took me under her wing and since then we've sat together in the same pew every week.

Like a bouquet of beautiful blossoming flowers, my coach lights up a room just by walking in. Her eyes, filled with love and compassion, reflect Jesus.

Life often throws curve balls at us but my coach is always there to support me through the challenging times.

"Keep your eyes upon Jesus," she advises me.

Every good coach understands that we all need encouragement when life's problems and worries come our way. My coach knows when to phone me with an uplifting verse, message or prayer.

"Worry about nothing and pray about everything" she reminds me.

Her gift for prayer flows beautifully like a gentle stream with sunlight sparkling on it, creating diamonds of light on the water. Coach's love for Jesus pours out with every word she speaks.

"Keep shining your light," Coach tells me.

We've shared some special times together, Coach and I.

It was pitch-black outside when we left after an evening church service finished. No street lights were working that night. With car keys in hand, Coach said "Let there be light." Suddenly the street light above us began to shine. We looked at each other in surprise and laughed. The timing was incredible. I think my coach had an extra special connection to our Creator that evening.

While attending a large church gathering a few years ago, a beautiful scent wafted gently through the air around Coach and I. Nobody else appeared to notice. It was as though this gift was just for us. A special blessing shared.

Waiting for prayer to be answered requires patience, endurance and trust. With 83 years of life's experiences, Coach knows this.

"Fear not, only believe," she assures me. "Keep on praying."

When Coach encourages me to step out on the field, I walk out in faith, with the knowledge that she is cheering for me from the sidelines.

Recently, Coach has gathered more people to guide, encourage and support.

“We are on the winning team,” she tells me.

Overflowing with kindness and a love for Jesus, Coach has become my wise and trusted advisor.

I’m learning a lot from my coach. She’s my heaven-sent mentor.

## Second Place



Robyn  
Wylie  
of Tauranga

## Wise Counsel

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Laughter filled the kitchen as the sisters shared the task of baking biscuits. Their mum Lois, watched, giving gentle direction when needed. Lois was our pastor’s wife.

I was 15, new to faith, new to church and new to youth group. I loved youth group. It gave me a social life filled with fun activities and new friendships. But before long the excitement of parties and fitting in with my peers drew me away.

Seven years on, I’d moved to Australia and was living with my fiancé. Church and youth group were a distant memory. One day I received a card in the mail. It was from Lois. She’d written a friendly note with some Bible references. I couldn’t look them up, because I didn’t have a Bible!

A year later, my fiancé and I were married back in New Zealand. The only reference to God in our ceremony was a Bible passage read by my sister-in-law.

A work opportunity took us back to my hometown. We’d been attending the Catholic church together with our three young children. Then one day my husband said he no longer wished to go. Wanting the children to continue in their faith, I took them to the Bible Church, where I’d gone as a teenager.

The ladies from church invited me to a retreat. It was there that I met Lois again. She told me she’d prayed I would return. I knew in that moment that God was directing my steps and that weekend, I recommitted my life to him.

A few months later I received a parcel. It was from Lois. She’d sent me a 30-day devotional with a card, encouraging me to read the devotions and the Bible verses. I dusted off my Bible and started reading. Each day, God spoke to me through His Word.

I started to soften and become more patient. My husband noticed and encouraged me to keep reading. God was growing the fruit of the Spirit in me, and I felt his peace.

When our marriage started to fall apart, it was Lois I went to see. I expected sympathy - I got none. Instead, I received wise counsel.

Today, I am part of the team for a new church plant. I am leading a group, and now have the privilege of encouraging other women on their faith journeys. I am so thankful that Lois took the time to guide and encourage me. Next year, my husband and I will celebrate 40 years of marriage.

## Third Place



Lynne  
Leppard  
of Bay of Plenty

## Influenced

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Long before it was popular to be one, my aunt was an influencer. Fond memories are recalled of visiting my uncle and aunty on their farm. Adopted as an infant, my insecurities troubled me from an early age, but spending time with my aunt always soothed places deep within my heart. Welcoming arms and a loving smile greeted me on each arrival, and warmth radiated through her simple words, “hello dear”. Her home was filled with laughter and music and delicious home-cooked meals, creating a tangible sense of closeness throughout their family.

