

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2025

# THE CHRISTIAN writer

## SEE INSIDE FOR

Tauranga Christian Writers  
Annual Retreat Report

South Island Christian Book  
Authors Report

*Missions in Marketing*  
by Mary-Pat Ross

Book Reviews:

*Adriel and the Great Escape*  
by Kay Peterson

*Songwriting DIY Column Part Six*  
by Felicity Logan

Poetry, Devotions, Celebrations,  
Competitions and more!

A magazine of NZ Christian Writers



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

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

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

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For magazine contributions, address changes and membership queries.

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

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

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

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

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

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**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 2025 edition of *The Christian Writer*. With special thanks to our Competitions Coordinator and Level One judge, Debbie McDermott, plus our Levels Two and Three competition judges, Shirley Jamieson, and Julia Martin, we are delighted to be sharing with our members the brand-new *Competition Topics Reference Sheet* for 2026. This provides an advance preview of our competition topics and criteria for 2026. Our print subscribers will receive this as a printed insert with this magazine, plus all members can access the *Competition Topics Reference Sheet* on our website: [www.nzchristianwriters.org/competitions/](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/competitions/).

We encourage all members, especially our new members, to give the competitions a go. Competitions are a great way to hone your gift of writing, receive helpful critique and support from our competition judges, plus gift vouchers are awarded to our overall Levels One, Two and Three winners.

As many of you will know, here at NZ Christian Writers, our vision is to encourage and inspire Christian writers throughout New Zealand. Our writing competitions are a creative way we encourage and inspire our members with a variety of writing challenges. Place-getters are published in our bimonthly magazines and overall prize-winners are announced twice a year.

Another way NZ Christian Writers encourages and inspires our members is through our various regional local groups. I'm very happy to report that we have several writers' groups which have been thriving throughout 2025, and we are excited about building community and making meaningful connections for the future. If you are looking for an encouraging and inspiring environment to help support your gift of writing, you are welcome to connect with a local group leader within your region who hosts a writing group. Our website has the contact details available here: [www.nzchristianwriters.org/groups/](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/groups/).

If you happen to know another hobbyist writer or someone who is considering self-publishing or even traditional publishing, perhaps share with them the website for NZ Christian Writers. As always, we welcome both beginner and experienced writers to join us: [www.nzchristianwriters.org/join/](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/join/).

Thanks to our member and photographer, Elaine Dixon, for the beautiful photo she has shared on the front cover of this magazine. Once again to all our members, be blessed as we step into the new Spring season together.

Be blessed

Justin St Vincent

# Editorial: Let it Shine

by Kathryn Paul



Sometimes I meet a Christian writer who has overcome or is in the process of overcoming a personal challenge, such as a physical disability or other kind of special circumstance. I admire these people for their courage and perseverance. They haven't allowed their personal circumstances to become an excuse not to try. They've produced some writing despite the challenges they face.

These days there's a lot of support for writers, to help bring a manuscript up to a high standard. A writer doesn't have to be an exceptional writer at the level of first draft, to end up with an exceptional published work. There's a lot of help available in between the beginning of the publishing journey and the final product.

One of the common barriers I hear frequently from potential writers is the doubt that their story is special, or that anyone would be interested in what they have to share or write about. Let me encourage all Christian writers at every level—your story matters—what you have to say will impact someone else. We are all influencers to some degree. We mustn't allow doubt to cause us to shrink back or fade into the background. The Lord has given each one of us a light and He doesn't want it to be hidden. Remember the song, *This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine?* One way to shine your light is through your creative communication.

I get a sense that as the ability to publish written work gets easier and faster, it's because the Lord wants His stories, His testimonies, His poetry, His practical guidance, to travel more quickly. The early church in the New Testament sensed it wasn't going to be long before the Lord's return—how much more so for us now? So, no excuses, no doubts, let's get that writing for the Lord out there and let our lights shine.



With love in Jesus,

from Kathryn

P.S (My pink hair in the photo above was styled by my daughter, Tikvah at her hairdressing training salon in Tauranga. Locals in Tauranga can book her there for discounted hair appointments. Can you guess what the salon is called? *Time to Shine.*)

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

# Notices

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

You are invited to send your contributions for our magazines, *The Christian Writer* and *Young Christian Writer*. **The next deadline for *The Christian Writer* is 10 November 2025. The deadline for *Young Christian Writer* is 10 October 2025.** Please send your contributions as a word document attachment, maximum 500 words. Please send pictures as picture files, not pdf. Thank you. Email to [editor@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:editor@nzchristianwriters.org).

## **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>

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

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

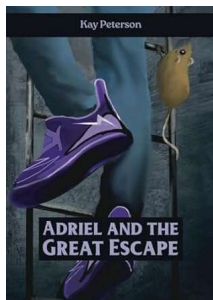
## **Raising Godly Mothers Magazine**

If you are an older mother who would like to write an article for future issues of *Raising Godly Mothers* or if you are a young mother who is struggling, please contact Shing at [rgm@rgm.co.nz](mailto:rgm@rgm.co.nz). For information or to subscribe to the magazine visit: [www.rgm.co.nz](http://www.rgm.co.nz)

## **Warning! Scammer Alert!**

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

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



## Adriel and the Great Escape Book Two

By Kay Peterson

Review by Debbie Bennett

Published by Tom Curtain  
Publishing

This was an exciting tale from start to finish. Protagonist 14-year-old boy, Adriel gets selected into an elite training programme for the Tri City Wedgeball tournament – a fast, highly skilled fictional game.

Adriel and his teammates focus on their Wedgeball training in an educational academy, which is ultimately under the control of the Robonics – a part human, part robotic enemy that annexed his nation from his grandparent's generation.

While busy with training and schoolwork, Adriel mysteriously discovers stepping stones for the ultimate plan of escape from the Robonics. A small group of trained allies from the students gradually unite as a secret group.

The group strategically flee the academy for the 'real' world. How can they work as a team to fend for themselves and get through never-ending tunnels? At the next turn, a new level of danger awaits. How can they keep hidden from the enemy and plan ahead?

In testing times, Adriel brings a humble reassuring presence for his group. He turns to God in prayer in one of their darkest moments.

*Adriel and the Great Escape* was a joy to read. Mystery and problem solving were masterfully woven throughout.

Aimed at junior fiction readers aged 8-12.