My aunt understood my nighttime fears and as bedtime drew closer, she carefully prepared a room for me. My eyes opened wide seeing the dolls and teddy bears she had arranged on the bed, ready to keep their little guest company through the night. Her compassionate gesture reassured me and warmed my heart. In the morning, the aroma of breakfast being cooked drifted down the hallway, signaling my uncle and cousins return from milking the cows. We had fresh milk straight from the cowshed and every experience was new and wonderful. Each day we set out on an adventure, walking through the paddock to the hen house, collecting fresh eggs together. My little legs eagerly tried to keep up with her as I shadowed her every move. She was love in action.

Sensing my timidity, she poured her life-giving love into me, nurturing me when I was sick, comforting me when I was sad. One day we danced around her lounge to Hawaiian island music, wearing grass skirts, shakers in hand. I wondered ‘is dancing allowed?’ - but it was joyous. She lavishly enhanced happy times as we smiled and laughed together. Hymns were sung enthusiastically, not only in church but also at home, and her faith guided me like a bright shining light. My aunt gave me the precious gift of hope and showed me the beauty of a closeknit family.

As time passed and I had a family of my own, the memories of these times together inspired me. Years later, when she passed away, my heart filled with grief. Our daughters joined us at her ‘celebration of life’ service, afterwards saying, ‘I know you loved her dearly, and listening to everyone’s tributes, it’s incredible how she sounded just like you!’

Humbled by these words, I appreciated the beautiful example she had created for me to follow. Undoubtedly my aunt had influenced my life, showing me the way in faith and love.

## Level Two

### Judge: Lesley Edgeler

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

### General Comments

*There is an art to writing recipes correctly. When writing for a Christian tea towel, however, the ingredients may not all be generic as found in one’s kitchen, but would also include certain aspects such as kindness, forgiveness and so on.*

*A good title is necessary to catch one’s eye if one is thinking of purchasing the tea towel for a gift. This can be followed by a description when writing a normal recipe.*

*Colourful photos or pictures enhance the effect on one’s eyes. Pictures on tea towels may be printed or even embroidered.*

*For normal recipes, however, the following are imperative:*

- *Preparation and cooking time*
- *List of ingredients and quantities*
- *Clear directions in order of procedure*
- *Cooking time and temperature*
- *Separation of each step into paragraphs*
- *Use of generic names of ingredients*
- *Size and type of cookware*
- *Serving and storage instructions*
- *Number of servings and serving size*

*It is important not to use two numerals together, for example:*

*2 (300 g) containers of margarine.*

*The first word of each new ingredient must be capitalised such as:*

*Freshly grated ginger.*

*Dietary implications are also important to mention.*

*For this competition, I received three well-formed entries. Unfortunately, two entries had to be disqualified due to very low word count issues which I have discussed in my critiques for those entrants.*

*I awarded Sandy Miller first place. Her entry is well-formatted and features the bonus of a topping to enhance her back-up plan. All ingredients are scriptural as per requirements.*

*Remember, when entering these competitions, the word count allowance is 5% under the requirement and one point is lost per word over the stipulated total.*

*If one submits a manuscript to a publisher of 15,000 words and the requirement is for 30,000 the publisher will not even, consider it. These competitions are designed to help writers hone their skills and take note of the specifications.*

*Contestants are encouraged to watch their word count for future competitions to alleviate the possibility of losing valuable points.*

*As this will be my last time to judge the Level Two competitions due to personal needs, I wish all future contestants well. I also would like to take this opportunity to thank Debbie McDermott and Kathryn Paul for their helpful feedback and Shirley Jamieson for her willingness to continue.*

## First Place



Sandy  
Miller  
of Auckland

## A Slice of Happiness

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This traditional slice is always offered to visiting family and friends. It is made with the fruits of the Spirit and inspiring ingredients that will help you live a fulfilling and happy life.

### Ingredients

5 cups of unconditional love

2 cups of joy

2 cups of laughter

1 cup of endurance

2 cups of peace

3 cups of kindness

1 cup of grace

2 cups of goodness

A dash of mercy

3 cups of faithfulness

1 cup of gentleness

1 cup of hope

2 cups of gratitude

1 cup of thankfulness

A bag of smiles

1 teaspoon positivity

1 teaspoon encouragement

Mix unconditional love and joy thoroughly together and add lots of laughter and endurance. Blend in peace, kindness and grace together with goodness, a dash of mercy and a lot of faithfulness. Slowly mix in gentleness, hope, gratitude and thankfulness with a bag of smiles to the main ingredients. To ensure this slice of happiness is successful add some positivity and encouragement and bake with lots of care and self-control. This happiness slice is not complete without a topping of understanding and empathy.

### **Topping**

2 cups of understanding

1 cup of empathy

1 tablespoon of self esteem

½ cup of calmness

1 tablespoon of confidence

1 tablespoon of trust

1 tablespoon of respect

Sift together understanding, empathy, self-esteem, calmness and confidence and mix all ingredients thoroughly together. Spread the topping generously over your happiness slice and dust with lots of trust and respect. Cut the slice evenly into bite-size portions and serve to family and friends.

As you enjoy this happiness slice together, sit back and watch the difference it will make in the everyday lives of family and friends over a period of a lifetime.

## **Level Three**

**Judge: Julia Martin**

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

### **General Comments**

*Although Artificial Intelligence (AI) may seem to many of us to be a relatively modern phenomenon. It has been evolving from around the 1950s and over recent times has made monumental leaps in groundbreaking technology.*

*It has been impacting many fields of human endeavour such as: journalism, healthcare, finance, industry, transportation, communication, entertainment and so on.*

*It's here to stay whether we like it or not and it's daily shaping the very fabric of our existence for better or worse.*

*For this assignment, members were asked to write a secular article outlining the pros and cons of AI.*

*I received four excellent well-written entries. They all displayed thorough research, balanced reasoning, and final challenging conclusions.*

*I awarded first place to Jean Shewan for her thorough examination of the topic. She gives both sides of the issue without getting bogged down in too much detail and ends her article with a compelling challenge to our thinking and a searching question.*

*Second place goes to Pat Kerr. Her entry has a lighter approach to the topic which is interesting yet informative. I awarded third place to Jill Clarke whose article was well-written and showed a thorough understanding of the subject. Close behind these three was Felicity Logan's entry.*

## First Place



Jean Shewan  
of Christchurch

## Good or Evil

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Artificial Intelligence (AI), like all discoveries and inventions of humans, can advance the world or can cause unbelievable trouble. Like an extension of the human brain AI can find answers to problems, solve mysteries and look deeply into the universe. The problem lies with where it gets its information to reach these conclusions. The Internet, the news and other sources of information are all a mixture of things that are right and those that are wrong, and it is not always easy to tell the difference. Lines get blurred very easily.

On the good side AI has provided solutions to health problems, extending Medical Scientists' ability to probe deeper into diseases and their causes, and to produce more effective vaccines and medicines. It allows increased knowledge of systems

and mechanics so that we can produce safer and more eco-friendly machines and processes. This will improve our environment, decrease waste, and allow better use and fairer spread of resources. With more accessible information available it will enable governments and rulers to make more effective and fair decisions. The problems of climate change can be addressed more successfully, if Artificial Intelligence is harnessed well.

On the other hand, as we have seen with the Internet, there is a dark side. From pornography and sexual exploitation to the development of more lethal weapons, and the undermining of justice and truth. AI can be used to lead people into places that deny them basic rights of humanity. Whole civilisations can be undermined by attacks on economic and living standards, and by the degradation of moral standards. AI increases the ability of countries to spy on one another and carry out war against governments and individuals. All of this can happen if it gets into the wrong hands!

Unfortunately, the only lessons that we have learned from history is that we haven't learned anything. Generation after generation has seen those who have the best intentions for the world be over-ruled by those who have a self-centred and bigoted approach to government and justice. In many places, individuals, especially women, are regarded as expendable, and corruption is widespread. Unless a miracle occurs, AI is not going to be able to change this. We need to work to improve our attitudes and actions, cut down on the rhetoric and assist our leaders to make careful and humane decisions.

How are you going to deal with Artificial Intelligence?

## Second Place



Pat  
Kerr  
of Roxburgh

## Artificial Intelligence

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'Artificial Intelligence presents benefits and dangers for our world today'.

Rip Van Winkle woke up after a hundred years asleep. His world was greatly changed. If we were to sleep for a hundred days we would find more changes than he did.

Technological changes are exponentially occurring in our society, in medicine, science, security, education, finance, politics, and music.

My father-in-law doffed his hat when speaking on the new-fangled telephone. My mother learned to cook with electricity. Nowadays innocent children accept astonishing changes seamlessly.

We tend to think 'that can't be done': sound waves, global instant internet links, microwave cooking, laser surgery. The older mind boggles over 'Alexa', drones, lasers, and Bluetooth. The younger mind continues to invent, modify and utilize technologies like 3-D printing, WIFI, computers, emails. All of us, if we're honest, struggle with this phenomenon, AI, artificial intelligence, which is not human, natural or real. Some forms are helpful. Some are downright dangerous or insidious, hiding in plain sight.