## A Lump in my Throat

by Maureen Tearle

*A poem begins  
with a lump in the throat:  
a homesickness  
or a lovesickness.*

*It is a reaching out  
towards expression,  
an effort to find fulfilment.*

*A complete poem, is one where,  
an emotion  
has found its thought  
and the thought has found words.*  
Robert Frost

What brings  
a lump in my throat?  
A sadness, an injustice, a fear?  
a lack of reconciliation,  
messy people, sad lives,  
messy lives,  
hurt people in our midst.  
I feel so sad, for them.  
I feel so ineffective, inadequate  
I want to love these people.  
Reach out and really love them  
Grasp hold of them and say,  
"I do care, I want to be there for you".  
Reach into their chest,  
and give their heart a squeeze  
To give it a massage  
on the inside.  
so that it kicks into life,  
so that it is not hopeless and sad  
I visit the elderly, the  
unwanted 80year old woman  
I tell her I love her and care  
But they are just words  
How do I really show  
love and compassion,  
so much so,  
that it hurts?  
Jesus knew how, He is my example  
He was, love, He is love.  
And I am to be His hands and His feet  
He said, 'if you obey me,  
and love one another as I have loved you,  
people will know you are my disciples'.  
O LORD, show me how!

# Tauranga Christian Writers Annual Retreat

by Gaynor Lincoln (Rotorua)

The first weekend in July is traditionally the Tauranga Christian Writer's Annual Retreat.

For many years we have gathered at Jan and Hans Pendergrast's farm, Land's End, high in the hills above Tauranga. Jan and Hans have a beautiful and spacious house which they opened generously for us to stay. Writers came from other parts of the North Island in motor homes and caravans which they parked in a nearby paddock which had amazing vistas over the farmland to the sea.



The attraction this year was our guest speaker, Rob Harley. Many of you will recognise his name as the producer of the **Assignment**, **Extreme Close Up**, and **Frontline** TV programmes.

It was a treat to have Rob, an entertaining and informative speaker whose TV programmes address the reality of life – no sugar coating here. As well as sharing aspects of his career as an investigative journalist and writer, he shared helpful tips for us as Christian writers. He commented that our writing should “reach into people’s chests and squeeze their hearts.” Now, that’s a ‘show not tell’ statement.

During the sessions he addressed alternatives to writing hard copy books such as having an online platform. He introduced us to using AI to enhance our work.

The most telling part of his message was the need for self-care when one is dealing with traumatic circumstances.

Seeing poverty, injustice, and tragedy in various parts of the world took its toll on Rob. Once he saw the world at its worst, he could not unsee it. His faith changed as a result of his experiences. Also, Rob learnt to look after himself and obtain professional help when overwhelmed by what he had seen.





We all brought food for the weekend and Han's sister, Marie, worked hard to organise what we had brought into lunches and dinners which she heated and had ready for us when we emerged from our sessions with Rob. She did a brilliant job. We had great fellowship, made new friends, and

enjoyed a beautiful worship service on Sunday morning to conclude the retreat.



## Missions in Marketing

by Mary-Pat Ross

I had no idea how much editing and self-editing would be required before my book was in my hands. As the day approached of getting it print ready, I now had to face the reality of marketing and distribution. *Help! Something I know nothing about*, I thought. The public library had a useful looking book, called *Self-publishing in New Zealand* by CopyPress. I devoured it. Some questions were answered. *But, where do I start?*

Finally, the day came! The first order of 100 books arrived from YourBooks printers in eight boxes. In two weeks, I had sold most and gifted some amongst friends and church members. I prayed and asked the Holy Spirit, "How many more should I get?" Another 100? *Gulp. This is a stretch!*

Even more of a stretch was my sensing the Holy Spirit say "GO on a book tour to people and places that I will show you; people who need encouragement in their faith walk and those who wouldn't normally come across your book". I started to email a few friends between the Bay of Islands and Christchurch to stay with but there were still many unanswered questions.

Just before I left, I visited some friends who had recently done some long road trips. Thankfully, one of them exclaimed, "Hey MP, did you realise your car is months out of its WOF!?" And this was two days before departure! A miracle of provision and timing with the long list fixed, I packed and left on Saturday as planned. *Thank you, God for hearing my urgent prayers!*

Driving south, I arrived days later at the printers in Wellington with a full car to pick up the second order of 100 books – eight boxes! *Where are they going to fit in my little compact car?* While visiting a church in Lower Hutt, my friends who are pastoring there offered to store four boxes. I took the other four to the South Island.

Driving onto the car ferry, I was amazed how God had gone before me preparing the way with new rear suspension, polished headlights, and the steering rack renewed.

I have many stories of remarkable connections, provision for petrol and ferry costs, and people who bought my book through five churches and four home groups. One 'random' stop in Carterton led me to a young woman who had a heart to sell Christian books from her home. By the time I was driving back from Christchurch, she had sold four out of five and wanted another two books.



Mary-Pat visited member Kay Peterson, here's Kay with her published books in Mapua Bookstore



Floods, icy roads, and winter ailments sought to disrupt my schedule. *Why would anyone travel south in the winter?* A six-week book tour was definitely not what I had in mind as a marketing strategy but God did. I again have been on a mission, but this time driving in New Zealand, sharing and selling my books. Obedient and trusting the prompts, He led me around obstacles, providing and protecting me all the way. I'm happy to be home too.

Photo left is Mary-Pat promoting her book 'Called to a Sun-scorched Land', at the Packhouse Market in Kerikeri.

# Songwriting DIY

Column by Felicity Logan

## Part Six: Pointers for your Melody or Verse

- It must serve the lyrics
- Your third line might have the same melody as the first
- Words like 'majesty', 'risen', 'highest' need the highest notes with the melody rising towards those notes. This is possibly the CLIMAX, which needs to be on an accented beat (on the toe-tap)
- A noun or name will usually have a longer note and occur at the start of a beat, and less important words such as conjunctions and articles usually happen halfway through a beat, or several combined to squash into one beat.
- A comma or full stop in the lyrics needs a longer note in the melody
- Don't have a lot of consecutive steps, or return to the same note too often—it makes it boring—or bogs down the tune
- However, if your song is contemplative, notes stepwise might be more frequent, and note values may be more regular
- If your song is rousing, use mostly chord notes (musicians will call these broken chords, an arpeggio base) and note values may be 'dotted' (jerky—more on this later)
- Don't have too many repeated high notes in a row, which strain voices, so return to lower notes afterwards
- There should be some rhythmic variety, combining long and short notes. Not too many bars with the same rhythm pattern.
- Don't worry about rests. Singers will breathe when they need to. Rather than write a one-count note plus a one-count rest, just write a two-count note and the singer will render it naturally
- If you get a little way in, then stuck for melody ideas, it might work to play/sing the previous line one note higher using the next words.

- Finish the tune on a strong beat, using the keynote preferably (If in the key of G, the keynote is G)
- If you want a jazzy rendition, use simple rhythms and write the words 'With Swing' just above the beginning of the music, and the musicians will know what to do.

Finally, ask a pianist to play what you've written. Did it sound as intended? If you sang along, did it match? Does the person have any suggestions?

*(Part Seven due out Dec 2025-Jan 2026).*

## Let's Celebrate!

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

Congratulations to Darren Green for the release of *Kingdom Revival, the Keys to Sustainable Revival*.



**Here are some helpful writer/reader websites:**

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

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

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

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

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

<https://www.storymonstersbookawards.com/>

<https://www.maoripostal.co.nz/>

Writer Beware - Shining a small, bright light in a wilderness of writing scams – <https://writerbeware.blog>

For South Island Writer Retreats: <http://www.sistereretreat.com/>

Hawkes Bay Christian Writers <https://hbchristianwriter.com/>

# South Island Christian Book Authors (SICBAN) Gather in Christchurch

by Verna McFelin

On Saturday 30 August 2025, the South Island Christian Book Authors Network (SICBAN) met at Dawn's home on Marine Parade, South New Brighton, Christchurch. The homely setting created a warm, relaxed atmosphere, quite different from a community hall. It gave space for genuine connection, conversation, and encouragement. Ten members attended, with fifteen sending their apologies.

## Sharing the Writing Journey

The morning began with refreshments and informal introductions. Members took time to share about their current projects, published works and some of the challenges they were facing in their writing journeys.

A peer review session was a highlight. Several writers read 1,000-word excerpts of their work and received feedback from the group. The range of writing was impressive, honest and raw, creative, and in some cases deeply moving. One member even shared their very first poem, written with remarkable impact.

There was also discussion about how God inspires the writing process. Some writers spoke of receiving downloads at night, while others described walking with God through each stage of their writing. Helpful advice was offered by more experienced authors and everyone left encouraged to keep developing their craft.

## Resources and Tools

A free resource table provided a variety of materials, including:

- *NZ Christian Writers* magazine
- Writing guides and checklists
- Quick-start publishing booklets
- SICBAN business cards for inviting others
- A prophetic word titled *The Annals of Heaven*

## Celebrating Achievements

The group also celebrated writing progress:

- 4 books waiting to be started
- 12 currently being written
- 14 completed manuscripts
- 15 books already published



In addition to books, members are active in shorter forms of writing such as Facebook posts, letters to editors, short stories, and journaling.

## Future Possibilities

Given the number of short stories being written, members discussed the idea of creating an anthology. This could be an exciting way to get God's message out into the community showcase talent and provide a shared platform for members' work.

## A Time of Encouragement

The smaller group size allowed for deeper sharing. Some members spoke honestly about personal challenges, and the group responded with prayer and encouragement. It was a time of refreshment, where faith and writing came together in a supportive environment.

## Next gathering, you are warmly invited to join us:

- **Date:** Thursday, 20 November 2025
- **Time:** 6:00 pm (Potluck tea)
- **Venue:** 338 Marine Parade, South New Brighton, Christchurch
- **Guest Speaker:** George Bryant, well-known in Christian publishing
- **RSVP:** verna.mcfelin@gmail.com

SICBAN looks forward to welcoming both new and returning members as the network continues to grow in friendship, faith, and shared purpose.

# Anagram or Acronym or Acrostic?

by Kathryn Paul

In the June-July 2025 magazine issue, we included an article outlining the differences between anagram, acronym and acrostic. We invited readers to write and send some in. Thank you to Nicky J Sims who sent in *BLESSED*.

## BLESSED

by Nicky J Sims

**B**lessed to be a blessing

**L**etting others know of the Father's love

**E**ither in my words or my actions

**S**howing the love of Christ

**S**erving those around me

**E**ven at a cost

**D**ependent only on the grace of the Holy Spirit of God

Also, thank you to Stephen Douglas, who had a go at all three as follows:

## Anagram

Anglican: *Canaling* (to dig a canal; a man-made waterway used for transportation)

Messiah: *Mashies* (plural of mashie or masy; formerly a club. Now the #5 or 6 golf iron used for approach shot i.e. lofting)

## Acronyms

### POSSIBLE – A Devotional Acronym

What is possible? The first four letters speak to the ground on which we walk: plausible, obtainable, solvable, stable. They describe the conditions of faith and life that assure us we're not dreaming—we're walking on a firm path. **But the moment we reach the centre—'I – Indomitable: I am able'**—the shift happens. Possibility becomes personal. We move from the external into the internal. We're no longer just imagining what might be—we're stepping into it. And from there? *We walk in what is believable, laudable, and endurable.* This is not just theory—this is the spiritual journey of living into what God has called...

**P**lausible

**O**btainable

**S**olvable

**S**table

**I**ndomitable: I am able

**B**elievable

**L**audable

**E**ndurable

*With God all things are possible* Matthew 19:26.

### Man of Valor

Great is the LORD who calls **G**IDEON. Though his calling appears to be **I**n weakness, he has a strength hidden, **D**eep within his soul. The Midianites were being so cruel to **E**very Israelite. Yahweh calls GIDEON, knowing he had the qualities **O**f humility, obedience, and faith. One Hebrew meaning of the **N**ame: GIDEON, is 'Mighty Warrior'. *The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor* Judges 6:12.

# Acrostic

A Thoughtful Acrostic: *The Grace of Now*

**D**etachment - being free from wanting the  
**E**xpectation of things to happen.  
**T**ime to be still. One's thoughts are set aside,  
**A**s mind activity is minimised -  
**C**an't make it happen - silence inside!  
**H**oly spirit guides with grace and peace,  
**M**editative prayer is creating space,  
**E**xploring the idea of *kairos*\* - a special time -  
**N**ow; today, not tomorrow. It's letting go gently,  
**T**o be at peace with what one can't change.

*"Come to me, and I will give you rest."* - **Jesus**

\**Kairos* - a time when conditions are right for the accomplishment of a crucial action: the opportune and decisive moment (Merriam-Webster)

| <b>W E L C O M E</b>  |                                     |                                       |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>New and Returning Members:</b>   |                                     |                                       |  |
| <b>Bruce Tregonning</b><br>Hastings   | <b>Justine Grayson</b><br>Australia | <b>Kelly Cochran</b><br>Thames        | <b>Selau Ifopo</b><br>Auckland   |
| <b>Deborah Kearney</b><br>Taupo   | <b>Kalasia Ifopo</b><br>Murchison   | <b>Renee Tavita</b><br>Whangarei      |  |
| <b>Jan Stroup</b><br>Napier   | <b>Myla Ago</b><br>Auckland         | <b>Robin Simon</b><br>Diamond Harbour |  |
| <b>Jenny Collings</b><br>Auckland   |                                     | <b>Sally Webb</b><br>Havelock North   |  |
| <p><b>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:</b><br/><a href="mailto:president@nzchristianwriters.org">president@nzchristianwriters.org</a></p> |                                     |                                       |  |

# 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

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## GRACE BELL PUBLISHING

A new traditional Australian Publishing company has opened recently - Grace Bell Publishing.

This might be of interest to NZ Christian Writers. Although mainly aimed at Australian authors, Justine at Grace Bell Publishing says she is open to submissions from NZ authors.