Drones can safely check out mine-laden battlefields, but snooping, (Canada's Paris debacle), is nasty. Drones on farms can remotely muster animals, and open or shut gates. Drones dropping items in prisons are bad, but dropping food to trapped individuals saves lives.

Lasers enable intricate eye surgery, but, when used to blind pilots, are dangerous and illegal.

Robots enable cripples to walk, aid inspections of potentially lethal underground mines, mow lawns, vacuum houses, but are dangerous when used in combat situations.

AI computers 'talk' for the mute. Headpieces that 'see' transform lives for the blind. Cochlear implants allow the deaf to hear. 'Alexa' is a computer system in houses that obeys voice instructions. Even children can instruct 'Alexa'. But what else is 'Alexa' listening to, recording, and forwarding?

Computers and laptops have cameras and recorders. Are these ever turned off? Who is watching and listening? Facebook users know the insidious algorithms that cause non-stop advertisements to appear on a subject searched. Who does the research, and how, and why? What else is 'Big Brother' capable of, and using? How can we mere mortals find out? What dangers are we facing?

Scams are deceiving experts. Student's work confuses professors. What is real? What is AI?

We welcome useful inventions but are wary of progress too. AI creators and users, having human natures, are good and bad, aren't they?

We need to keep our sleepy eyes open, eh Rip?

## Third Place



Jill  
Clarke  
of Wanganui

# Artificial Intelligence (Ai)

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Handling artificial intelligence responsibly is a challenge in our modern society. While society may benefit greatly from this technology there are also risks that it can be misused causing harm or damage. Good security is a 'must' as personal information is taken from the data we use through technology. The rules used in training artificial intelligence programmes can discriminate and alter our personal data. Truth is imperative for student exams and job applications as the use of artificial intelligence can give a false idea of student or applicants personality and training meaning they are often unable to do the work required of them.

The process of human thinking has a massive part to play in what we wish to say or write. How intelligent is this artificial technology when used in the translation of languages? Changes in the nuances of pronunciation can alter the meaning for many of our world's tribal dialects. The English language is known for three or four words that sound phonetically the same and sometimes have identical spelling but have totally different meanings.

One can take scratches and creases from old photographs making them clear and unspoiled. Another can alter the appearance of a portrait to make the photographed person unrecognisable by changes of facial features or gender. Changing the background, though often making the picture more appealing can cause the subject to be accused of being in a totally different place or country when photographed.

Medical science can be advanced with quicker diagnosis of a patient's illness or disease meaning correct and quicker treatment can be undertaken. Bones and joints may be fashioned to replace those corrupted by bone disease or artificial limbs formed for a prothesis following an accident. These can be made to fit perfectly into the natural body aperture with the use of artificial intelligence.

Robots have a place for use in potentially dangerous situations like bomb disposal, the source of leaking gas, or search and rescue amongst rubble following earthquakes or avalanches. They can also be programmed to replace heavy machinery previously used in engineering or manufacturing workshops. The danger here is that of job losses for those who don't have the qualifications or knowledge required to manage the artificial intelligence.

Society may benefit if wisdom is used in dealing with artificial intelligence for security, education, health and unity of persons, tribes, and nations.

# Competitions for December 2024

Due by 1 November 2024

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

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

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

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

**NB: If you are not sure which level you're on, email Debbie McDermott at: [level1@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:level1@nzchristianwriters.org)**

Entries are judged on: Entering, format and layout 15%, Topic requirements 25%, Creativity, flow and impact 25%, Grammar and punctuation 25%, Spelling 10%. Stipulated wordcounts have a 5% leeway under or above the required wordcount. A maximum wordcount has a 5% leeway under the wordcount.

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

**Requirement:** Using Luke 14:13 as your key point of reference, write a true or fictional story on inviting the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind to a Christmas banquet and describe what effect it has on them. Use fictional names if the story is based on fact (450 words).

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



*Debbie*

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

**Requirement:** Write an article by one of the shepherds in Luke 2:8-20 for the imaginary Bethlehem Times. Include fictional names for the shepherds and tell of their reaction to seeing baby Jesus, but be factual to the Biblical account itself (350 words).

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

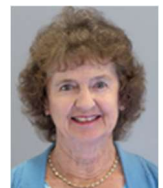


*Shirley*

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

**Requirement:** You are concerned about the eternal destination of some of your non-Christian friends and family members. Compose an email to send to each of them outlining the good news of the gospel and their need of a Saviour. Use simple language and a gracious approach (300 words).

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



*Julia*



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

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