<https://gracebellpublishing.com.au/>

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*Any questions?*





# Bulbs, the Garden of Life

by Stephen Douglas



I saw my garden today and noticed the bulbs poking through.

Winter is that time of year when the air cools, shadows fall long, and brightness hides behind clouds. The happenings of my life, too, seem to drift into the past. But today, as the bulbs show their new start, I am drawn to my Summerset—my sunny room—to pen thoughts of reflection.

So much is hidden in life's mystery, but every now and then, there's a stir of treasure beneath the surface—reappearing to help the experience of living gain meaning. How long is a life season? That remains unknown.

So I pause in mindful contemplation of the happenings along my trail.

These bulbs, which I had forgotten, now push through the soil with anticipation of a show to the world. They awaken me to the truth that many happenings in my life—a mixture of pleasant and sad—lie hidden but not gone. Like the bulbs, moments, hours, and days have been incubated, hibernated, covered over, yet still alive, waiting to poke through. No calling, no seeking—they're just there in my garden, planted years ago.

Anticipation rises in me. I see what these bulbs were before and now envision their coming bloom. So, it is when dark and happy instances in my garden of life show again—calling me to revisit. Not with fear, but with wisdom and maturity, I deal with memory, emotion, and enjoy their stories: with my new being, who I am today.

There is much I can do. Plant new flowers, new shrubs, new bulbs. I don't need to root out the old. I can condition my soil and plant new seeds to grow. As I think about this, I realise that some happenings in life, were not of my own making—but they're part of my garden.

So, like a gardener, I shape, prune, and, where needed, remove. Yet there remains a trace—of feelings, of memory, of the need to forgive others and myself. I can regather and settle what disturbs.

In my garden, I see vegetation we call weeds. Yet they're still plants—with identity, shape, colour, growth. Some creep along; some grow tall. In the garden of life, too, what may seem like weeds to me might be beauty and balance to someone else. That's the richness of life's experience: happenings don't have to control the whole. With care, planning, and diligence, their impact can be softened—not erased but transformed.

With life, there is no stagnation. Each breath is an opportunity to rebuild in a way that heals. The soul is like a well that can be repaired, refilled with living, fresh, life-giving water. So too, with the garden of life—repairs can be made, reshaping done. And I can call upon help, engage with active purpose, to shape a desired outcome.

*Everything has beauty, but not everyone can see." — Confucius*

*"The LORD will work out his plans for my life—for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever.*

*Don't abandon me, for you made me." Psalm 138:8*

*I was inspired when I noticed, in my garden, bulbs poking through; Friday 19 July 2025*

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Many of our NZCW members remember the late Janice Gillgren who was a Level Two competition judge and a past Northland Christian Writers Group leader. Sadly, Janice's husband passed away this year. Northland member, Maureen Tearle has shared this tribute poem with us.

## Remembering Mark Gillgren

**22 March 1958—  
14 June 2025**

**(Tribute poem)**

by Maureen Tearle

Big heart, bigger smile  
Always prepared to go the  
Extra mile  
You were one in a million  
Unique, autonomous  
You called the shots  
Yet still managed to stay meek  
Humble, yet large as life  
Maybe not in stature  
But in your heart  
That knew much strife  
Suffering alone in grief  
You carried on doing  
What you did best  
Sharing with others  
Never greedy  
Always with a smile  
You went the extra mile



You were lost without your other  
half, when she departed,  
It left a big void in your heart, and  
life,  
for a while your smile dimmed  
Even so, you still made us laugh  
The story was told  
Your wife commented when, you  
said  
“Perfect, Mark” she said,  
“Hit the mark!”  
And so, you carried on  
Serving others, expecting no  
reward  
With no more larks  
Well, maybe one or two  
As you alone saw fit  
Pruning trees and getting carried  
away  
Taking no payment, especially if  
askew!  
So, you always went to the task  
with a smile  
Always prepared to go the extra  
mile.

# Homecoming

by Julia Martin

I wonder how it works up there  
When Christians are called home?  
Their body dies  
The soul's set free  
And enters God's abode.

Are millions waiting there to greet  
The new ones coming in?  
Are lists pinned up  
Or names announced  
Of saints God's calling home?

So do they hear the screech of brakes  
The sighs, the cries of pain  
The earnest prayers  
The last farewells  
As God calls home His own?

I guess there'll be surprises there  
For folk gone on before.  
An unborn babe  
A long-lost friend  
And those for whom they prayed.

But oh, the tragedy to find  
A loved one is not there.  
A false belief  
A faith not true  
Now lost forever more.

So friend, make sure your booking's made  
Your passport's safe and sound  
By grace, through faith  
In Christ alone  
Your destination's sure!

*Julia comments: I wrote this imaginary poem after my mother-in-law died as I contemplated how she would meet up with her late husband and other family members and friends who preceded her into heaven.*

*We believe there will be great reunions there in a totally different environment from here on earth. Plus, there's the prospect of seeing our Lord and Saviour and being with Him forever.*

*What an amazing thought! The older I get, the more I think of these things.*

# What a Friend!

by Julia Martin

Everything was ready. All the plans and preparations for the wedding were complete and it was just a matter of hours now until Joseph Scriven would marry his bride and be the happiest man in Ireland.

But it was not to be. All Joseph's hopes and dreams were shattered when a messenger arrived with the news that his fiancée had drowned in a tragic accident on the way. Heart-broken and lonely, Joseph turned to the Lord for comfort and strength. He discovered that Jesus was the best friend of all and that He could always be trusted in every situation.

In 1845 at the age of 25, Joseph left his home in Ireland and migrated to Port Hope in Canada. In this new land Joseph faced many difficulties but he was determined to spend the rest of his life showing true friendship to others. He devoted all his spare time to helping people in need. He often gave away his clothing and possessions and worked without pay for anyone who needed a hand.

Sadly, it seemed Joseph was destined to go through life as a single man. He fell in love again and made plans to marry, but before the wedding took place, his second fiancée died suddenly from a brief illness.

When Joseph received news that his mother was ill back in Ireland, he wrote a letter to comfort her and enclosed a poem he'd written, reminding her of their heavenly Friend. No one else knew about the poem until some years later when Joseph became seriously ill. A neighbour came to visit him and noticed a sheet of paper on the table beside his bed. The friend picked it up and read the lines of the poem written there. The first verse read:

**WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS  
ALL OUR SINS AND GRIEFS TO BEAR!  
WHAT A PRIVILEGE TO CARRY  
EVERYTHING TO GOD IN PRAYER!  
OH, WHAT PEACE WE OFTEN FORFEIT  
OH, WHAT NEEDLESS PAIN WE BEAR,  
ALL BECAUSE WE DO NOT CARRY  
EVERYTHING TO GOD IN PRAYER!**

Who wrote this poem? asked his friend. 'The Lord and I did it between us,' Joseph replied.

Soon after, in 1886, at the age of 66, Joseph went to be with his best Friend in heaven.

A special monument was erected where he lived, in honour of the Irish immigrant known as 'The Good Samaritan of Port Hope.'

Joseph's poem about his friendship with Jesus was set to music and has become one of the best loved hymns of all times.

# Marketing – your Readers’ ‘Why’

by Kathryn Paul

In the previous magazine issue, I published an article on *Helpful Tips for Great Marketing*. Some of the most important points were:

- It’s really important to remember that your readers can’t buy your book if they don’t know it exists. They won’t know about it unless you bring it to their attention.
- Buyers won’t simply just turn up at your website or the bookstore without some clues to help them find it and some good reasons to make the effort.
- You have a ‘why’ for writing the book. Let readers know their ‘why’ for buying it.

In this follow-up article I want to enlarge on the third point here; *You have a ‘why’ for writing the book. Let readers know their ‘why’ for buying it.* This isn’t a pressure sales gimmick, this is a genuine heart-reason for why you know your book will benefit the reader.

I will use my children’s novel, *Dog Tucker* as an example. What was my ‘why’ for writing the book? I had quite a few ‘whys’. One was simply I wanted to change the phrase, ‘one day I will write a book’ over to ‘I have written a book’. Another was, ‘I want to raise awareness of foster care in New Zealand and help readers understand what it can be like to be in the shoes of a foster child.’ Another was, ‘I hope my book will be a help to foster caregivers in their caregiving journey’. Another was, ‘There’s many horse stories, but not many about the equestrian sport of harness racing, so I want to introduce horse-story readers to that not-so-well-known sport’. Another very important one was, ‘I want to write a book that Christian parents will feel comfortable with regarding the content for their children, for example having no witchcraft in it’. Another was, ‘I want to write a book for the secular market that is Christian, but not too preachy, so it doesn’t put readers off, but does sow positive seeds’. Another ‘why’ was ‘I hope young readers will be encouraged from this story to make positive choices and set good goals.’

There were a lot of ‘whys’. Many of these can be used as a ‘why’ for someone to want the book. Did I have any idea it would be published by Scholastic NZ at the time I wrote it? No, I had no idea that would happen. Did I foresee that some schools would purchase class sets of it for their English classes and study it together? I had no idea that would happen. Praise God, what a wonderful result. But what do you think my ‘one-liner’ is when I’m trying to quickly think on my feet to raise a ‘why’ for someone to get the book for a young reader? It’s simply, ‘they might enjoy reading it’. Isn’t that the main reason we all read? It’s because we enjoy reading.



Can you identify your ‘whys’ for what you have written? I encourage you to note them down as I have. Your writing will be of value to someone. Remember that ‘one-liner’ is perfectly fine to say, ‘Hey, here’ my book... I think you’ll enjoy it.’ We often tell others about a book we enjoyed reading and it’s okay if it happens to be your own. If you’re not comfortable with wording it that way, you can always use someone else as a reference. I sometimes say, ‘many people have let me know they enjoyed it’, as this can feel more comfortable and is promoting it in an indirect way.

To sum up, know your why’, communicate your ‘why’, let your readers know your book is available and tell them how and where they can get a copy of it to read.

# My Backyard Cathedral

by Clive McKegg

They used to love to build them large  
To express the magnificence of God  
And yes, they are awesome to behold  
With vaulted ceilings, incense, and shining gold  
But I prefer the sight and smell  
Of my backyard cathedral

My cathedral's ceiling is the sky  
It shimmers with golden light from on high  
Filtered through the worshipping leaves  
As the Spirit blows gently through the trees  
Sharing the joy that all will be well  
In my backyard cathedral

The choir is filled with birdsong strong  
As a tiny fantail flits and dances along  
A little priest who darts around  
Splashing holy water from the birdbath she has found  
The tui-song is the only bell  
In my backyard cathedral

Heaven is my throne and on the earth I rest my feet  
Where is a house that you could build for me?  
What can express the glory of the Lord  
Who created all of this with his word?  
In a humble, contrite heart is where He longs to dwell  
In a backyard cathedral

*Based on Isaiah 66:1-2*

*Thus says the LORD, Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.*

*Where then is a house you could build for Me?*

*And where is a place that I may rest?*

*"For My hand made all these things,*

*Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD.*

*"But to this one I will look,*

*To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.*

# How to Format your Competition Entry

by Kathryn Paul

Contestants for all levels please take note of this article. 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, you will benefit from expanding your skills.

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

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

## Heading

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

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

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



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

A massive thank you to Fiona and Alan Murray, who have, together, prepared the NZ Christian Writers Members' Books Catalogue. Click the image above

to view over 200 NZCW members' books available for sale or go to: [www.nzchristianwriters.org/catalogue](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/catalogue).

## Writing Competitions Points Board

| Level One                   |    | Level Two       |    | Level Three   |    |
|-----------------------------|----|-----------------|----|---------------|----|
| Verna McFelin               | 15 | Stephen Douglas | 12 | Elaine Dixon  | 27 |
| Cheryl Christopher-Roulston | 15 |                 |    | Sandy Miller  | 24 |
| Janet Scantlebury           | 12 |                 |    | Robert Prins  | 12 |
| Judy Kibby                  | 12 |                 |    | Janet Fleming | 9  |
| Elaine Gosumett             | 9  |                 |    |               |    |
| Kathy Forster               | 9  |                 |    |               |    |
| Sarah Prem Manogarom        | 9  |                 |    |               |    |
| Nicky Sims                  | 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 Christian bookstore vouchers. Thank you to Andrew Stirling at [www.purebooks.nz](http://www.purebooks.nz). Our next prize winners will be published in the Dec 2025–Jan 2026 magazine edition.

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

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

# Competition Results

## Level One

**Judge: Debbie McDermott**

**Requirement:** Jesus said to the church of Laodicea, "I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends" (Revelation 3:20 NLT). Write an essay on what this statement means and how to apply it. Ensure you include a good introduction and conclusion. (400 words)

### General Comments

*I was pleased to receive fourteen very good, well-written entries, eight of which were from first-time entrants. Welcome! I hope you all enjoyed the challenge and will continue entering the competitions in future. I know from experience how helpful they were in honing my wordsmithing skills and am confident they will do the same for you as you persevere.*

*While not specifically stated in the competition requirements, the objective of this competition topic was to examine Revelation 3:20 in context with the rest of the chapter (particularly verses 14-19 prior to verse 20), then write an essay on what this verse meant to the backslidden, lukewarm church to whom it was written, and how we should heed and apply it to our lives today.*

*Many of us with a church background would have been taught that Jesus knocking on the door of our hearts is an invitation to receive Him as Saviour and Lord. Although Revelation 3:20 is indeed a good verse to encourage the unsaved to come to Jesus, it should also be used for what it was originally intended—to encourage Christians whose love for Jesus has cooled to come back into relationship with Him so they can enjoy the feast of blessings He has for them.*

*While most of the entrants referred to the context in which the verse was written, and how it can be applied to either restore a backslider or introduce unbelievers to Jesus, there were a couple who concentrated only on the latter and lost a couple of marks as a result. When writing an essay on a verse or passage of Scripture, it is always important to convey to your readers the context of the verse or passage so they do not misinterpret and/or misapply its meaning.*

*With so many well-written entries, it was difficult choosing winners as the points awarded were so close. I finally placed Cheryl Christopher-Roulston first and Judy Kibby second, with Sarah Prem Manogaram and Nicky Sims tying for third place.*

# First Place



Cheryl  
Christopher-  
Roulston  
of Auckland

## “I Stand at the Door and Knock”: What It Really Means

---

*(Revelation 3:20)*

Jesus wasn't speaking to unbelievers when He said, “I stand at the door and knock.” People who sang His name on Sunday but shut Him out by Monday. Laodicea looked strong—rich, self-made—but spiritually? They were comfortably indifferent. And Jesus wasn't impressed. In fact, He was ready to spit them out.

That makes Revelation 3:20 one of the most sobering, yet hopeful, verses in the Bible. It's an invitation. Not to the world, but to those who've grown numb. To the ones going through the motions. To churches that have all the gear but no fire. He says, “If you hear My voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.” Not as judge and defendant. Not as boss and servant. As friends.

Jesus wants relationship, not religion.

### **So what does this mean practically?**

First, it means you can be surrounded by church and still be far from Christ. Showing up every Sunday doesn't mean He's on the inside. Being active in ministry doesn't mean you're connected. Jesus is speaking to those who've kept Him at arm's length, even while wearing the name Christian. It's possible to be busy for God and completely disconnected from Him.

Second, hearing His voice requires quiet. Discernment. Honesty. You won't hear Him if your life is filled with religious noise, distractions, or pride. Laodicea thought they were doing fine—wealthy, strong, in need of nothing. But they were blind to their own poverty. Jesus wasn't just offering correction. He was offering presence. He wasn't knocking with a list of demands.

He's not barging in like a landlord. He's coming to sit. To talk. To be with you. And yes, maybe some hard things will come up. Maybe He'll point out what's rotting in the fridge. But the invitation is built on friendship, not fear.

You need to slow down and ask: Have I locked Jesus out? Do I still hear His voice? Or have I replaced intimacy with activity? Opening the door is simple but costly. It means giving up control. Letting Him speak. Letting Him stay.

Jesus is knocking at the door of His own church, not to tear it down, but to sit with you in it. He wants to be welcomed, not just acknowledged. Revelation 3:20 isn't about initial salvation, it's about ongoing relationship. Let Him in. Set the table. Listen for the knock.

## Second Place



Judy  
Kibby  
of Taranaki

# Revelation 3:20

---

The book of Revelation was penned by the disciple John during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (81–96 CE).

This quote from Rev 3:20 is addressed to the believers in the wealthy city of Laodicea. Domitian was notorious for being the first emperor to declare himself a god while still alive. All were required to worship him. Defiance not only prohibited one from trading but inevitably ended in death. It is in this setting that the Laodicean church functioned.

So God, after calling the Laodiceans lukewarm in these times of duress, calls them to repentance and appeals to them to hear his voice.

Just as the Laodiceans would have been challenged by the message of Rev 3:20, we consider the message for ourselves. It is the same Jesus who is standing at our door. Are we too being called to repentance?

Can we hear his voice? Is our hearing apparatus in good condition? Are we free of the hindrances that might be filling our spiritual ears with wax? There are a hundred and one reasons why our ears may not be hearing that knock clearly, pride, fear, guilt, busyness, self-determination, pursuit of wealth... Do we need to come aside in stillness to hear?

We not only need to hear the knock and acknowledge the knocker (Jesus). We must actually open the door. What is the door and how do we open it?

The door is a symbol of our own heart. The spiritual heart referred to in scripture encompasses our mind (thoughts, beliefs, understandings and judgements), our will (choices) and our affections (emotions, desires, feelings and imaginations). In fact, our everything!

And like the Laodiceans this involves recognising our own failings and our need of God and his forgiveness, then by faith inviting Jesus in through the door of our heart, allowing him to take the honoured seat at our table. An exchange takes place as we hand over our all, and we become God's friend.

Oh, to be the friend of God! What an honourable status this is and what a sumptuous meal he has to share with us. What wonderful spiritual food he has for us. What joy, love and compassion will we experience at this meal table?

Does God already have a foot in your door? Is he asking you to fling that door wide open? Take courage, and invite him in to become your friend too.

# Third Place Equal



Sarah Prem  
Manogarom  
of Auckland

## On the other side

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We've all come so close to missing Jesus. We fall into lukewarmness, comfortable that we know everything there is to know about Him—stifling an expectant heart and relying on empty traditions. But Jesus is just outside the door of our hearts, waiting for us to hear His knocking. We must respond and allow Him in for fellowship, where through close communion we receive the wonderful life He has to offer.

I've often missed Jesus. Looking back, I see Him standing at the door of my heart, waiting patiently for me to open. We go about our day with eyes on screens, ears blocked off, and hands busy with toil—totally oblivious that Jesus is on the other side of the door, waiting to change our lives. But Jesus does not give up so easily. He stands at the door and knocks, and waits patiently, “not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to Him” (2 Peter 3:9). And this coming begins with hearing.

In the Old Testament, we see the Shema prayer—the well-known command that begins, “Hear, O Israel...” (Deut. 6:4). To ‘hear’ here means not only to pay attention but more importantly to hear and respond to the voice and command of God. Jesus is not only standing at the door and knocking, He is softly and tenderly calling us out of our lukewarm state. Let us have ears to hear the knocking of our Saviour, because what He has to offer is life.

Food in my culture means relationship; we never go to another's house for a meal empty-handed. Likewise, \*Koinonia\* is a Greek word meaning deep communion and shared fellowship—an exchange over fellowship. When we make an intentional decision to open the door for Jesus, He comes and has fellowship with us, and we with Him. But He too does not come empty-handed; He comes with abundant life, a life to the full (John 10:10).

He is knocking. We must hear. And when we open the door, He brings us into \*Koinonia\* and true life with Him. We will miss Jesus if we dampen our ears or restrain ourselves from opening the door, though we can indeed hear. “Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, and you will find life” (Isaiah 55:3)—life that is available just outside the door and ready for us to receive.

## Third Place Equal



Nicky  
Sims  
of Whitby,  
Porirua

# Jesus Stands at the Door and Knocks

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It is so simple. The door is not locked. Slow down, turn down the volume, wait a little in the silence. Hear His voice and open the door to Him.

Let Him in and sit together, share a meal together. As friends.

Hearing Jesus' voice and opening the door to Him my very first time, oh how sweet it was. Pure liquid love flowed through my veins with a sense of being lifted off my bed and floating, floating, floating. I feasted on His presence, savoured every moment. It lasted oh so long, then it was over. I was on my bed again, changed. Filled up to overflowing, already missing the sensations I had just experienced of our first meal together.

That first love, the infilling of His Spirit, that moment I heard His voice and opened the door, let Him in. I didn't know the door was so easy to open. I didn't know our first meal together was one to feast on, to savour. What had taken me so long? He had been there all this time, waiting patiently, lovingly for me.

It is not only that first time that Jesus stands at the door and knocks. Every day, every hour, yes, every moment is an opportunity for me to hear His voice and open the door to let Him in, to feast on His presence, savour every moment. He is standing there, waiting patiently, lovingly, arms open.

Sometimes I forget the door is even there for me to open. I am busy, caught up in tasks, people, social media, busy and distracted. My back is turned, too self-important, too self-sufficient. I am starving myself of feasting on and savouring His love. Too busy to sit and share a meal with Him, to just be. It is me who has changed. Not Jesus. Not the door. Me.

Yet, how simple it is for me to slow down, turn down the volume and wait a little in the silence with my face turned back towards the door. I hear His knock, His voice calling my name and I open it. What a delight. Jesus is there. He has not gone off anywhere, but He waits patiently, lovingly to come into my world, my space, my day.

I let Him in, and we sit together, sharing a meal together. As friends.

# Level Two

## Judge: Shirley Jamieson

**Requirement:** Write a fiction story beginning with the sentence, “It was going to be a disaster – he just knew it.” Choose an imaginative title and a surprising ending to the story. (500 words).

### General Comments

*As the first sentence of this competition is already set, it creates a ready-made platform to build on. Choosing a title to complement your story is important as it needs to spark curiosity in the reader. A mundane title could give the impression there is no point to continue.*

*The story could begin with a peaceful setting but hints that trouble is brewing.*

*Setting the scene is important. Descriptions should be brief, though. A few well-chosen words draw the story forward, allowing the reader to begin imagining what might happen next.*

*Creating suspense draws the reader on, and using short sentences in places of high action increases the pace and tension. Strong verbs tell the story with greater effect than adjectives ever will.*

*Characters are developed through dialogue, their reactions to events, and the actions they take. Again, choose your words carefully. Will they add flavour to your story? Or detract from it?*

*By keeping to the theme, the story flows better, without being sidetracked by unnecessary information.*

*Each sentence contributes to build the scene. Maybe it is peaceful to begin with but hints a disaster could happen. Will it be avoided at the last moment? If not, what is the result?*

*A surprise ending brings a satisfying completion to the story. It keeps the reader guessing.*

*I received one entry for this month’s competition. I awarded Stephen the position of second place. Turning Point, his choice for the title of his story, matched the warm-hearted surprise ending. Feeling the disappointment of a ruined holiday, the characters in his story received an unexpected blessing.*

*Well done, Stephen for accepting the challenge.*

## Second Place



Stephen  
Douglas  
of Wellington

## Turning Point

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It was going to be a disaster — he just knew it...David could see the crash happening. The motorhome was sliding towards a line of vehicles even though he was braking.

It's Boxing Day and David and Pam are in their motorhome. David is suggesting they use Route 2 for variety — "I like change." Pam, the practical one, is saying, "Continue on and use the expressway." But David is driving, so she tunes the radio to her favourite music station.

Since purchasing their 7.5-mtr motorhome, named *Turning-Point*, they enjoy the variety of choice as to where to stop for the night and the comfort of travelling with everything — including the kitchen sink! The days of family caravan and tenting are gone.

David is settling into his new role as club president and is enthusiastic about this New Year's rally to Hawkes Bay, the wine region.

As they exit Wellington, through the Hutt Valley, towards the notoriously twisty Remutaka Hill Road, David begins to relax. Having driven this route a thousand times as a sales rep, he is confident with the corners and the few passing bays.

Pam, however, feels anxious. Ever since her minor car collision two years earlier, she tends to caution David. Today is no different.

"David, please take the corners slower," she urges. "It's seven meters of our living you're driving, not your beloved Harley."

Two more corners sweep by. The next one is too close to the railing for Pam's liking.

"David, please! I was on top of the railing then."

"Yeah, sure," David replies, grinning to himself, as he checks the rear mirror. "I've ridden my motorbike plenty of times over this hill. Many improvements have been made since then," he says, turning to look ahead again.

Suddenly Pam shouts, "Watch out! The car ahead is braking!" As she flings her arms upward to shield her face. David immediately brakes hard, as he feels and sees *Turning-Point* skidding toward the van ahead.

Next there's the crashing sound, as they hit the van. Both are shaking. Pam remains silent. David can't believe it as he tries explaining to the van driver he was braking but the motorhome just kept sliding.

The driver looks annoyed, and head is shaking as insurance details are noted. Then walks to the van and drives off.

"Good for him but not for us. We're off the road" David says to no one.

While they wait for the tow truck, David phones the club secretary to explain they've had an accident which means they can't make the rally.

The next day at home, recovering from their ordeal yet lamenting their ruined trip, the doorbell rings. They open the door to find their good friend Bob, standing there, jingling a set of keys.

"Here are the keys to our motorhome" he says grinning, "We're off overseas."

Stunned, David and Pam stare at each other, then burst out laughing and crying with joy.

Embracing Bob, they shout, "Praise the Lord, we can go!"

## Level Three

**Judge: Julia Martin**

**Requirement:** Write a short story in which the main character's life is drastically changed as the result of a sudden decision. Can be Christian or secular. (400 words).

### General Comments

*This assignment affords members the freedom of using their imagination to create a compelling short story which can be read quickly but is still capable of leaving a lasting impression on the reader.*

*As with most genre, it's important to start with a hook that induces curiosity and a response from readers.*

*The main elements of a short story are:*

1. **Plot.** *This is the arrangement of events in the story and involves:*
  - a) *Exposition – introducing the setting, characters and conflict.*
  - b) *Developing action – which builds conflict and develops the characters.*

- c) *Climax* – this occurs when tension reaches its peak.
- d) *Resolution or denouement* – where the story concludes with a satisfying or challenging ending.

*For the sake of length, it's best to avoid sub-plots and keep to a single central storyline.*

- 2. **Conflict.** *This involves the struggle of characters that sets up the action and leads to suspense.*
- 3. **Characters.** *In a short story, limit the number of characters to avoid complications.*

*The protagonist is the main character who may be in conflict with an antagonist or other issues.*

- 4. **Setting.** *This involves the time and place where events take place.*
- 5. **Dialogue.** *Used cleverly, it can be a powerful means of revealing character and developing the plot.*
- 6. **Theme.** *This is the main idea and general view about life which is usually inferred and not stated.*

*Because the word count allowance for this assignment is so small, every word and sentence should count. Furthermore, there may not be space for some of the elements of a short story outlined above to be included e.g. setting.*

*I received five entries, three with a Christian subject while the other two were secular.*

*I awarded first place to Sandy Miller for her excellent entry which was a gripping story with a strong moral that played on my mind for some time. Second place went to Elaine Dixon and third place to Janet Fleming.*

## First Place



Sandy  
Miller  
of Auckland

## Was it Worth it?

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Craig York had a lifelong dream—to become a pilot. At 42, married with two young children, he worked as a builder, but something inside him yearned for the sky. One evening, driving home, the thought hit him: *What if I really changed my life? What if I became a pilot?*

A week later, Craig walked into the local airfield and signed up for flight lessons. When he told his wife, Sara, her face fell. “How will we pay for this? We have two kids, I’m not working, and we live on one income,” she said, voice trembling with worry. Craig brushed it off. “We’ll just add it to the mortgage.” Sara’s anger broke through: “You can’t make decisions like this alone. We should have talked first.”

Despite Sara’s disapproval, Craig loved flying. His heart soared every time he flew, but the cost was heavier than he imagined. Flight lessons were expensive and all-consuming. He missed family get-togethers, birthdays, holidays, and precious moments with Sara and the kids. When Sara reached out, hoping for connection, he snapped, “I’m finally doing something I love. Why can’t you support me?” Sara looked weary. “Since you started flying, I barely see you, and you hardly spend any time with the kids. And I don’t like you drinking at the airbase bar all night on Fridays.”

As months passed, the distance grew between them like a chasm. Craig immersed himself in flying and became critical towards Sara. Then the bombshell—Sara found out through a friend that he was having an affair. Heartbroken, she left, taking their children with her.

Alone in a quiet house, Craig threw himself into flying shifts, desperate to rack up hours for a commercial pilot career. One Friday night, over drinks, Mark, a new instructor, asked gently, “Do you have kids?” Craig’s voice cracked, “Yes, a boy and a girl.” “Do you see them much?” Mark pressed. Craig shook his head. “Not really. I’m too busy flying. It’s been so long.”

Mark looked at him with quiet honesty. “Was it worth giving up your family to become a pilot?” Craig swallowed hard. “We all have dreams. I wanted to become a pilot.” But as the night wore on, surrounded by laughter and clinking glasses, the emptiness settled in. Was chasing his dream worth losing everything he loved? Or had he made the biggest mistake of his life?

## Second Place



Elaine  
Dixon  
of Tauranga

## An Impulsive Decision

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It was Sunday morning. Mandy was frustrated. She had been driving around the small but unfamiliar town for 15 minutes, looking for the church she had been told about.

“Lord,” she prayed. “What shall I do? I need to get to know local people, not be driving to a big city church an hour away.”

Immediately, as if in answer to her prayer, she noticed cars driving into a church not far from her house.

“Thanks, Lord. I’ll try this one,” she prayed silently.

Parking the car, Mandy went in and found an inconspicuous seat. After some worship songs the pastor asked the congregation to greet those around them. In the row in front a young man turned and made himself known to her.

“Hi, I’m Dane,” he said. “Are you new here? I haven’t seen you before.”

Mandy told him how she had recently got a job in the town and had been looking for a local church. They chatted for a while before everyone resumed their seats.

After the service Amanda talked further with Dane, finding herself quite attracted to him. That evening he rang her.

“You left your Bible on the seat and your phone number was inside it. Can I bring it back to you?”

A few minutes later Dane arrived at Mandy’s door. He seemed nervous so she invited him in for a chat. They talked easily and found they had a lot in common. The following week she saw Dane at church and once again they chatted to one another. She met some other young people and started to feel this was a good place to make her new church home.

Later Mandy discovered from her work colleagues that a local ball about to take place. Having recently purchased a beautiful ball dress while on holiday in Australia she really wanted an opportunity to wear it. Unbidden, Dane’s name came to mind as a potential partner. However she was reluctant to ask him when they had only just met.

“I’ll ask him to the ball if he rings me,” she thought. Only a few minutes later Dane *did* ring her. Bravely she mentioned the ball. To Mandy’s surprise he agreed to go, and that was the beginning of their romance.

Now, twenty-five years and four children later, they laugh about those early days and the impulsive decision that led to their first meeting.

In hindsight, maybe it was not really an impulse but rather...a divine plan.

## Third Place



Janet  
Fleming  
of Kaeo

## Rameko and Roi

Many years ago, some Maori children began attending programmes in our area. After a time, we got to know their parents. Rameka was a big Maori man who worked on the roads and Roi cared for their children and did Day Care work.

A travelling preacher arrived in the area and one evening we arranged to go to Ramela and Roi's place. That night the way of salvation was presented and after a while Roi said that she wanted to trust Jesus. We were so excited. Rameka seemed more hesitant but eventually he said that he too wanted to become a Christian. What an exciting night!

After a time, they talked about getting baptised but there was something they needed to sort out first. They were not married. So, their wedding was arranged. They were married on Saturday and the following day they were baptised and began fellowshipping at the church we attend.

Soon after this I became convicted that we needed to try and reach the Maori children at a neighbouring Marae. Roi was happy to help. We both took our own children along, and soon a number of others were attending. To start with we used the Marae, then an old school building. Today the children get off at our home after school for a Sunday School programme. It has been most days of the week but never on a Sunday, yet is still known as Matangirau Sunday School.

Rameka had a great respect for the Bible and was not happy if anyone put their Bible on the floor in church.

He also told of an incident at work when he asked a workmate "Hey bro, what kind of toothpaste do you use?" I'm not sure what the worker said, but Rameka responded by saying, "It does not do a very good job, because you have a dirty mouth."

Some time passed and Roi went home to be with the Lord. Later Rameka asked if we would call and see him. We did and his words to us were, "I want to thank you for bringing the good news about Jesus to my home."

Later Rameka also went home to be with his Saviour. What a blessing it was that we were able to share the gospel with Rameka and Roi all those years ago and one day soon we will meet them again.

# Competitions for December 2025

Due by 1 November 2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Requirement:** Record the conversation two Christian friends are having about Christmas. As one approves of the festival and the other opposes it, ensure you clearly present both arguments in their dialogue and come to a satisfactory conclusion. At least 90% of the entry is to be in dialogues so take care to keep taglines to a bare minimum. (400 words).



*Debbie*

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

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

**Requirement:** Write an allegory that highlights a biblical truth. An allegory is a story using fictional characters, such as animals or even inanimate objects, acting in imaginative ways to give a moral message to the reader. (500 words)

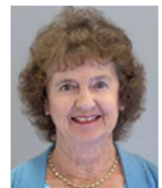


*Shirley*

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

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

**Requirement:** Choose a New Zealander you believe is worthy of an honour's award. Tell us about the person and why you consider he or she deserves public recognition. (250 words)



*Julia*

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



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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.